



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 33

3rd Session

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HANSARD

Tuesday, March 10, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2020 Spring Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North

DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Don Hutton, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun

DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Deputy Premier Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Economic Development; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Government House Leader Minister of Education; Justice
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Pauline Frost	Vuntut Gwitchin	Minister of Health and Social Services; Environment; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Highways and Public Works; the Public Service Commission
Hon. Jeanie Dendys	Mountainview	Minister of Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board; Women's Directorate

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party	
Ted Adel	Copperbelt North
Paolo Gallina	Porter Creek Centre
Don Hutton	Mayo-Tatchun

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

Stacey Hassard	Leader of the Official Opposition Pelly-Nisutlin	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Third Party House Leader Takhini-Kopper King
Liz Hanson	Whitehorse Centre

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Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Terry Grabowski
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, March 10, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.
Are there any tributes?
Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Hassard: I have for tabling a letter from TIA Yukon regarding response to the evolving coronavirus situation.

Mr. Cathers: I have for tabling an e-mail from the chairperson of the Driver Control Board regarding the IMPACT program.

Speaker: Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?
Are there any petitions to be presented?
Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 10: *Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020)* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that Bill No. 10, entitled *Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 10, entitled *Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 10 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Adel: I rise to give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House supports the Yukon Energy Corporation's plans to generate more renewable energy to meet the growing need for electricity in the Yukon.

Ms. White: I rise to give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to alleviate the pressure on Yukon health care professionals by introducing legislation to suspend any requirement of

employees to provide their employer with a doctor's note to access sick leave.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?
Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Old Crow community centre

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise before the House today to report progress on an important project that this government is supporting in Yukon's most northern community. The Government of Yukon is contributing important dollars to help to build a new community centre in Old Crow.

In a place like Old Crow, a community centre offers an essential place for people to gather, connect, and practise their culture. For many years, the community hall in Old Crow has served this purpose, but the building is nearing the end of its life and the community needs a new space to grow and gather.

In Old Crow, this new building will replace the old community hall and will offer more space and a more modern facility to residents. The new building is designed to have a gathering space, an elders lounge, multiple meeting rooms, a training and exercise room, and a full commercial kitchen for the cooking of traditional foods. This will be a facility that supports recreation, culture, traditional activities, exercise, and more.

Our government is committed to supporting communities in developing these important spaces. Because of that, we're contributing \$3.6 million toward the project, plus \$2.7 million that we have already contributed through our transfer payment agreement for planning, design, and preliminary costs. This is a \$14.6-million project that would not be possible without federal funding and the support of the Vuntut Gwitchin government. Mahsi' cho to our partners for this support.

Our government is committed to building healthy, vibrant communities, and the Old Crow community hub is a tangible example of how. I'm very pleased to note that construction on this project began last summer and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation hopes to complete the project by the end of the year. We're excited to see the finished product and to hear back from the people of Old Crow about how the new facility allows residents to connect and come together.

In addition to the new community centre in Old Crow, we're supporting a variety of projects across the territory that facilitate recreation, healthy activities, and community connectivity. These include our investment in projects like the Kwanlin Dün First Nation community hub, the Carmacks arena, upgrades to Mayo's arena, the F.H. Collins track and field, new pools in Pelly Crossing and Ross River, a Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in youth centre in Dawson, planning for the Teslin Tlingit Council community hub, retrofits to the Watson Lake administration building and community library, a new skateboard park in Whitehorse, and investments in many other community assets that meet local priorities.

We believe that the Old Crow community centre along with other projects that we are supporting are important

building blocks that will help grow communities into even more vibrant places to live, work, and play.

Ms. Van Bibber: I am pleased to rise in response to today's ministerial statement, which is a re-announcement. We are certainly happy to hear about investment in community spaces across the territory, especially considering the significant amount of federal dollars that were allocated last year toward projects like this in lead-up to the federal election. I believe that the original announcement was made in 2019 and stated that the federal government invested \$10.8 million into this project, with \$3.6 million from the Government of Yukon. As the minister noted, construction started awhile ago, and the project is almost completed. So again, today's ministerial statement would likely be better done through a press release.

The business of the day, of course, is largely decided by the government, and it is based on priorities. I leave it to the government to explain why they are taking time away from allowing us to discuss the government's budget or the government's response to COVID-19 by constantly re-announcing projects in this House, especially considering that the ministers are rarely ever prepared to answer questions.

Since the minister has stated that construction has already started and is nearing completion, we have a couple of questions. Firstly, when was the project tendered? Who was awarded the construction contract? What was the original budget? What do the final costs for construction come in at? When exactly did construction begin? Is construction on time? Is the \$2.7 million that the minister mentioned included in the \$14.6 million of total costs, or is this an additional \$2.7 million?

This is a project that we are excited to see for the community of Old Crow. We recognize the hard work in getting this project secured for the community and look forward to seeing it completed. But considering that the minister is standing to take credit for it today, we feel that he should have those essential details on hand. To be perfectly honest, the statement is not much different from the federal announcement from May of last year. So if the minister does have any new details to share, we hope that he can provide those important details in his response.

Ms. White: The Yukon NDP is pleased to see plans for a long-overdue community centre for Old Crow. I know there would be a wealth of stories if the walls of the current building could talk. It holds great memories and has seen momentous and historical events within those unique log walls, but it is past its prime. Many of us in this House have no doubt attended community dinners and events in the old building and are aware of its shortcomings, so a new community centre with all the amenities as described by the minister is very exciting. It's great to see this government's contribution to the project and a thanks must go to the federal government for, without their funds, this project would not get off the ground.

It's great that so many different aspects of well-being are incorporated into this new building, including recreation, an elders' lounge, a commercial kitchen, and meeting spaces. The

Yukon NDP want to congratulate Old Crow and the people there for their time, good ideas, and planning that went into this project and we look forward to hosting a community meal and meeting to take advantage of this new centre. Mostly, I really look forward to seeing the photos of the elders take pride of place in this new building.

This statement is about the Old Crow community centre and not about the other projects mentioned by the minister — as I'm sure we will have ministerial statements with regard to them as well in the coming weeks and we will respond at that time.

Mr. Speaker, we too look forward to the opening of the new Old Crow community centre.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I agree with the Member for Takhini-Kopper King and the Member for Porter Creek North that this is an important project.

I'm always happy to answer questions. I will find out — the project hasn't been finalized, so I can't give a final budget update. I can say that the \$2.7 million is part of the \$14.6 million. I can talk to the Vuntut Gwitchin and find out who the contractor is that's working on the project.

There are some things that I did. I have gone up to see the project and inquired about it. There are some things that I have asked about. For example, the building targets high energy-efficiency measures and a commercial kitchen to accommodate the preparation of traditional foods.

I remember that when I went up there, there was a space carved out underneath. I asked about it and they explained to me that it is about reducing their greenhouse gases. It is a key design feature to incorporate climate change consideration. This increased design depth of adfreeze pile foundations and the addition of slotted steel piles are to withstand vertical forces associated with the changing depth of the active permafrost layer and risks associated with overland flooding when ice jams might occur on the Porcupine River.

If you have seen it, the new site is along the river, as members noted. It's right next to the old building. It has been designed by the community and it's responding to the needs of the community. I appreciate the opportunity to stand and talk about it — and again, I will get answers to the other questions that were raised. I hope that we are always able to bring forward these progress reports on our projects from our communities.

One of the things that I will say is that, when we started travelling to each of our communities to talk with First Nation governments and municipal governments about the projects, we asked them for their priorities and their leads. So it isn't our project, actually; I will disagree with that. This is a project of the community of Old Crow and the Vuntut Gwitchin and we are supporting it. I am here today to just update the House on the progress to date. I would be happy to get up again and answer further questions about it.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD**Question re: COVID-19 coronavirus preparedness**

Ms. McLeod: Yukoners expect their elected government and ministers to have a grasp of what the plan is to respond to COVID-19 and to communicate it publicly in a calming way. As you know, the Liberals have refused opposition offers to work collaboratively across party lines to address these issues. Instead, the Liberals have not provided the details of their plan. It wasn't until this morning that they finally agreed to the opposition's request to provide us with a briefing. We are appreciative of that, but Yukoners still expect the Minister of Health and Social Services to demonstrate that she has an understanding of the plan and that she can clearly explain what the government is doing.

Yesterday, the government indicated that all influenza samples in Yukon were now being tested for COVID-19. Some jurisdictions have found that the testing has been a stumbling block, either through delays or capacity. Can the minister tell us if these tests can be processed locally and what efforts are being taken to bolster local capacity to do that?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The Minister of Health and Social Services will also help in responding to this question from the opposition, but I want to alleviate some of the concerns from Yukoners, based upon the bizarre narrative from the Yukon Party. This is absolutely top of mind for many Yukoners for sure. Now is not the time to panic. It is important to remember that the risk in Yukon and in Canada is considered to be low and that there have been no confirmed cases in Yukon.

I completely disagree with the members opposite about the state of preparedness of this government. We are extremely prepared. The conversations are not only local, but national as well. Health authorities are in regular contact and they are updating the assessments, and Yukoners will be informed as those things change. The information is out there on our website. Government agencies and departments are working hand in glove to prepare and to ensure a coordinated and effective response, and we are regularly working with our federal and other provincial and territorial jurisdictions as part of a coordinated pan-Canadian response.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we are following the chief medical officer of health as she leads all activities related to coronavirus preparedness. We are prepared and we have a plan in place should the virus be detected here.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, on November 21 last year, the Hospital Corporation appeared as witnesses in this House and told us that the average occupancy of the hospital, under normal conditions, is between 90-percent and 100-percent occupancy. They went on to say that a third of the time they are indeed at 100 percent. In the event that there are ever COVID-19 cases in the territory, the possibility that our hospitals will be at or over-capacity is a reality.

We have seen reports from other jurisdictions in North America and Europe that even just a couple of cases can overwhelm the health care system if it is not ready. We are happy that there are currently no cases of COVID-19 here in Yukon, but we need to ensure that we are ready in case it does

happen so that we aren't just reacting to events on the fly, like the government has been doing so far.

So, what plans are in place to deal with a potential influx of patients at Yukon's hospitals as a result of COVID-19?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am pleased to rise to respond to the question. When talking about COVID-19, it is important for Yukoners to know that we in the Yukon are prepared.

As we've noted from our chief medical officer and our acting chief medical officer, Yukon is prepared to provide support for all the citizens who we have here in the Yukon. I want to just acknowledge them for their leadership in guiding us and supporting us as we've gone through this exercise in the last few days, assuring Yukoners that certainly we want to provide the supports and provide supports to Yukoners where they reside in Yukon communities. We are doing that in collaboration with our health centres as well.

So, I'm very pleased with where we are and I want to thank the member opposite for raising this because surely Yukoners want to know what the facts are. Rest assured that we are providing the necessary supports should the support be required.

Ms. McLeod: Now, as we have mentioned previously in this House, the Liberal government has continually underfunded the hospital and there's no mention of COVID-19 in the budget. There's no contingency money set aside to deal with it, as we can see. Despite what the Deputy Premier claimed yesterday, spending money on highways isn't an effective way to deal with the global spread of a virus.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us if she provided the hospital with any increased financial resources in this year's budget specifically to prepare for this?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, again for our budget here — as we did in every previous budget — there is an increased amount of money that goes to the Hospital Corporation for funding. That is the good news, that we continuously increase the funding for Health and Social Services and specifically for the Hospital Corporation.

Now, the members opposite are saying that they want to support and they want to help out here in the Legislative Assembly and we agree that we would love to have their support. I'm heading to Ottawa to coordinate a national response with all the premiers and with the Prime Minister. I'm doing that tomorrow. The Official Opposition refuses to pair with me as I go to Ottawa.

Again, Mr. Speaker, if they want to help out, there are things that they can do to help out and there are things that we have asked them to do that they're refusing to do.

Question re: COVID-19 coronavirus preparedness

Mr. Hassard: As you all know, tourism is a key contributor to Yukon's economy. However, world events are aligning to make this a difficult summer. The federal government has indicated that the Canadian tourism sector is expected to see a \$550-million downturn from the Chinese market alone. Canada's top doctor has told Canadians not to travel by cruise ship. The US state department has told Americans the same thing. Yet the Minister of Tourism and

Culture claimed yesterday — and I'll quote: "... it's business as usual."

So, can the Minister of Tourism and Culture explain to us how projected declines to the tourism sector and the collapse of the cruise ship industry are business as usual?

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for raising the questions again today. I am happy to update Yukoners on where things are at in terms of tourism. We had a lengthy discussion yesterday about what we are doing with our business community and how we are working in collaboration. We certainly have committed to working in this way around tourism. We believe that we have all of our partners at the table. We continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on Yukon's tourism industry.

I had briefings with my department this morning again just to check in to see where we are at in terms of the cruise ship industry, which is very important to Yukoners. We recognize that, absolutely.

We are continuing to work with our federal partners at Destination Canada and the Yukon's chief medical officer of health to assess the situation. We are continuing to work with our federal, provincial, and territorial partners to continue to work together on strategies and to mitigate impacts that may come from COVID-19. We are adjusting as we go. This is a very fluid situation that is happening in Canada. What is really important is that Yukoners do not panic, because we are working very hard with our partners.

Mr. Hassard: Yesterday, the Minister of Tourism and Culture was asked about the impacts of COVID-19 on the tourism sector, and the minister, as I said, claimed that it was business as usual. Well, the Official Opposition has obtained a letter from the industry association sent out late yesterday calling into question the minister's claims. The letter states that they are urgently compiling statistics and estimates about the expected downturn in their industry this summer so that they can show the government that business is anything but usual. So, the minister doesn't even have the statistics to know what the impacts will be.

Last week, the minister stated that her department was having bi-weekly calls with the federal government to share data about what the impacts of COVID-19 will be on the tourism industry. So, Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us what her department has told the federal government in those bi-weekly calls with respect to the Yukon tourism sector?

Hon. Mr. Silver: So, Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing from TIA is exactly what we asked for when we met with the business community yesterday. Today, again, the conversation is continuing — which is that we need anecdotal information, and we need to know from industries where we are currently and what the effects are on this particular issue when it comes to a national presence and what the federal government can do also.

Thank you to TIA for their quick response to the direction from the Minister of Tourism and Culture, the Minister of Economic Development, and me to get out there quickly and to do the analysis necessary as opposed to speculating, as the opposition would do.

Mr. Speaker, what we're doing on this side of the House — again, when it comes to the economic considerations, we have \$3 million in income tax reductions this year for Yukoners in this budget. If you add that to the \$7 million that the federal government announced already, that's \$10 million a year that Yukoners are saving in income tax right now.

When it comes to businesses, our small business investment tax has blown the doors off of the thresholds there to help local businesses like Air North as they put money into new investments in tourism and new investments in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Add on to that the \$360-plus million in capital assets that are getting out the door this year — Mr. Speaker, this budget is exactly what other jurisdictions are envious of. We have solutions here locally and we are using them. We are heading to Ottawa to ask for a coordinated effort from the nation as well.

Mr. Hassard: It's clear that the Premier has never been in business because otherwise he would know that if you don't make any money, you don't pay any taxes.

I'll just recap here, Mr. Speaker. The federal government has predicted significant declines to the tourism industry. Canada's chief public health officer has told Canadians not to travel on cruise ships. The US state department has told Americans not to travel on cruise ships.

Mr. Speaker, on February 25, deputy ministers responsible for culture and heritage from across this country met via teleconference. During that meeting, did Yukon express any concerns about the impacts of COVID-19 on our tourism sector and did we request stimulus money from Canada?

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I want to reassure Yukoners that the threat of COVID-19 is still low. It's low in Canada. We are working together to protect our tourism industry. We recognize that there may be impacts. We are working with our partners on this. We're absolutely working with them. Our department is in constant communication. They were with Holland America today — on a daily basis — so they're talking. There are no ports that have been closed. There isn't a complete collapse of the cruise ship industry at this time.

There is great concern — absolutely. We are working on different scenarios with our partners around how to mitigate this. The opposition keeps talking about a downturn of \$550 million in Chinese tourism. That is exactly why, in the Yukon, we have a diverse market. We do not fully rely on the Asian market. It is important to us, but we do not fully rely on it because our markets are spread out — and we did that purposefully.

So, I want to reassure Yukoners again that we are working together with our partners. This is important to us as Yukoners.

Question re: COVID-19 coronavirus — employee sick leave

Ms. White: Yesterday, in the context of COVID-19, I asked the government to introduce paid sick leave for all employees in the Yukon so that all workers can make the sensible choice to stay home if they are feeling sick. Believe it or not, the minister said that it is not needed, because workers should simply work from home. Well, here is a reality check.

In Yukon, school bus drivers, who interact with dozens of kids each and every day, don't have paid sick leave and can't work from home. The majority of retail and hospitality workers, whose job is to deal with the public every day, don't have paid sick days and can't work from home. So hopefully now the minister understands why paid sick leave is not a luxury for some, but a critical tool for public health.

Mr. Speaker, let me ask again: Will this government introduce paid sick leave for all workers so that they can make the responsible choice to stay home when they are sick?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank the member opposite for the question. Yesterday, when it first got posed, I said that there are some people who are able to work from home, and if they are still working, they are still working. The question that is being proposed is a change to legislation. I thank the member opposite for that question.

I think we always work with our employers and our employees to discuss the situation. We are working with the federal government to talk to them about their role around things like employment insurance. So, there is conversation that is happening. I want to say that, as several of the other ministers have said today, and the Premier, there is no case of coronavirus here in the territory. I spoke directly with the chief medical officer of health around this issue regarding the Arctic Winter Games, and I just want to reassure people that this is not the case at this moment.

We will continue to work with employers and employees to support them during their concerns around the potential of coronavirus.

Ms. White: Government is able to make changes to legislation and that is why we have raised the question.

A study by the US Centre for Disease Control found that, in the food service industry, 59 percent of workers had worked while sick. A majority of these workers cited a lack of paid sick leave as the reason for going to work despite being sick. I have worked in both the food and retail industries. I know that many employees cannot afford to skip a paycheque. Even if they could, employees fear that taking a sick day will lose them entire shifts, hours, or even their jobs. These are the people who make the food we enjoy every time we eat out. They are key workers in the economy and in our communities too. But without being able to afford time off, these people are left working while sick.

Mr. Speaker, why won't the minister ensure that hospitality and food service industry workers can afford to stay home when they are sick by introducing paid sick leave for all Yukon workers?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I again thank the member opposite for her suggestion. I did open the conversation this morning with the department. I am happy to have a look at it. But I do want to note that, especially for our food and beverage industry, it is one of the places where you might find minimum wage workers. I will say that, following an order from the Employment Standards Board, on April 1, 2020 — this year — Yukon's minimum wage will increase from \$12.71 per hour to \$13.71 per hour. This increase was achieved by raising the minimum wage by the 2019 consumer price index for

Whitehorse, which was two percent, and an additional 75-percent increase.

I think we are working to support employees and employers, as I have already said, and we will continue to work with them. I thank the member opposite for her question.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I didn't think I could be any more disappointed in the non-answers that I have received, but it turns out that I was wrong.

Jurisdictions that are most affected by COVID-19 are turning to drastic measures in order to stay afloat. In Italy, the government has suspended mortgages and household bills to help folks deal with the economic impact of COVID-19. But these measures were put in place in reaction to the outbreak rather than in prevention of it. The Yukon situation is worlds away from Italy — I know that — but they and we, the government, have a choice to make. Do we wait until COVID-19 is found in Yukon to take action, or do we enact smart, preventive strategies ahead of time?

Mr. Speaker, will this government commit to making Yukon a leader in disease prevention by introducing paid sick leave or will it maintain the status quo and force Yukon workers to choose between a paycheque or going to work sick?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Even though we do answer the questions — just because the members opposite don't like the answers, that doesn't mean we are not answering those questions.

So, again, we are monitoring this current situation. This is not Italy; she is right. I don't think that Italy has paid leave for all of their workers either, for that matter — but, on the same point, monitoring other jurisdictions in Canada is a key part of what we are doing right now. We are coordinating our efforts from the finance ministers' perspectives on health and social services, economic development, tourism and culture, and also with the First Ministers' meetings as well. We will have a coordinated effort when it comes to those federal conversations. We are looking at other jurisdictions as to what they are doing, in a country where the risk is low.

The member opposite keeps on comparing us to Italy and asking us what we are going to do if we become Italy. Well, again, Mr. Speaker, we are going to concentrate on today's issues in Yukon, and we are going to act according to what is happening today in Yukon in the short term and with a long-term plan as well to work with partner governments, with federal governments, and also coordinating our efforts with jurisdictions that we rely on for health care, including Vancouver, Edmonton, and Calgary. Members opposite don't like the response, but we are absolutely prepared today and are working on being prepared for the long term if and when this becomes a bigger situation than it currently already is.

Question re: Graduation ceremony funding

Ms. Van Bibber: As many Yukoners know, graduation time each year is an exciting time for all involved, but it also can be an expensive time. It came to our attention a few weeks ago that the three high schools in Whitehorse that use a raffle to offset costs associated with annual graduation ceremonies would not be able to obtain a licence from the Yukon

government for the raffle. This means that there will be a shortfall for families trying to cover expenses this year. On February 11, 2020, the grad committee sent an e-mail to the Minister of Education requesting a meeting but did not hear back from the minister's office for almost two weeks, and then the minister refused to meet and pushed it off to officials.

We understand that a meeting took place yesterday. Can the minister provide us with details of that meeting and if solutions to the funding shortfall have been found?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Unfortunately, much of the information in the question, or the preamble to the question, is incorrect, and I am very pleased to be able to rise today to give correct information to Yukoners, because that is what this is about. Yukoners deserve to have information that will assist them when they are concerned about an issue.

Graduation from high school, Mr. Speaker, is an extremely important milestone, and we support the school communities as they work toward these types of celebrations for their students. A number of issues have arisen with respect to the opportunities for a raffle, which is something that we may all know about. It has been happening for the last number of years with respect to graduations.

We are working with the school staff to share more information about fundraising alternatives for the substance-fee proms which have been chosen by the students and the options to address the costs that are associated with the cap-and-gown ceremonies which, in turn, support the conversations at the school level between the students, the administration, the grad planning committees, as well as parents.

Ms. Van Bibber: One of the biggest concerns that we've heard is with respect to costs for the cap-and-gown ceremony. One of our Whitehorse area high schools will be charging \$150 per student to participate in the cap-and-gown ceremony and it is unclear how this charge was arrived at, especially since the school already owns the clothing.

The reality is that some families will find it cost-prohibitive to attend graduation. With so many other expenses associated with this time of year and the ability to raise money through a raffle not available, will the minister commit to cover the costs of a cap-and-gown ceremony at every Yukon high school until a long-term solution can be found?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I want to reiterate how important graduation ceremonies are for high school students and their families. It's an important milestone as they move through their high school careers and on to whatever they choose to do in the future.

It is extremely important that these opportunities are affordable for families. Some issues have arisen. I don't think any final determinations have been made — again, unfortunately, some fear-mongering and details coming from the other side that are simply not yet available to me with respect to the final decisions. In fact, the approach that is being taken with the Department of Education is that this opportunity must be available to all students. The schools are working together. They are working together with the families. They are working together with the graduation committees to resolve these issues going forward so that every student can participate

in a high school graduation that they have earned through their hard work and determination.

Question re: École Whitehorse Elementary School improvements

Mr. Kent: At 70 years old, École Whitehorse Elementary School, or EWES, is the oldest school in the Yukon. It has served many students well over the years, but it needs significant repair and/or replacement. In a seismic study from 2013, it was determined that the building would require \$6.6 million in upgrades to address a number of identified issues.

After attending the February school council meeting, I sent an e-mail to the minister on this topic, and in response to that e-mail, she mentioned that some work has been done, but structural seismic work related to the school would be addressed in renovation or replacement plans.

So, can the minister tell us how much of the original \$6.6 million still needs to be spent and if any money in this budget is earmarked for this work this year?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The École Whitehorse Elementary School is a priority for renovation and replacement in our capital plan for this year, has been last year, and going forward. The recognition, of course, is that Whitehorse Elementary School is the oldest school building — having been built in 1952 — and needs to have some modern approaches implemented. It currently presents some challenges — that being the building itself — to the learning situation, including things like mobile technology, for example.

I have been pleased to receive the letter from the member opposite to outline in that letter the determinations that will be made this year. It is in this year's capital budget for work to be done at Whitehorse Elementary School so that the life of that school can be extended to the point where a decision can be made going forward with respect to replacement schools for elementary schools in Whitehorse.

Mr. Kent: So, the minister spoke about challenges at the school, and one of those challenges is with respect to the design of the egress for the gym. Due to that, they are unable to hold assemblies that include the entire student body.

I have previously asked the minister about capital upgrades to the school in that e-mail, including additional washrooms and improvements to the gym egress, which would allow the school community to have an assembly that would include the entire student body. The minister mentioned — in that letter that she sent back to me — that these and other projects were at various stages of planning and development.

So, can the minister tell us if there is any money in this year's budget to address the two projects that I brought up — the washrooms and the gym egress?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: There is money in this year's budget. We recently had a meeting between the Department of Education and the Department of Highways and Public Works. We often have those meetings, but this was to talk about the particular projects here at the school — École Whitehorse Elementary School.

School capital projects, Mr. Speaker, are prioritized based on criteria such as building age and safety needs and, of course, programming requirements, which is one of the factors involving this school. We continue to plan for the enrolment trends for this program as well and we're working with École Whitehorse Elementary School Council and the community, as well as the French immersion community, to plan for short-, medium-, and long-term options for the school, some of which are accounted for in this year's budget.

Mr. Kent: I'm hoping that the minister, in her final response, will be able to confirm that it's the washrooms and the gym egress specifically that are two of the projects that they're looking at for Whitehorse Elementary this summer.

The budget documents tabled last week mentioned two projects that could apply to EWES, but unfortunately, it lacks specifics for us to be certain what they're about. The first is a Whitehorse school replacement in 2024-25, and the second is an elementary school expansion in that same year. The minister and her colleagues claim that their budget process would provide certainty to Yukoners; however, these vague references in the budget do anything but provide certainty, especially for the EWES community.

So, Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us if either of these budget line items is related to EWES? If so, which one?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I should note that, more than a year ago, I met with the school council for Whitehorse Elementary on the basis of starting these conversations and participating in them. We have on many occasions since that time spoken. We've asked the school council for their preferences going forward. That is presumably where — the list the member opposite emailed to me regarding the details of those priorities set for the school.

We're working with school communities for them to set the priorities and for them to tell us the most important projects that they have. We're working through the Department of Education with Highways and Public Works for the purposes of communicating that information and having those priorities set as a team as one government so that things are being accomplished.

We recently, for example, replaced the hockey arena at École Whitehorse Elementary School. The egress at the gymnasium and the potential for additional washrooms are two priorities that they have brought forward and that we accept as issues with respect to the concerns at that particular school. The work will continue.

We will try to set priorities working with our school communities so that individually they are participating in this decision-making.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of opposition private members' business

Mr. Kent: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, March 13, 2020. It is Motion No. 191, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge.

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, March 13, 2020. It is Motion No. 123, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, we often rely on scripts provided to us and I had some difficulty with dates. Just to confirm that my motion — and, I presume, the motion for the Third Party — will be called on Wednesday, March 11, 2020.

Ms. White: I thought I had caught it when I said "2020", but indeed, it is March 11, 2020.

Speaker: Both of these motions will be debated on Wednesday, March 11, 2020.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Unanimous consent to move without notice a motion to rescind an Order of the House

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I request the unanimous consent of the House to move, without notice, a motion to rescind the November 25, 2019 Order of the House adopting Motion No. 121 that provides for the House to stand adjourned from its rising on Thursday, March 12, 2020, until 1:00 p.m. on Monday, March 23, 2020.

Speaker: The Minister of Community Services has requested the unanimous consent of the House to move, without notice, a motion to rescind the November 25, 2019 Order of the House adopting Motion No. 121 that provides for the House to stand adjourned from its rising on Thursday, March 12, 2020, until 1:00 p.m. on Monday, March 23, 2020.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 194

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move:

THAT the November 25, 2019 Order of the House adopting Motion No. 121 that provides for the House to stand adjourned from its rising on Thursday, March 12, 2020, until 1:00 p.m. on Monday, March 23, 2020, be rescinded.

Speaker: It is moved by the Minister of Community Services:

THAT the November 25, 2019 Order of the House adopting Motion No. 121 that provides for the House to stand adjourned from its rising on Thursday, March 12, 2020, until 1:00 p.m. on Monday, March 23, 2020, be rescinded.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will just begin by saying that this past weekend and the cancellation of the Arctic Winter Games have been difficult on our athletes, on the sporting community, on all the organizers, on all the volunteers, on all the sponsors, and on all the folks here in this Legislature, here in the territory, and across the circumpolar north.

I wanted to just, first and foremost, to say thank you to everyone. It has been a tough thing for everyone to get through and to deal with, and I know that we will rally around our athletes. I know that all of us here in this Legislature continue to be supportive of our athletes and our organizers, our volunteers, all the sponsors — everybody. I appreciate that this has been a unanimous sentiment from this Legislature and I just want to thank all Yukoners for that sentiment.

I know that originally our notion was to provide time for all of us to volunteer and support the games. Now that the games are not happening, I think the best course of action is for us to continue doing our work here in the Legislative Assembly to represent our ridings and our communities. That is why I have presented this motion to us. I think that overall I still encourage all of us to continue to show our colours, to support and rally around our athletes, and to support those businesses that were sponsoring the games so that we can continue to support them.

I thank members for the opportunity to present this motion so that we can continue to work.

Mr. Kent: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While this is largely a procedural motion, the minister did outline why it has come to the floor of the House. Like him, I too would like to acknowledge and express the disappointment that many Yukoners and athletes from around the north feel with respect to the cancelling of the 2020 Arctic Winter Games — especially the volunteers, coaches, and athletes who were significantly vested in these games. We understand, of course, how difficult a decision it must have been, but it was a decision made for the health and safety of those involved with the games, and it was a decision made based on the best medical advice. So, we certainly appreciate that.

In rescinding the break for next week, we can hopefully get back to as normal as possible in the shortest time possible by continuing our deliberations in this Legislature on behalf of all Yukoners.

I thank the members opposite for bringing this forward and of course we will be supporting this motion.

Ms. White: The Yukon NDP echo the thoughts of our colleagues. We were also saddened to hear the news on Saturday with the cancellation of the Arctic Winter Games. I think about my nephews — one competing in snowboarding and one in archery. But I have to say that they are very proud to wear their outfits and I can only imagine what schools looked like on Monday. Regrettably, I'm not a teacher and I didn't get to see it.

Although we will be seeing people in their blue jackets — their white jackets for officials and the red jackets as participants — the hard decision was made and we appreciate how hard that decision must have been. We agree that we should go back to business as usual. We will be supporting this motion.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard on this motion?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I just want to echo a comment that I heard from the Member for Takhini-Kopper King. I do encourage all Yukoners who have received their jackets as athletes, volunteers, and officials that we do show our colours. I think it's great. I hope all Yukoners say hi and just cheer them on.

On the weekend, I got a note from a young constituent who was going to be competing. He expressed his concern, so I picked up the phone and I called him. I'm just going to read his note back to me.

"I would just like to thank you again for the call yesterday. I was pretty disappointed. I believe my first e-mail reflected that. However, you calling helped clear up any confusion and annoyance. Thank you for all the work you have put in, and again, thanks for calling. Also, if you have any pins that may go to waste, I could always have a place for them."

I will have some pins and I'll share them across with all members of the Legislature to share out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for everybody's indulgence on this.

Motion No. 194 agreed to

Speaker: Government bills.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 201: *Third Appropriation Act 2019-20 — Second Reading*

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 201, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 201, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2019-20*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 201, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2019-20*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am pleased to rise this afternoon to begin debate on Bill No. 201, *Third Appropriation Act 2019-20*. This *Supplementary Estimates No. 2* is an exercise in taking advantage of opportunities when they are present. Some of these are opportunities that have come about because of our strong relationship with other governments. Some of these opportunities are a result of a hot economy and a growing population that forces us — in a good way — to build for our future. Some of these opportunities are the result of hard work, projects going ahead of schedule, or the foresight to realize that more work needs to be done. Some of these opportunities are financial, as we are taking advantage of recoverable funding opportunities while we have the chance. Yukoners know that the Official Opposition has taken a different position — namely, that we shouldn't take advantage of this federal money on the table. Well, we disagree.

We are able to invest in a future for all Yukoners because, over the last three and a half years, we have done our planning and built a foundation. The small changes that we see before us are the results of opportunities, and changes come in many ways. For example, we are proud of the work that our

government is doing to promote media production in Yukon. These supplementary estimates include support for a 10th season of production of everyone's favourite television reality series, *Yukon Gold Rush*.

We want to ensure that we meet the needs of Yukon First Nation students and offer all students the opportunity to learn about Yukon First Nations' rich and diverse history, culture, languages, and ways of knowing, doing, and being. By working together, we have found opportunities to provide additional funding to support further collaboration with Yukon First Nations. This is through the joint education action plan and related community-level joint education priorities.

Overall, we are dealing with a responsible increase in spending as compared to the main estimates of 2019-20. The *Third Appropriation Act 2019-20, Supplementary Estimates No. 2* forecasts an increase of \$26.2 million in operation and maintenance growth spending, offset with an increase of \$12.7 million in recoveries.

Capital spending is forecast to be decreased by \$7.2 million, with a decrease of \$8.4 million in recoveries. Revenues are forecast to decrease by \$496,000 due to a slight decrease in Yukon tax and general revenues. These changes will result in a deficit of \$18.6 million, which reflects only a minor change overall. This is a result of a variety of factors including increased investment in infrastructure, tangible capital assets which result in a different accounting treatment, and differences to accounting adjustments.

This year-end net debt forecast is forecasted to be \$60.8 million. Overall, these changes show a government responding to the needs of a growing territory in areas of investment that are valued by Yukoners like health, education, and safety.

So, let's get into some of these details.

Overall, we are seeing an increase in *Supplementary Estimates No. 2* of \$26.2 million in O&M. Almost half of this is balanced by a matching increase in recoveries. The biggest single increase is from wildland fire suppression — \$4.5 million for a fire season that continued to burn as we prepared the fall supplementary estimates. That's extraordinary, Mr. Speaker. It was beyond all regular fire seasons' expectations for size, location, complexity, and, of course, length. Ensuring the safety of Yukoners is essential and is something that comes at a cost.

There are also significant increases to Health and Social Services of \$12.8 million. This funding is across numerous programs and much of it is recoverable through funding agreements.

That money goes to things like Whitehorse Emergency Shelter to support expanding services. Over the past year, the shelter has provided much-needed supports for our most vulnerable citizens. It has also helped give our citizens a sense of belonging.

Also, to support First Nation children and family programs through the child and family services protection and enhancement initiatives as promised, \$2.2 million has been added this year to ensure that Yukoners have an expanded orthopaedic program at Whitehorse General Hospital. This

includes consultations, treatments, and surgeries at Whitehorse General Hospital as we add an additional surgeon and staff required to operate this program, including nurses and physiotherapists. This made-in-Yukon approach leverages local supports and improves accessibility and continuity of care.

Surgeries that previously went out-of-territory now get to stay home. Data from 2019 to date show that 150 surgeries that previously would have been done in hospitals outside of Yukon were done here at home, which represents a significant savings in avoided medical travel and medevacs.

Another significant change is \$3.6 million for Energy, Mines and Resources. This is an opportunity to do work that is mostly recoverable as well. Additional funding includes construction to support mining activities and revised workplans for assessment and abandonment and energy projects. Recycling is getting increasingly expensive and we have to put an additional \$250,000 into the recycling fund. We are also committing to improving the system for waste, decreasing our reliance on single-use products, and working with our partners to have Yukoners rethink their consumption practices.

We are proud that some of our other commitments have come to fruition after a lot of hard work. We have heard from Yukoners that these are important initiatives that we want to get off the ground now. Programs like the sexualized assault response team — this is delivering integrated linked services focused on victim needs and choices. It ensures consistent and coordinated support for victims by providing high quality and timely responses and services to ensure that they get the care that they need.

Yukon played a key role during the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Now that this commission has issued its calls for justice, we are responding in a manner that changes the story for indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited Yukoners and their families. We are working in partnership with the Yukon Advisory Committee to develop a Yukon-wide strategy that addresses the calls for justice in our territory.

As mentioned, we have increased recoveries to the tune of \$12.7 million. This is an example of maximizing every dollar we can that is coming from federal and other funds. The biggest increase in recoveries are in Health and Social Services and Energy, Mines and Resources. Health recoveries are increasing, thanks to the territorial health investment funding and Family and Children Enhancement Services and prevention initiative funding as well.

EMR recoveries are increasing due to environmental assessment and work on abandoned mines, including wells and former placer claims.

Other departments are also seeing increases in recoveries, like funding from Public Safety Canada for the national crime prevention strategy, also the family information liaison unit for Justice, Peel land use planning, and — last but not least — habitat stewardship programs.

There are fewer changes to capital than we saw in O&M. Overall, the change is a decrease of \$7.2 million. The bulk of

that is in Community Services and the Yukon Development Corporation.

Land development was delayed and therefore reduced by the early onset of winter.

There is a nearly \$4-million reduction in capital appropriations due to a delay in approval for the arctic energy fund project and that work is still coming.

We did see some small increases in capital worth mentioning. The biggest is for finishing for the French language secondary school. This is a great example of an opportunity to push forward when we are ready so that we can expect changes like this in the grand scheme of things of getting work done.

Other capital increases include a Family and Children's Services case management system.

There is also spending on the Peel land use plan implementation. Earlier this year, we worked with First Nations to celebrate the completion of the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan*. Now, with the support from the federal government, we can designate and create management plans, help establish national historic sites, and designate off-road vehicle management areas.

Also, working on the permit hunt authorization system, boat launch and dock repairs, and a national disaster mitigation program — much of this work being recoverable. These are things that Yukoners value — making lives better for Yukon families, protecting the Peel, being out on the land, enjoying our waterways, and ensuring that we can continue to do the things that we enjoy for years to come.

In terms of capital recoveries, Mr. Speaker, we are seeking a decrease of \$8.45 million, not so dissimilar from the decrease in capital spending.

Just as some projects progress at a faster pace, it is not uncommon for projects to run into delays — shifting expectations. Delayed work means delaying funding returning to the territory for that work. It is important to note that delays do not mean cancelled projects. Sometimes the resources — human or physical — are not available on our timelines, so timelines change; so recoveries change.

As mentioned, we have a delay in the Arctic energy fund project that is still in the scoping stage. Some projects require additional planning and scoping, such as the Ross River school remediation and the Old Crow health centre.

Lastly, there are minor changes to revenue in this supplementary estimate.

We are forecasting revenues to decrease by \$496,000. Forecasts for sales of land were down; however, that is a delay rather than an actual decline. As spring comes around, that inevitability and availability will ramp up again. But we also saw an increase in corporate income tax, a reflection of our strong economy in the past few years.

Mr. Speaker, this second supplementary of 2019-20 is an example of our government ensuring that Yukoners have what they need. There are great opportunities available for us right now. We are moving forward on projects where we have momentum.

Mr. Cathers: In rising to speak to this as the Official Opposition Finance critic, I do have to note that, while of course we do support some of the projects contained within this *Third Appropriation Act 2019-20*, as with any of the budgets presented by this government, we do overall have concerns with the decisions made by the government, particularly in the case of their habit of spending beyond the territory's means.

I note that this revised appropriation act still shows the Yukon with some \$60 million in net debt, as the Premier noted. That is due to choices made by this Liberal government. I would point out that spending into the red and depleting the financial resources of Yukoners and future Yukon generations is happening at a time when the federal revenues have never been higher.

We have seen significant increases in the federal transfer payments in the past two fiscal years. The growth of that transfer payment over the previous year is \$58.3 million in the upcoming fiscal year and \$53.4 million in the fiscal year just ending. So just to clarify that for — to phrase that slightly differently, in case my explanation was unclear — the change between 2018-19 and 2019-20 was a \$53.4 million increase in the federal transfer, and the change between the federal transfer in 2020-21 is \$58.3 million.

So, in total, if you look at the numbers for a population of a territory of roughly 40,000 people, you're seeing an increase in federal funding in just a single year of over \$1,000 per person. You're also seeing a total in the last two years — the increase alone to the federal transfer is \$111.7 million. Taking a look at that and looking then at the actual spending by this Liberal government as estimated in *Supplementary Estimates No. 2* — also known as the *Third Appropriation Act 2019-20*, which we're currently debating — the expenses, as shown on page S-3, that the government is expecting to spend for the current fiscal year do come down to over \$36,000 per person based on a population of 40,000 people. So, the rate of spending in comparison to other jurisdictions is quite high.

We have gone through in the past, and we will outline in the future, some of the more obvious wasteful decisions made by this Liberal government, but I want to also point to the fact that, while they're wasting money in some areas, there are other areas that we've seen government consistently underestimate and underfund in their main budget for the year. That causes us to wonder, with the 2020-21 main estimates — we question the government's claim that they will be in surplus at the end of the year because of what we've seen in the *Third Appropriation Act 2019-20* and in previous years.

Mr. Speaker, this includes the fact that we've seen, for three years in a row, where government has in its main estimates significantly underestimated the cost of social assistance payments. In the *Third Appropriation Act 2019-20*, we see the adjustment to that totalling some \$1.5 million in adjustments that they did not previously provide funding for and which I do question whether this was in fact simply just a choice to make the budget look rosier when presented in the spring.

We've also seen — there has been substantial debate in this Legislative Assembly about the government not providing

adequate funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation. My colleague, the Member for Watson Lake and our Official Opposition Health critic, and I in the fall asked questions about this. Our questions were dismissed by both the Health minister and the Premier.

When our health critic, during the appearance of the Yukon Hospital Corporation witnesses in November, noted the fact that we were told by department officials in spring budget briefings last year that \$2.8 million that had been requested by the hospital for the previous fiscal year wasn't provided by government until the start of the next fiscal year — a \$2.8-million shortfall for the hospital matters, Mr. Speaker. Those numbers were recognized by witnesses when they appeared, and they also informed us of the fact that — the CEO of the Hospital Corporation told us in the fall that the hospital was still waiting on some of its core funding for this fiscal year and told us that they would only have a balanced budget for 2019-20 if a pending decision by government on — quote — “core funding” was approved. He also said — and I quote: “We had set a budget early in the year, and we are right now looking to make sure that core funding has been established in its entirety.”

In the fall, I criticized the government's decision for, eight months into the fiscal year, the fact that the hospital was still waiting for millions of dollars in core funding for the current year. The Premier dismissed both me and my colleague, our critic for Health and Social Services, and in fact made the suggestion on November 25 that government “... has decided the budgetary process is so important that it needs to be done sooner, not later.” He made that statement on page 836 of Hansard. In fact, Mr. Speaker, what we have seen confirmed in the information provided by department officials with this briefing is that the hospital is waiting in what is now the 12th month of the fiscal year. The hospital is finally now about to receive \$4.6 million in funding that it needed. I will quote from the information given to us by officials for that \$4.6 million for Yukon hospital services. I quote directly from the document: “Yukon Hospital Corporation — Funding for various areas, mainly to address funding shortfalls.” Mr. Speaker, that is quite simply unacceptable.

Adding up the underbudgeting for social assistance and for the Hospital Corporation, it seems that, in fiscal year 2019-20, the government's budget understated by \$6 million, just for those two areas, the amount of money that they should have known would be required by the hospital and by social assistance. It causes us to question the numbers for the next fiscal year and, in fact, even causes me to question the numbers in this *Third Appropriation Act 2019-20* — because, for all we know, since it is based only on month seven of a fiscal year — just past the halfway mark of the fiscal year — we may see additional appropriations brought forward in the fall or adjustments may occur when we finally see the Public Accounts for the 2019-20 fiscal year.

I would also note that the Liberal government, after bragging in the fall about the decision to increase capital funding and our concerns about the apparent connection to the federal election campaign, we see in the *Third Appropriation*

Act 2019-20 that they have actually lapsed a significant amount of capital that they were expecting to spend. According to the line item, the total sums required or not required on page 4 of the *Third Appropriation Act 2019-20*, the amount appears to be \$10.4 million in funding that is being lapsed.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I do want to mention as well — in noting that the \$26.2 million the Premier referenced in spending and the capital funding that has been lapsed and has gone into what the Deputy Premier likes to call his “didn't-get-'er done” pile, we are concerned overall about the direction and the decisions being made by the elected leadership of this government. I do want to also clarify and remind officials that when we do criticize the decisions that are made, including the accounting choices, that I and the Official Opposition recognize that ultimately those decisions are made by Cabinet. Officials, while providing their best advice to the elected leadership — ultimately, the decisions are the responsibility of the ministers and the Premier and Cabinet collectively.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to spend too much more time here on debate on the *Third Appropriation Act 2019-20*, while just noting those concerns. I should also mention, with regard to the funding for the Hospital Corporation, that the additional funding for the orthopaedics program that was included in that \$4.6 million — I believe that this is a good program. I am pleased to see the expansion of the orthopaedic program. But the fact is that, based on the information provided to us, the doctor who is providing those services and presumably the associated nursing staff began work in September of 2019. It does beg the question as to why funding for that was not included either in the main estimates last year or in the supplementary budget the government brought forward in the fall of last year. Instead, it is folded into this \$4.6 million in funding that the hospital required for the current fiscal year and are only getting finally — or are about to get — in what is the 12th month of the fiscal year.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will wrap up my remarks and look forward to Committee of the Whole.

Ms. Hanson: I rise to speak to the third appropriation and *Supplementary Estimates No. 2*. I'm not going to speak to the details of what is contained in the supplementary budget. I do want to speak, however, to the process.

We are looking at the second supplementary budget where there are 13 departments and agencies represented here. The first supplementary budget that was discussed last fall had two. I think we all recall — with some chagrin — the amount of time that was wasted last fall because of a refusal of the Minister of Finance to actually engage in a discussion about other departments and getting actually to a discussion on some of the trends — some of the issues that might be arising that might be leading to some of the issues that we're now seeing reflected in the supplementary budget before us today.

That's part of the issue with respect to the whole issue of accountability, transparency, and accuracy. Mr. Speaker, four years ago, when we saw the first budget from this government — and if we look back at the budget speech and the throne speech of the day, there were great claims about how we were

going to do things differently — this government was. It was going to share information with all Members of this Legislative Assembly. It was going to ensure that information was accurate, up to date, and accessible.

Today, the Leader of the New Democratic Party, in response to queries that we raised during the briefing of the supplementary budget last week, received a letter from the Minister of Finance. It says — kind of patronizing, in my voice — it says, “Thank you for your letter expressing concern over the lack of supplementary information for the 2020-21 main estimates” — and also going on to talk about the supplementary estimates and concerns that we have raised. I’m told in briefings this morning, Mr. Speaker, that it’s the direction of Management Board — that the information that we have seen provided to members of this Legislative Assembly — upon which we are supposed to assess and determine whether or not what is put forward is accurate adequately reflects the situation on the ground.

I am told that it is a decision that has been taken — not to provide that information. I defy members opposite to go back and look — even last year, for goodness’ sake — at the information that was provided to members on the opposition side to support understanding the massive tome that’s placed before all members of this House in terms of the budget. There is no substantiating information there.

Mr. Speaker, both with respect to the supplementary budget that we’re speaking about today and the main estimates, there is no information on the website. Now, I’ve been told repeatedly by the Minister of Finance for this government that this was happening. It’s not there. So, absent that, we’re left, as elected members charged with holding this government to account — because that’s what our job is, and even the backbenchers who sit there — that’s their job as well, and they have no information.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I look at the information that’s provided to members of the opposition with respect to the supplementary budget as prepared, I would ask you to look at, across the 13 departments and agencies, the information that was provided to members of the opposition and see how you find a consistent narrative, objectives, and assessed outcome. How do you know whether or not — I mean, some of them are laughable in terms of even figuring out what is intended here. We’ll get into details about that. Some of them don’t even express what they are doing. My note in the margin of one of these is: “A transfer from what to what?” No information provided as to what the original budget amount was in terms of the supplementary information provided.

You know, Mr. Speaker, our job should not be to guess what activities government departments and agencies are performing on behalf of all Yukoners. That should be something that the government should be proudly saying, and saying, “This is how we’re doing it and this is how we’re measuring our performance.”

You know, Mr. Speaker, performance measurement — for the Premier to stand there and say that the performance plan indicates performance — I defy him. I asked the question this

morning, because he referred to the “acute processing unit”, but it is the “arrest processing unit”.

The arrest processing unit — which, as you will recall, was put in place contrary to the recommendations of the Beaton and Allen report — was put in place at part of the jail in response to the severely intoxicated persons at risk group.

So, I asked the question. Great — we have this APU, and the Premier says that, in the performance plan — and cites it in the budget speech — there is a reduction in the number of people going through the APU. So, I say, “Great — where are the stats?” We don’t keep those; we have no idea.

So, where is that coming from? It sounds good. We would like to feel that it is going down — same with the ER.

It is problematic for this government to keep referring to the ER. Last year, it was a 60-percent reduction in costs around ER. We could never get an answer to the question about a 60-percent reduction of what, and now we are told that visits to the ER are decreasing. Decreasing from what to what — what are we measuring? If you can’t tell us what you are measuring, how do you know you are being successful? We are not talking peanuts here.

When I raise these questions — and we will go back into each of these areas, but it is about accountability. It is about being transparent about the source of information. It is about being able to say, with clarity, what is being done with the fiscal resources that the Yukon government is charged with stewarding on behalf of all Yukon citizens. Again, that is our job, to hold this government to account, but we cannot do it if the government refuses to share the information about programs, program expectations, program deliverables, simple data and statistics — all of which used to be part of the budget documentation and which is missing — gone by directive.

So, Mr. Speaker, we look forward, unfortunately, to trying to guess, again — because, again, when I go to the websites — supposedly yukon.ca — I am really tired of asking the Department of Justice or the Department of Community Services, and I get, “Oh, you want to get a licence?” No, I don’t. I want to know what the Department of Justice is doing. What are its various branches doing? How are they organized, how are they organized to achieve the objectives of spending the money that is apportioned to them, and how do they measure success? Mr. Speaker, I defy you or any other member of this Legislative Assembly to find that in any publicly accessible document.

It is unfortunate. Every other government has that kind of information. I said this at the briefing to the officials, Mr. Speaker. You know, we get the big parts in the federal system — that would be in the mains. We don’t have the third part of the mains here in terms of any data. When are we going to get it? Are we now punting this forward to some future government because we can’t get our act together after four budgets?

It really dismays me to be told that it is Management Board’s decision not to provide that supplementary budget information. It is simple statistics. It would be fine if we had the army of public servants that the Minister of Finance and each of the ministers here have to back them up as they come

in for briefings. On the opposition side, we are one or two people. We do it ourselves, Mr. Speaker.

If I sound frustrated, it's because I am. I take seriously my job to try to represent citizens of this territory in understanding. I am not unfamiliar with budgetary processes, Mr. Speaker. I spent many years, not just the 10 in this Legislative Assembly, intimately involved with the budgetary processes of other governments. When I can't find the basic information to satisfy the basic questions of accountability, I am deeply concerned.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate on second reading of Bill No. 201.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues across the way for their comments. I will answer some of the comments from the opposition, and then we will move on with other business for today.

I will start with the Member for Lake Laberge talking about spending beyond our means. Mr. Speaker, it's hard to know which way that narrative goes, depending on what day or what file the member opposite is speaking to. We are presenting a budget currently, this year, in the 2020-21 fiscal year with a surplus. We did that through sound financial management.

Our ability to get capital projects out the door and actually accomplishing what we said we would do, by proof of the Public Accounts as compared to our main estimates — which, again, the opposition used as an accounting flexibility mechanism when they would announce massive amounts of spending on capital projects and then never get even close to those numbers. We are.

I know it is a little bit confusing to see that these numbers come out and we actually accomplish those numbers, but to say that we are spending beyond our means but yet we're putting out a balanced budget — it's an interesting narrative — with an unprecedented increase actually of capital assets to help Yukoners and to help Yukon businesses in a year where we're being told by the opposition that we need to make sure that we help the businesses of Yukon. There is an increase in transfers — yes, absolutely. Does the Yukon Party believe that is a bad thing? Well, they do now. They sure as heck didn't when they were in government, as we saw a very similar trend — every year, an increase in those federal transfers. But now those are bad.

They are asking us on the one hand for stimulus spending when it comes to COVID-19, but we are also spending too much money — and it's hard to know where the opposition stands on this. The Hospital Corporation again — four years in a row of increased funding to the Hospital Corporation and we're spending too much money, but here, we need to spend more money. Okay, I'm just trying to keep up.

Expanding capital —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Member for Lake Laberge, on a point of order.

Mr. Cathers: In addition to the Premier seeming to be close to imputing unavowed motives to another member or perhaps across that line pursuant to Standing Order 19(g), if the Premier had been listening for the last three years, I have been pointing out to him that the government is not providing adequate funding for the Hospital Corporation, but apparently he has an interesting narrative today.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: What I've heard so far — I'll continue to listen closely — is that really it's just a matter of debate between members and these are differing narratives. But I will continue to listen closely if I hear any areas of concern.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Where was I?

Expanding capital monies — maybe the member opposite has another point of order. He seems to be a little perturbed from your ruling there, Mr. Speaker.

Expanding capital monies — again, as mentioned in my intro, because — not expanding; sorry, lapsing capital monies — we did explain to the member opposite; maybe he wasn't listening — that again, this doesn't mean cancelled projects. A government — whether it's our government or their government — can't control Mother Nature and we did have an early winter. As such, projects are delayed.

The narrative from the members opposite would have you believe otherwise. I think that was about all I got out of the member opposite from his response to the second supplementary.

I will turn now to the NDP. Again, it definitely sounds frustrated. It sounds like a lecture. It is interesting. I will start with this concept of somehow wasting time in a budget supplementary last time when we had two departments to debate. Yet, the opposition didn't want to debate that budget. They wanted to debate all things government, all things political, and all things Yukon. What did we do, Mr. Speaker? We said "Okay." So I sat here for days upon end answering all the questions the members opposite would ask me to answer. I delivered on that, but now that's a waste of time. Well, that's interesting, Mr. Speaker.

Again, in parliamentary procedures across not only Yukon but in parliamentary situations right across the world, when we debate budgets, we should be debating budgets. What did we do? We accommodated the opposition and had general debate on everything under the sun. We are happy to do so, yet that was a waste of time, according to the opposition.

The former Leader of the NDP somehow got out of the letter — which was responded to extremely quickly — that it was somehow patronizing. I take huge —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: — as the member opposite tried to explain this to me, Mr. Speaker — thank you very much. I am not happy with her interpretation of our response. Basically, we had a letter come in from the opposition a few days ago.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order. The Premier has the floor. Order.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, we received a letter from the opposition a few days ago. Now, whether or not you get a letter based on budgetary considerations or issues of concerns in rural communities — I don't see a four-day turnaround as patronizing. I see that as a very quick response by a dedicated team in the department. But I will let the department know — those who helped to draft this letter — that the member opposite thinks that they and I are patronizing.

Also in this letter — and I will read the response — not only did we address the concern, we also took into consideration the suggestions from the opposition and made good on them.

I will read directly from the letter: "Thank you for your March 5, 2020 letter expressing concern about the lack of supplementary information in the 2020-21 Main Estimates.

"As we move forward, the government is looking at other opportunities to supply statistical information, including on the recently established Open Data portal or at other sites on Yukon.ca.

"Also, the Executive Council Office continues to coordinate the development of department strategic business plans that will outline department outcomes and performance measures.

"Nevertheless, I understand that the supplementary information is useful to you and other groups/citizens to assess government spending. I have directed the Department of Finance to continue to gather the information that was provided last year and to make it available on the budget website.

"In addition, I would direct your attention to the Government of Yukon's updated Performance Plan. This document contains indicators on how the government is tracking and whether it is succeeding at achieving its priorities."

There is a website there, Mr. Speaker.

"Should you wish additional information I encourage you and your colleagues to reach out to the Ministers responsible for specific departments."

I don't see one patronizing word in this whole letter, Mr. Speaker, and I will follow that up with the conversation that we had with Finance just today. Not only do we have the fiscal and economic update that is now attached to the budget every year, which was never done before — so more information — and not only do we have the performance plans every year — which was never done before and which is over 80 pages of information — not in the past where the Yukon Party would brag about things that were happening; it's more about an indication of where we are as a society compared to other standards right across the world. It's not all good news, Mr. Speaker. It's a measure of where we need to be and what we are going to do so that Yukoners know exactly how we are going to move forward — more information. On top of that — what I hear in this letter and what was confirmed in my meeting with Finance is that we still want to do more with the statistical information that the members opposite speak of. So, we will work on making sure that it is provided as well.

Again, I think that, in the past, the statistical information that the member opposite is looking for with the supplementary

information, which she obviously doesn't want to hear about because she is continuing to talk off-mic as I try to explain — and we will hear later on in the week, "You didn't answer the questions." Well, okay.

Again, in the past with the Yukon Party, not all departments provided that information. They didn't. It was a trend that certain departments would and certain departments wouldn't. What are we doing as the Yukon Liberal government? We are looking into this, and we will make more information available statistically. That's what I see in this letter.

Now, the member opposite can say that this is patronizing by us working with them, listening to what they are actually saying, and actually working on it in an expeditious fashion. I don't see that as being in any way patronizing.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite doesn't think the performance measures are a measure of performance — that the performance plans are a measure of performance. Mr. Speaker, we didn't invent these performance plans. This is out of a major university in Canada — an index of well-being. That is not something that the member opposite can basically say, "Well, I don't enjoy these ones and I liked the way I got my information before." Well, we're giving more information now and we're making good on the statistical information as well that the opposition seems to believe is no longer available.

Again, for the Finance department to say, "Well, we are not tracking that information" — that doesn't mean the government's not tracking that information, yet the members opposite would make you believe that's what was being relayed to them today in the briefings.

I really, again, question the member opposite when that is what she brings to the table here when we're debating this.

So, in addition to the more information that we are providing on an annual basis, we've endeavoured, through a letter that we responded to in five days, that we will do more when it comes to the specific information about missing supplementary information on the operation and maintenance and capital estimates. We will also endeavour to, on an annual basis during the budgetary process, do better for those statistical purposes, working with the department, working with the board of statistics, and give even more information.

I thank the members opposite for their concerns and I will pass on to the department the comments about us and them being patronizing.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Ms. Hanson: Disagree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker. The results are nine yea, eight nay.

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

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 201 agreed to

Bill No. 202: Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2020-21 — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 202, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 202, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2020-21*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 202, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2020-21*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: It is nice to know that we're naming bills after bars. I want to thank you, and I do rise to speak in support of Bill No. 202, otherwise known as the *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2020-21*. If this is passed, this bill will provide authority for the first two months of the fiscal year. This will ensure that Yukoners will continue to receive the services that they expect and rely on until the full budget can be debated and passed in the Legislature.

The total value of the *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2020-21* is approximately \$338.3 million. Now, this includes \$271.3 million in operation and maintenance spending, and there is approximately \$67 million in capital spending. Our government's main estimates for 2020-21 continue to take Yukon on a path of fiscal responsibility. It shows commitment to making evidence-based decisions and a reasoned approach to managing government dollars. This interim supply bill follows in these footsteps with the same analytical rationale. The intention is to fund operation and maintenance and capital spending for up to two months of the fiscal year.

In general, this covers cash-flow requirements for one-sixth of personnel and non-personnel costs for the entire year. This coverage maintains service continuity for everything from health care to schools to environment, environmental protection, and services in the communities.

However, it's important to recognize that amounts are, in some areas, more than one-sixth of the total funding outlined in the main estimates. Cash-flow requirements can vary for both

operation and maintenance and capital spending. There are some commitments that require quarterly payments as well.

As we head into the busy construction season, we need to satisfy the businesses — the building contractors, for example — and there are annual grants that are paid out on April 1. This includes municipal grants being approved by the Legislature as part of this interim supply bill.

So, while some of the numbers reflect more than one-sixth of the government's budget, I will explain in further detail during Committee of the Whole how those figures are determined. Because this isn't just about one-sixth of the year, it's about all projects and operations that require payment at the start of the fiscal year. We expect the *First Appropriation Act 2020-21* to receive assent by the end of the session, which will provide spending authority for the full year.

Mr. Cathers: In rising to speak as the Official Opposition Finance critic, I would note that, while we don't disagree that there should be an interim supply appropriation act, we do again, as with the government's budgets and the *Third Appropriation Act 2019-2020*, have concerns with a number of their spending decisions and, as the Member for Whitehorse Centre pointed out, the lack of information. In being asked to support the *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2020-21*, we see a total amount of \$338 million, and we don't really know what that's for. There's a very general high-level explanation, but as the Premier used to say when he was the lone member of the Third Party, the devil is in the details, and we don't have the details.

I would just note as well that I echo the general concerns raised by the Member for Whitehorse Centre about the fact that consistently less and less information is being provided with budgets by this government. That does make it difficult to know what we are being asked to vote on. Despite promises made by the Premier about being more open and more accountable, we have seen, in fact, that this government is providing less information with the budget and has stripped the budget highlights down from 11 pages to a mere four — that is just one example of the information that has been removed — and, of course, removed the statistical information and other details, as noted by my colleague from the Third Party. We know that those decisions are the responsibility of the Premier and Cabinet. We have been told that those decisions were made at the direction of Management Board. Of course, ultimately, the content of any budget is subject to the approval and decision-making of the Premier and Cabinet.

The Liberal government, under the direction of the Premier, has chosen to be less open and more secretive. This begins, of course, in following the way they began their time in office, by approving almost a half a billion dollars in two special warrants without providing a detailed explanation to the public about what the Liberals were doing with their money.

With that, Mr. Speaker, since there really is very little information to talk about in the *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2020-21*, I will not be able to talk about the details further. I am sure the government will, of course, push this through with its majority, but we do not intend to support the *Interim Supply*

Appropriation Act 2020-21 because we have simply not been provided with enough details to give us the ability to support it moving forward.

Ms. Hanson: It's our understanding on this side of the House that the process of voting on an interim supply bill is pro forma — standard procedure. Notwithstanding that, I do take some concern or express some concern at the Minister of Finance's assertion that this has been prepared with the same analytical and background or even presented with both the budget and the supplementary estimates. We will have an opportunity to debate that on the whole of the budget. We understand that, pending the support or lack of — indication of the support or lack of from this House for the overall budget — the business of the day has to proceed and so we won't stand in the way of that. But we will register very strongly again and at every opportunity that we have the right to have the right information at the right time and that it should be accurate and detailed.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard on second reading of Bill No. 202?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will be very brief. Thank you to the members opposite for their comments on the interim supply bill. I agree with the Member for Whitehorse Centre that the lights need to be staying on and the interim supply needs to move forward.

I would assume, based upon my experience in opposition compared to being in government, that the process of briefings was supplied to the opposition. To address the concerns for the Member for Lake Laberge, again, what I will do is I will go back and take a look to see if there were any questions not answered during that briefing — to see how much time the member opposite spent asking questions on the particulars of this budget for which he is so concerned about not having that information.

I believe that those briefings are a good opportunity to expand upon the numbers like the number mentioned — the \$338.3 million that was mentioned in reference. There is also an opportunity during Committee of the Whole debate to expand even further from those. I will take a look to see which questions the Yukon Party did ask on the interim supply bill, if at any point in time, any of those questions were not answered by our department, then I will apologize in advance. But I will have to check into that first and foremost.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: With a prejudice, agree.

Speaker: I'm sorry, I didn't hear the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 11 yea, six nay.

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

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 202 agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: 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

Deputy Chair (Mr. Adel): I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 201, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2019-20*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 201: *Third Appropriation Act 2019-20*

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 201, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2019-20*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am pleased to be here and rise today to speak to and begin debate on the *Third Appropriation Act*

2019-20. I would like to welcome to the Legislative Assembly former Deputy Minister Chris Mahar. Sadly — well, joyfully, I am going to be enjoying today and some other days with Chris beside me here for debate. It's definitely not her first. Over the years, she has been amazing in providing me with information that I need and that guidance that I so enjoy and thoroughly am grateful for. She will definitely be missed. I am putting bets out, Mr. Deputy Chair, that she is not going far. I know everyone listening in at Finance is supportive of that. She will probably get bored in retirement, and we are all hoping that this actually happens, but not until after she gets some much-needed downtime with her husband, who also is enjoying retirement — kind of.

Mr. Deputy Chair, I am very pleased to rise today to speak to this bill. Bill No. 201 is the second supplementary estimate for the past fiscal year. I do not say this about a lot of supplementary estimates, but this one is pretty exciting. While still fiscally responsible, we are taking advantage of opportunities that will help Yukoners now and into the future. These opportunities come from various angles. They come from the relationships that we have built, such as our work with First Nations and other governments. They come from our thriving economy, growing population, and the need to ensure that we can have homes and established businesses. These opportunities come from the hard work of Yukoners as we push forward with projects that are ahead of schedule or take more time on others that need more planning. They come from recoverable funding opportunities and take advantage of money while it is available.

Over the last three-and-a-half years, we have done our planning and laid a foundation on which to build for the future for all Yukoners, and we are extremely proud of that. Now, looking at our future through the lens of opportunity, we can see where we want to go. These supplementary estimates show direction and our ability to change as priorities shift. Overall, these changes show a government responding to the needs of a growing territory in areas of investment that are valued by Yukoners, like health, education, and safety. This is an increase in spending to the 2019-20 main estimates and is an additional increase over *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*.

The 2019-20 *Supplementary Estimates No. 2* forecasts an increase of \$26.2 million in operation and maintenance. However, this is offset with an increase of \$12.7 million in recoveries.

Capital spending is forecast to decrease by \$7.2 million. As well, capital recoveries are also set to decrease by \$8.4 million. Revenues are expected to be down by just under a half-million dollars. This is attributable to a slight decrease in Yukon tax and general revenues. These changes are forecast to result in a deficit of \$18.6 million for the 2019-20 budget year.

Overall, this is only a minor change and a result of a variety of factors, including increased investment in infrastructure, tangible capital assets — which result in different accounting treatments — and differences to accounting adjustments.

The net debt forecast for the end of the year is \$60.8 million. This reflects the adjustment for 2018-19 Public Accounts based on actual performance.

While those are overall numbers, I will get into some more of the details, but, Mr. Speaker, to allow ministers a chance to speak about their department budgets, I will only speak to the overall spending here.

We look forward to moving into departmental debate on this spending so that the members opposite can have their specific questions comprehensively answered there.

In *Supplementary Estimates No. 2*, we are forecasting an increase of \$26.2 million in operation and maintenance. That number is offset by \$12.7 million in recoveries. The largest departmental increase is for Health and Social Services — \$12.8 million — to help support essential services that help Yukoners. This funding ensures the delivery of numerous programs around the territory, and much is recoverable through the funding agreements. This forecasted increase provides supports for our vulnerable citizens through the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. It provides support to expand the orthopaedic program at Whitehorse General Hospital, keeping Yukoners in the Yukon for procedures that historically involved medical travel.

The biggest single increase in *Supplementary Estimates No. 2* is for wildland fire. Last year's fire season was still ongoing as we prepared the first supplementary estimates. Size, location, complexity, and length of the fire season were all beyond average expectations. So, another \$4.5 million on top of what was allocated in the first supplementary estimates is considerable, but ensuring the safety of Yukoners is undeniably important to all of us.

We have also heard how important it is to support mining activity but also address abandoned mine sites in the territory. The amount of \$3.66 million for Energy, Mines and Resources does just that. Shifting timelines has shifted some priorities, but this additional funding supports mining and energy projects and revised workplans for assessment and abandonment.

While I will let departments get into the specifics of smaller decreases in these supplementary estimates, I think it's important for us to see the breadth of priorities that we have moving forward: more money for an increasingly expensive recycling program, for example; consistent and coordinated support for victims through the sexualized assault response team; enhanced collaboration with First Nations to improve educational outcomes for Yukon students; working to develop a Yukon-wide strategy addressing the calls for justice following the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls; and protecting species at risk through a habitat stewardship program. These programs have impacted the lives of Yukoners and the future of this territory.

One way to ensure that we have the money to pay for the services Yukoners expect is to maximize available funding from the federal government and other sources. In *Supplementary Estimates No. 2*, we have increased forecasted recoveries by \$12.7 million. We see those increases in Health and Social Services and in Energy, Mines and Resources. Both, as mentioned, have spending increases of their own in these estimates. That spending takes advantage, in many ways, of recoverable funding.

Health recoveries are from the territorial health investment fund, or THIF, from family and children prevention and enhancement initiatives funding and from various other recoveries.

Energy, Mines and Resources recoveries are set to increase from environmental and assessment work on abandoned mines, including wells and former placer claims.

Other recoveries are across a variety of departments for things like Public Safety Canada, a national crime prevention strategy, a family information liaison unit for Justice, and Peel land use planning and habitat stewardship programs in Environment. I also want to stress that these are just a few of the areas in which we are taking advantage of recovering costs. I encourage these to be celebrated when departments present their supplementary estimates.

The changes to capital estimates are less than what we saw in O&M. The bulk of the decrease of \$7.2 million is in Community Services and in the Yukon Development Corporation. The early onset of winter meant that land development was delayed and therefore reduced. There was also a decrease of \$4 million for delayed Arctic energy fund projects. Thankfully, these projects will still become available in the spring, and delayed projects will still proceed. Some of our projects are proceeding at such a rate that we will have small increases in capital. The biggest is finishing the French language secondary school, which we anticipate completing before winter of 2020-21. The completion of this project is a great example of how good planning and momentum creates opportunities to push forward.

Moving forward on other projects has led to small capital increases, increases that directly speak to the values of Yukoners — increases for a Family and Children's Services case management system, Peel land use plan implementation, work on the permanent hunt authorization system, boat launch and dock repairs, and a national disaster mitigation program. These are things that speak to our values as Yukoners, as families, and as people who want to protect the Peel and who enjoy the outdoors and our waterways. We want to ensure that these are things we can do now and into the future. These are opportunities to take advantage of, as much of this work is recoverable.

Speaking of recoveries, there is a forecast decrease of \$8.45 million. Unsurprisingly, this lines up pretty close with the decrease in capital estimates. As many of our projects take advantage of recoverable funds, delays turn into delayed recoveries, but it is important to note that not all delays are bad news stories. In fact, it is quite the opposite. As a small but relatively remote jurisdiction, sometimes resources are not available on planned timelines or, for best possible outcomes, additional scoping should occur before a project moves forward. That is what is happening with the Ross River School remediation and the Old Crow health centre.

We also need to make sure that we have it right, like in the case of the slowdown on Gateway construction as we continue negotiations with our First Nation partners. Change happens. Part of being fiscally responsible means being responsive to

changing conditions, but we are committed to pushing forward this coming year.

Mr. Deputy Chair, we are also only seeing minor changes to revenue in the supplementary estimates. A forecasted revenue decrease of \$496,000 is mostly attributable to the expected sale of land; however, that revenue is a delay rather than a decline. We expect that availability of land in the spring will result in returning revenues. There was also an increase in corporate income tax. This reflects our strong and growing economy continuing an upward trajectory.

Mr. Deputy Chair, we have so much momentum right now, and we do not want to waste it. We have opportunities to invest in areas that are valued by Yukoners, things like safety, health, and education. We have the chance to build and maintain relationships with our partners in First Nations and other governments to ensure that all Yukoners have what they need.

In closing, Mr. Deputy Chair, I am very pleased to enter into the general debate on the *Third Appropriation Act 2019-20* and thank members opposite in advance for their questions. As we saw in the fall, I will endeavour to answer the questions that I receive in general debate, with help from Ms. Mahar. I invite members to direct their questions to the appropriate departments during Committee of the Whole, recognizing that individual ministers will be best equipped to provide those details in response to questions.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Silver: Before I leave, I do want to recognize that in the gallery today is our new Deputy Minister of Finance, Mr. Scott Thompson. He is not to be confused with the Scott Thompson from *The Kids in the Hall*.

I had a lot of great experiences with Mr. Thompson, in my responsibility as the Minister of Finance, when we went to the finance ministers' meetings nationally on a yearly basis. Scott comes with an awful lot of expertise and know-how. What a great colleague he was at the table, working as all of the finance ministers gathered with the federal minister. I am very impressed with the work he has done. It is also great to see that he has family in Whitehorse as well.

Welcome to Scott. I would ask everyone in the Legislative Assembly to help in welcoming Mr. Thompson to the Legislative Assembly today.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: In speaking, I would also just like to thank Chris for her time and service to the Yukon government. I am sorry to see you retiring. I welcome the new Deputy Minister of Finance in the gallery today.

In moving on to the questions — as I noted in my second reading speech, but just for officials here — I do want to point out that, while I will, in my capacity as the Official Opposition critic for Finance, be criticizing some of the decisions made by government in this budget, we recognize and acknowledge that the decisions that are made about every budget, including this *Third Appropriation Act 2019-20*, are ultimately made by the Premier and Cabinet. Officials provide their best advice, but the

decisions themselves rest on the shoulders of the territorial Cabinet. We do have a number of questions related to this area.

In looking at the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, we have seen there that costs in these supplementary estimates related to the government's decision to expand class 1 notification territory-wide slipped out as an announcement just before Christmas, presumably hoping that industry would not notice this large lump of coal being put in their stockings by the Liberal government.

Is that \$320,000 included in the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources the total amount of increased cost to the Yukon government contained within this budget, or are there additional amounts elsewhere within other departments?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Of course, class 1 notification being a result of this Yukon Liberal government working with First Nation governments, based upon declarations for litigation from the Yukon Party government — it was a long time coming to get to where we are. We have seen the Chamber of Mines stating their support for class 1 notification. Of course, starting with Tr'ondëk Hwéch'in and then moving to Yukon-wide, this is something that has been in the works for a long time, so I don't agree with the member opposite's assertions that somehow something was being sneaky. This was a long time coming, and it was announced as soon as we possibly could, knowing full well that the mining industry knew that this was coming and, again, where it was coming from — starting with the Ross River Dena Council case and moving on to subsequent litigation and therein.

When it comes specifically to the dollar values that the member opposite is seeing in the supplementary budget, there is definitely that expenditure from Energy, Mines and Resources.

There will be expenses that will be taken upon internally as well, I would imagine, through EMR, Environment, and Tourism and Culture, as this is a whole-of-government approach through those. So, yes, to EMR, the \$320,000 — I would say that Environment's cost would have been around \$50,000, and for Tourism and Culture, you would add to that another \$175,000.

Mr. Cathers: The Premier made some interesting statements, and it's interesting that he tries to spin this as good news when in fact the Liberal government's decision around class 1 notifications is increasing the barriers to Yukon's small businesses, making life harder and more expensive for Yukoners who are prospectors and placer miners.

I'm going to ask the Premier a question that officials were not able to provide us with information on. Did the government, before making its decision behind closed doors to implement this new barrier and increase red tape for placer miners and prospectors, conduct an economic assessment of the cost of compliance for Yukon businesses or the economic cost of lost productivity?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Those are great questions for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources as he becomes available. It's interesting that the member opposite is considering class 1 notification as increased red tape for industry. I would wonder if the member opposite is in

agreement that we should be doing the class 1 notifications or not — if he agrees with the memorandum of understanding with the Yukon government and the First Nation governments in response to litigation that his government caused. What would he ask us to do in place of the fact that we're being directed by the Supreme Court to move in this direction?

Now, again, it's not a situation that we created, but definitely a solution that we worked on. It was very hard for the minister to come into his role right away and to know pending litigation, to know current litigation — deck 1 and deck 2 of the Ross River Dena Council court case — not a great position to come into. We on this side of the Legislative Assembly believe that the First Nation governments need to be part of the decisions when it comes to our industry and that an increased equity stake in the mining industry is very important for our economy, not only for First Nation governments but for all Yukoners.

It will be interesting to see if the member opposite agrees that the First Nations should be more involved in the mining industry or if he believes that class 1 notification is something that he agrees with or doesn't agree with, because we sure do have an awful lot of information about their last few years in government and the direction that they were going toward.

Again, the specifics of that question would, I would say, be better suited for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. I know for a fact that he will be happy to answer that.

Mr. Cathers: I would point out that it wasn't even an hour ago that the Premier promised that he would answer questions in general debate, and now he is dodging them.

The Premier acknowledged, in response to my first question, that the cost of the government's behind-closed-doors decision on class 1 notifications has an impact across several government departments. Of course, it has an economic impact on Yukoners, including some of the Premier's own constituents in the Klondike area or people from other areas of the Yukon who are mining in the Klondike area. This is of great concern. There are significant costs in terms of compliance and lost productivity to prospectors and placer miners who have reached out to us with their concerns after their concerns fell on deaf ears when they raised them with either the Premier or the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources or both.

I asked a very simple and, I think, a very reasonable question: Did they conduct an economic impact assessment on the cost to Yukon businesses — and by that, I mean both the cost of compliance and of lost productivity — before implementing their class 1 notification decision behind closed doors? Yes or no? It is a very simple question, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, I don't think the member opposite is listening to my answers. We are not avoiding the answer to the question. I am asking if he really wants to have a conversation about this with the minister responsible, or does he want to have a general conversation about this during general debate on this supplementary budget?

When it comes to the actual information in the supplementary budget, I gave him the answers he asked for.

When it comes to the overall planning and processing of class 1 notifications, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has so much more information on this than I do. I guess the member opposite doesn't want that information from the minister, but I am offering that as probably the best place for him to ask those questions.

It is interesting to hear from the Yukon Party the concept of behind-closed-doors conversations when it comes to the mining industry. We don't have to go too far back in time to remember Bill S-6, when a five-year review of YESAA turned into actually five years of a review of YESAA, and at the end of the day behind closed doors, the Yukon Party took four of these recommendations that they didn't share with the First Nation governments to Ottawa through the Senate, which was interesting as well. Basically, that one move, I would say, as far as regulatory uncertainty, moved the Yukon back by a decade.

To come into government after the Ross River Dena Council litigation against the Yukon Party and the Bill S-6 debacle, which got us to where we are — I think the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has done a herculean effort when it comes to repairing the damaged relationships between governments, but also, at the same time, I don't think the members opposite want the minister responsible to be the one answering these questions. I can feel him right now wanting to answer these questions — vibrating for sure.

We're not blocking the opposition; we absolutely want to answer this question, but I would expect that Yukoners would want the minister responsible to have this conversation in debate when he appears for exactly this reason — to talk about his department's supplementary finances.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Deputy Chair, I would remind the Premier that, in the fall when we were asking departmental questions in general debate after most departments did not have line items or new appropriations in the supplementary estimates, our only chance to ask ministers was in general debate. The Premier at one point took to sending ministers out of the Assembly so they couldn't respond to the questions being asked of them. We've seen an increased pattern of secrecy here, Mr. Deputy Chair.

In terms of the Supreme Court of Canada decision regarding the Ross River Dena Council, which did prompt class 1 notification in that area, the Premier just misrepresented the court decision to suggest that it applied to the entire territory. I would ask the Premier: Is he deliberately bringing incorrect information, or has he not read that court decision?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Deputy Chair: The Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The concept of the accusation of the member opposite accusing the Premier of deliberately — I know he'll say that he asked whether it was deliberate. But the truth is that he's really accusing the Premier of deliberately bringing false information into this House, and I ask that you have him withdraw those comments because it is inappropriate and against the Standing Orders of this House.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Ms. McPhee: You really want me to give you the Standing Order? I'm happy to — 19(h).

Deputy Chair's statement

Deputy Chair: Would you sit down, please? Order, please.

I will take it under advisement and review it with the Clerk, and then I will make a decision on that and come back to the House.

Mr. Cathers: Again, I will ask the Premier a very simple question: Did he read the Supreme Court of Canada's decision regarding the Ross River matter, or not?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes.

Mr. Cathers: Then it is interesting that the Premier made the statement that he did earlier because that statement is not factually correct. I would encourage anyone listening and reading Hansard to in fact read the court decision. They will see quite clearly that the Premier's claims are not factually accurate.

Mr. Deputy Chair, I still haven't had an answer to the question of whether there has been an economic impact assessment done of the cost of the government's unilateral decision on the class 1 notification matter — a behind-closed-doors decision that has impacted the lives of Yukon's small business owners. We haven't yet heard an answer of whether the government did an economic impact assessment of the cost of compliance to local businesses of their new regulation or of the cost of lost productivity.

So, will the Premier answer that question, or is he going to tell Yukoners that they don't have a right to that information?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Deputy Chair, I believe I have answered this question now a third time. That is a great question for the minister responsible, who will be appearing here in the Legislative Assembly — if we ever get past general debate. At that time, not only will the member opposite get a more expansive response from the minister responsible —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: — I don't know if they want to listen to the answer or not — they will get a really good answer. Again, what I am offering the member opposite is more open, more transparent, and more information, but the member opposite doesn't want that. The member opposite wants me to answer every question from every department right now in general debate. Interestingly enough, we can go back through time and take a look at different general debates. I would assume, based upon the journals of Hansard, that the best information comes from the ministers who are responsible.

Mr. Cathers: I do have to point out that the Premier is trying to dismiss this question as somehow being unreasonable, but with the class 1 notification requirement — the impact that has on prospectors and placer miners is that, when they stake a claim under the government's unilateral decision, they actually lose some rights that they had prior to staking that claim under the *Lands Act* by virtue of having recorded a claim out of the *Quartz Mining Act* to the *Placer Mining Act*.

During that time — in all the matters covered by the class 1 notification red tape put in by this Premier and his government — after they have to provide notification and wait for almost a month before they can then conduct that work — in that timeframe, the Premier and every member of this Legislative Assembly probably get two paycheques deposited into our account automatically. Meanwhile, that Yukon small business owner is having to wait to earn money because of a decision made by this Liberal government, and the Premier won't even tell us whether they did an economic impact assessment of the cost of compliance and the cost of lost productivity to Yukon businesses.

Deputy Chair's statement

Deputy Chair: Order. It is the opinion of the Chair that we've covered this ground. We're going in some pretty interesting circles that ask the same question again. It's been asked and answered.

I would ask the member to move on to the next question.

Mr. Cathers: Well, Mr. Deputy Chair, I didn't get an answer to that question. If you're not allowing me to continue, then let the record so show — but I asked a very reasonable question about something that is impacting the lives of Yukon business owners. Again, the Premier did not actually answer the question. He simply refused to provide an answer.

So, I'm going to move on to another area. In this budget, we have seen that the budget last fall increased the capital budget. The 2019 budget began with — pardon me; I'm just going to move to another part of my notes here.

In the Department of Community Services, the budget saw an increase in the fall of some \$45.3 million to what was initially \$71.24 million in capital. A large amount of that seemed to be in direct connection to pre-election spending and photo ops with the Liberal Member of Parliament. Now, in the adjustment to the supplementary estimates, there is a significant lapse in capital spending. Can the Premier tell us why that occurred?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I believe, in both my second reading speech and also my Committee of the Whole speech, we went over this twice for the member opposite — exactly why there was a decrease. We explained the seasonal nature — the early winter — and also the fact that these are not lost; they are delayed. I believe I answered that question twice now for the member opposite.

Mr. Cathers: What the Premier believes and what is factual seem to often be very different things.

We were advised in the information about the Department of Health and Social Services briefing with regard to an increase that is contained in this budget for the amount that included funding for First Nation family support workers as well as extended family care agreements.

One thing that was of concern is that we were advised by officials that this was not contemplated in the *Child and Family Services Act*. Is the Premier confident that, in fact, this decision was within the legal authority of government, or is it contrary to the *Child and Family Services Act*?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It is an interesting question. We are assuming that all directions and decisions made in a budgetary consideration are done inside of the law. If the member opposite can expand on where he's going with this, I would be very grateful for that. It is a weird insinuation to make. I want to know where he is going with this.

Mr. Cathers: I am simply asking a question prompted by the information officials gave us in the briefing, which was that, when the question was asked about the legal authority for extended family care, the officials indicated that it is not contemplated in the act. So again, the question is: Where does the authority to enter into that come from, and is the government confident? Once children come into contact with the system, there is a legal obligation on government, including the director of Family and Children's Services, to do certain things as set out in the act. If this is not in line with the act, is the Premier confident that government did so with lawful authority, or did they make a serious mistake in this area?

It's a question that the Premier should either know the answer to or be able to get the answer to.

Hon. Mr. Silver: The short answer is yes. I do have confidence that the department made the decisions within — inside of the proper legal authority.

Mr. Cathers: Is the Premier espousing that legal opinion based on actually having received a legal opinion or did he just make up his own?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The member opposite is off on a tangent and he's asking me if I just gave a legal opinion. Unlike him, I don't pretend to be a lawyer and I'm not a lawyer, so I'm not giving a legal opinion. As the Premier, I have complete confidence in my departments and their authorities.

Mr. Cathers: Apparently, asking a question about children in care or under extended family care agreements and whether government has taken the steps that it's lawfully required to is now dismissed in the mind of this Premier as a tangent. It's really unfortunate to see him making light of this issue and answering with what appeared to be an off-the-cuff response. Espousing a legal interpretation without actually being willing to answer whether he looked into it — that is disappointing and certainly the children affected by this decision do deserve a more serious response from government. No matter how well-intentioned this decision may be, it is important that the government do things it is lawfully able to.

Another area where we have seen this back-of-the-napkin approach to decision-making by the Liberal government is in the area of the former Centre of Hope where the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter seems to be getting worse under this government's watch. We've seen the addition of 37 staff, according to what the Minister of Health and Social Services told us last fall. Disturbingly, when my colleague, the Official Opposition critic for Health and Social Services, asked questions about the additional costs of this facility — which we were initially told was being funded only until partway through the summer — last fall, when my colleague repeatedly asked what the costs were, she never got a straight answer from either the Minister of Health or the Minister of Finance.

Now, in the supplementary estimates, we see additional costs for the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter totalling some \$2.8 million in one line item and what appears to be another \$181,000 in another line item under Social Supports.

So, the question would be — two questions related to that: What is the total cost of this facility? Are the costs that we have seen presented here in this handout the total year costs, or are we going to see another surprise bill in another appropriation act? The third question that I would add to those two is: Why has the government been so reluctant to tell the public what the costs of this facility are?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The premise of the question is unfounded, to tell you the truth. When we got into government, that was another example of failed leadership on behalf of the Yukon Party. When we take a look at the programs and services, or lack thereof, that were used to contemplate the shelter in a larger picture of what we need to do with the spectrum of care for our most vulnerable citizens, since that time, I have watched the Department of Health and Social Services, under the leadership of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, do an amazing job of not only putting the adequate programs and services in the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter — which completely reduced the amount of emergency room visits in the hospital by the programming that was implemented — by moving EMS over into that building. The upstairs units that are now being used by the hardest to house of our citizens — the complete gamut of working collaboratively with health care and with our partners — it is amazing to see what work has been done there.

Is it a bigger expense than what the Yukon Party planned? Yes, it is. Are we going to see better results? Absolutely; we already are. As opposed to demanding that folks are sober before they get housing — or sober before they even get into the building — meeting people where they are today was a fundamental shift in this government's perspective on how we meet people where they are — our most vulnerable people.

Again, us believing it is the best way to care for Yukoners is by integrating our health care systems and services — not these one-offs that we had with the Yukon Party — offering health care that considers the whole person, Mr. Deputy Chair — their situations, their supports, as well as their physical health. We can make sure that they have access to services that they need to be healthy.

We have answered the questions as we get into every budget. There is a budgetary consideration in this supplementary for this department, which is an increase for the shelter specifically of \$2.63 million in the supplementary. Again, I don't know where the member is coming from by saying that we are not answering these questions about financing. We absolutely are.

Again, the member is hiding behind general debate. If he wants to ask very, very specific questions about where that money comes from, he will absolutely have that opportunity to ask the minister specifically about these funding dollars. She will be happy to answer those questions. Again, when we got into government here, the state of services, especially in rural communities for our rural health care providers, was in a sad

state of affairs for sure. There were two mental health nurses for all of rural Yukon under the Yukon Party — two — to service all of the communities outside of Whitehorse. We now have 22 positions focused on Yukoners' mental health and wellness located in our four community hubs.

We are very proud of that, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite don't want to hear it, but we are very proud of that. They don't want to hear about the booming economy. They don't want to hear about the lowest new FTE count in our new budget, which is unbelievable. All we hear is: "Tell us the numbers." We are telling them the numbers.

Again, those community hubs are extremely important. We are not done there, either. On a national level, the Premier of Saskatchewan and I are going to be co-hosting a mental wellness symposium in Toronto this coming spring. Do these initiatives cost money? They do. Do they provide results? Absolutely. I think that is the difference. We are planning in a way that we know we are going to be helping our most marginalized citizens and people who are just dealing with struggles with regular mental health issues in their lives. That is part of the consideration — some more money up front, meaning a better long-term situation for our most marginalized citizens and for the general health of Yukoners to make sure that we all thrive.

I think that Yukoners know what we are doing. I think they are pleased with the results. It would have been easier for us if we had started tabula rasa — if we started at ground zero — but we didn't. We started with another initiative from the Yukon Party that wasn't very well thought through. We saw that play out. We worked with the partner communities, such as Kwanlin Dün and the Ta'an Kwächän Council as well, with the work that the two chiefs had done there as well — so all of this.

We wish we could have started with comprehensive programming in the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. We wish we had started with money for EMS support in that building or really a plan for the units upstairs, but we didn't. We started with what was left from the Yukon Party's decisions and we moved forward from that.

Taking a look at the work that has been done, I believe that the Department of Health and Social Services has done a tremendous job, but don't take my advice on that either, Mr. Deputy Chair. The Department of Health and Social Services is up for debate in the supplementary budget and will happily expand on the good work that it and other departments are doing when we deal with the issues of health and social services.

Mr. Cathers: The Premier was again very defensive and dismissing any criticism that was brought up. The Premier is forgetting the fact that in October — I showed in Hansard, and I believe later on in November, but the page I have in front of me is October 29 — my colleague, the Official Opposition critic for Health and Social Services, repeatedly rose in this House and asked very reasonable questions about the millions of dollars of taxpayers' money associated with the government's back-of-the-napkin decision to shut down the Salvation Army Centre of Hope and replace it with a

government-run shelter. The minister repeatedly refused to answer the question.

I'm going to just quote one of the many reasonable questions asked by my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake and our Health and Social Services critic. On October 29, on page 412 of Hansard, my colleague said: "Yesterday, the government announced several initiatives to address community concerns around the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. Yesterday, I asked the minister how much was budgeted for these initiatives that she announced yesterday and she was unable to answer.

"Again, can the minister tell us how much new money is budgeted for all the initiatives she announced yesterday?"

In the responses, the minister refused to provide the cost and criticized my colleague for daring to ask her how much it cost. So, read Hansard, Mr. Deputy Chair. I would encourage the Premier to do the same, because in fact the minister repeatedly rose and dismissed the question as unreasonable.

Now, we know that in the spring, the government had indicated — after they launched their back-of-the-napkin plan to take over the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter without even receiving Management Board approval before it was executed — and told us at that time that the staffing was only going on partway through the fiscal year.

At that time, the Premier and the minister indicated that they were going to try to get an NGO to take it over. Then, in the fall, they wouldn't answer how much additional funding was required and tried to convince members of the opposition that there were no additional financial resources, and they were reluctant to talk about what their first plan had been regarding that facility.

So, we see again that increase in excess of \$2 million contained within the supplementary estimates. This information is based on period 7, so it would mean that, at that time, the minister and the Premier would be well aware of the additional staffing cost during the Fall Sitting, yet they refused to be accountable to the public.

So, it is concerning because the money does belong to Yukon citizens. Whether the Premier likes the questions we ask or not or likes the people who ask it or not is quite frankly irrelevant. It is the public's money and they have a right to know.

The Premier claimed that the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter is resulting in a reduction of use at the emergency room. In his budget speech, he said it's also resulting in a reduction of use at what he called the "acute processing unit" of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. As noted by the Member for Whitehorse Centre earlier, there is no "acute processing unit". The Premier's budget speech misnamed this facility.

But neither in this third supplementary that we're debating here nor in the budget that we provided or any of the supplementary information has the Premier provided any numbers to back up his assertion that the new model at the Whitehorse emergency centre is resulting in a reduction in visits to the emergency room or reduction of use at the arrest processing unit at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. We're simply asking him, as the Member of the Third Party asked

earlier, to back up his claims with the numbers. People have a right to know whether his claims are accurate and to see that information. Otherwise, he might as well get himself a red cap and start using words like "bigly" because it looks a lot like what we see south of the border where the president vws up and down that black is white and white is black.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Let the record state that there was absolutely no question in that diatribe, but I will respond to some of the accusations and misleading statements that are unfounded.

So, again, we have heard from the opposition that we have somehow missated the name of the processing unit in the budget speech — no, we didn't. That is confirmed by the department — so, again, wrong, by the members opposite.

It is interesting too that the member opposite makes it seem that, as I am answering these questions, I am being dismissive. I think he is a little bit tone-blind, because we are answering the questions, offering more answers to the questions that are specific to the departments, giving more openness and more transparency, but yet that somehow is us not answering the question and being dismissive — not true.

Then the member opposite quotes a question from Hansard where he verbatim quotes the question from the Yukon Party, but instead of the response, his answer is, "And then the minister just refused to answer the question." So, again, it is highly misleading. We have had these conversations over and over again. As far as the funding for the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, I'm confident —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Deputy Chair: Mr. Cathers, on a point of order.

Mr. Cathers: The Premier just contravened Standing Order 19(h) several times in a row, including suggesting that, by me quoting Hansard, that was misleading. I would ask you to call him to order and have him retract those comments.

Deputy Chair: Mr. Silver, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Silver: It's not the quote that makes the member opposite misleading. It is the fact that there is an answer in Hansard that the member opposite will not respond to and will not "share" — in quotes — as well. That part where he says that there was an answer, but it is his opinion that the answer was not an answer, so that part is very misleading, Mr. Deputy Chair, because the minister does answer questions here. As the member opposite just said, if you don't like the answers, it doesn't mean that we didn't answer the questions. What is good for the goose should be good for the gander as well.

Deputy Chair's ruling

Deputy Chair: Standing Order 19(h) focuses on if there is "intention". The Chair doesn't believe that there was intention in there, but try to not walk so close to the line if you can.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I won't take a lot of time because, again, there wasn't a question there.

It is an interesting narrative in the fact that the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services at many different times has responded to the financial costs of the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and the changes in the programs and services — even coordinating that with the costs of the Housing First initiatives and a whole gamut of things we spoke about, whether it's the four new mental wellness and substance abuse hubs, which is also a new expense from this government that deals with the mental health of all Yukoners. There are a whole myriad of different funding initiatives that we are very open and transparent about.

It is interesting — on this particular file — when the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter was first announced by the Yukon Party, they put \$14.9 million in the budget for the capital asset, but there was no money in the budget for the operation and maintenance of that facility. It is pretty rich for the member opposite to now say that this government, which has given the money for O&M, has given the money for the building, has given the financial data for the programs and services for the continuum of care — that question is coming from a former Yukon Party government that planned for a 300-bed facility in Whistle Bend with no operation and maintenance costs and also for a Salvation Army-run building that had a budgeted capital plan but no O&M.

So again, we will continue to provide the details again, offering that, after general debate, the Minister of Health and Social Services will be available to again answer very specific questions and give more details on the specifics of the dollar values and would be happy to have that conversation.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Deputy Chair, despite the Premier's assertion, he still hasn't answered the question I asked, which is very simple. It is whether that \$4 million that we've been told by officials is the cost of the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter is the total annual cost of operating the facility — yes or no? If that's not the right number, what is the total O&M cost?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, the member opposite is talking about two different financial accounting principles toward this. This supplementary is \$2.36 million for the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. I think what he's doing is adding previous budget amounts — and I'm looking for clarification from the member opposite. He is checking his phone to find out. I am not sure if that's where he's getting the complete number from or not. I think that is where he's coming from. Yes, the complete number is in the \$3-million area, but this supplementary budget is \$2.36 — from previous days on the Legislative Assembly in different budgets, we've added the other number of \$1.2 million in the mains — so those two numbers together being \$3.46 — around there — \$3.5 million.

To answer his question, yes, that is the total.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you. It only took us five months to get that information from this government.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Deputy Chair: Mr. Silver, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don't know if the member opposite is intentionally misleading with that statement, but we didn't have

that information four months ago. We just got it as of this budget.

Mr. Cathers: I made reference to a question that my colleague asked five months ago that we just got the answer to now.

Deputy Chair's ruling

Deputy Chair: The Chair doesn't consider that — after some consultation — a point of order, so we'll just continue on. Mr. Cathers.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Again, moving to another area, I would note as well in this budget that again, as the Premier will recall — at least I assume he recalls — in a budget we expressed concern about funding for the Hospital Corporation. Every time we raised this concern, the Premier assured us everything is fine; everything is okay.

But as my colleague, the Health critic, pointed out in November when the Hospital Corporation witnesses appeared, we were told by department officials in the spring budget briefings that \$2.8 million requested by the hospital in the previous fiscal year for their core needs wasn't provided until the start of the 2019-20 fiscal year.

Questions were asked as well by my colleague of the hospital chair and CEO about funding for the current year. While the CEO wasn't prepared to speak about how much core funding hadn't been approved for the current year — as Hansard will show — and again, for the record of Hansard, I'm looking at page — I'm referring to page 861 and 862 from November 26, 2019: "The hospital CEO... confirmed that they are waiting for a — and I quote: 'pending decision' on 'core funding' and for the orthopaedic program."

As well, the confirmation we received was that they were waiting for money, both for the core budget and the orthopaedic program. I'm just referring to an earlier reference on page 861. The hospital CEO told us "... they would only have a balanced budget for 2019-20 if a pending decision by government on 'core funding' was approved. He also said — and I quote: 'We had set a budget early in the year, and we are, right now, looking at making sure that core funding has been established in its entirety.'"

Then we received the information provided by department officials in the budget briefing related to these third supplementary estimates and, according to the handout that we were provided, we see that there is a \$4.6 million amount provided to Yukon Hospital Corporation — and again quoting from that handout: "Yukon Hospital Corporation — Funding for various areas, mainly to address funding shortfalls."

My first question would be: Will the Premier acknowledge that he was mistaken in the fall? Will he tell us when the hospital made this request for their core funding for the 2019-20 year that they're only now finally receiving in the 12th month of the fiscal year? Because based on the way government used to operate, we would assume that this request had been made by the Hospital Corporation no later than September 2018. So it would seem that more than a year has elapsed since they made

that funding request and they're only finally now receiving that \$4.6 million for core needs and for an orthopaedic program that was expanded in September in month 12 of the fiscal year.

So, again, when did the Premier know about this hospital's core budget request? Is it indeed, as we would assume, September 2018 or earlier? Why has it taken to the 12th month in the fiscal year for them to provide the hospital with \$4.6 million that they need?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think the member opposite is confusing or combining for some reason two different numbers. This supplementary has \$2.385 million for core funding, but we also have the \$2.248 million for the orthopaedic program as well, so just for clarity's sake. Again, what I heard from the members of the Hospital Corporation who appeared here was that they are working within their budgets and they have the money they need for the programs and services.

Again, if there was ever a time when the Yukon Hospital Corporation needed more money, there is a process for that. We check in on a regular basis through variance reports on the needs of our corporations. Again, every year, we have increased the funding to the Hospital Corporation.

These are better questions saved for the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, who will be up in debate for the supplementary budget.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Deputy Chair, I know that the Premier is annoyed by us repeatedly going after this issue, but the reason why we are going after it is that the numbers that we are provided say that there is a problem and the Premier keeps dismissing it. We are in month 12 of the 2019-20 fiscal year. The hospital is only now getting the \$4.6 million it needs for core funding and the expensive — valuable but expensive — orthopaedics program that they've been absorbing until this point in time. I am quoting from the document that we were given by Health and Social Services officials, just as we were previously.

In the last 2019-20 fiscal year, part of the money that they provided to the hospital was \$2.8 million that they needed in the previous fiscal year, and now we're seeing, at the tail end of 2019-20, \$4.6 million that the hospital already needed during the current fiscal year and that they are only finally getting in the 12th month. If the Premier doesn't realize that this is a problem, he needs to take a serious look at it, read the documents in front of him, and recognize that our health care is important. That includes adequate funding for the Hospital Corporation.

I am not expecting to get a straight answer from the Premier on this issue about when they first knew of these needs, but the Premier can rest assured that, anytime that it seems that he and his colleagues are neglecting the hospital or other parts of our health system, we will hold them to account for their failure to fund those needs. Again, just as I mentioned earlier, we hear repeated claims from the Premier and messaging in the budget about areas where they are saying they are doing better, but they fail to provide any evidence to back up their talking points.

Moving on to another area in the budget, can the Premier explain why, in the social assistance amounts, which are broken

down into two areas, there is an increase of \$1.5 million in social assistance, especially when the Premier is bragging about how great he says the economy is and how there is a low unemployment rate? So, why would we see a spike in social assistance costs of \$1.5 million in this fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It is interesting, again. We are working in partnership with the Yukon Hospital Corporation. We're not hearing the concerns from them that the member opposite is making them seem to be — like there is a big concern there. The Hospital Corporation is soundly funded, yet the member opposite is trying to create an issue where there isn't an issue there within.

Again, we answered the question, talking about how every year — and this is our fourth year in a row of increasing the funding to the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Working hand in glove with our corporations is extremely important to this government, and we stand by that.

The member opposite also says that we will make these big statements but we won't back it up with evidence — okay. Let's back it up with some evidence, then. We believe that the best care and support that we can offer to Yukoners comes from a system that is integrated, where that care is team-based and holistic and providing diverse services to the people to achieve the wellness that they deserve, and that is why we are advancing a model of collaborative care that the previous government wouldn't consider, even after the Peachey report — from the Auditor General's recommendations, from their decisions to build capital assets of hospitals — told them to go in that direction. We are moving in that direction. Collaborative care is extremely important. It calls upon health care providers to work closer together to meet the diverse needs of people and families, and we are working on that.

We are also focusing on coordinating mental health and trauma and substance use care for Yukoners, recognizing that, across Canada, the social and economic impacts of mental wellness are significant and in need of a response matched to the severity of the situation. As part of that response, we are very proud to again speak about the mental wellness symposium that we will be co-chairing with the Premier of Saskatchewan. This is a commitment through the Council of the Federation that meets in July with all of the Premiers of Canada. This symposium will explore opportunities for innovation. It will promote collaboration among governments and share knowledge among the best and most promising practices to address challenges with unique Canadian approaches. That was the goal right away. We had the first conversation with the three premiers in our territorial premiers' conversations in the summer. We took that conversation to the western premiers — they agreed — and then right to the nation, to the national premiers, to have that conversation as well. Every time that we had this conversation, it was about how everybody is trying some bold new initiatives in every jurisdiction, and we want to see what best practices work in those different regions. I am really excited about looking at the evidence from other jurisdictions, as well as to share the evidence that we have here in Yukon.

Mr. Deputy Chair, if you want to talk about evidence, we have a 49-percent decrease in children and youth in continuing custody in Yukon — from 143 in March 2018 to 73 in March 2019. It is interesting that the members opposite are saying that we don't give the evidence, but when we do give the evidence, they just keep talking off-mic because they don't want to hear it, and then they will say tomorrow that we didn't answer their questions.

We know that we have a lot more to do. For example, for children and finding daycare, we know that we are above the national average in daycare and we want to reduce that, but we have also seen an increase in our support services there. It is really good to see the coordinated effort that the department is making. When we take a look at the number of hospital stays or long-term care, we are reducing those numbers and we need to continue to do that. There are decreases in hospital admissions — a 12-percent decrease. Again, the members opposite are asking for these numbers. We have decreased from 542 per 100,000 to 477 per 100,000 from 2017-18. So, again, I will reiterate that number — decreases in hospital admissions for health conditions that may have been prevented or managed with appropriate primary health care — that is a huge decrease. We are continuing to work on reducing these numbers.

On access to regular health care providers, the national standard for that is 84.9 percent. In Yukon, it is lower than the national average, and we are proud of that.

Do we have more to do? We do. We want to make sure that we continue to increase those who have access to that regular care. We are trying to get to those national numbers. Again, it is a lot of work. The Minister of Health and Social Services is going to be able to expand on a lot of the work that we're doing there. The money that we are providing for our younger generation to live happier, healthier lives — that work is ongoing.

We announced the other day additional accessibility into our park systems to make sure that wheelchair accessibility is increased to our park systems. Again, we could talk about the independent expert panel conducting that comprehensive review of Health and Social Services systems with the goal of figuring out how we can better allocate our existing resources to improve services, make things more efficient, and find more creative solutions to meet our needs either today or tomorrow.

I could go on and on that the members opposite keep saying we don't provide, but we do. The information that I'm talking about right now is readily available through our performance plan and through other documentation that we readily provide. I could go on and quote from other documents as well, but I might be called out of order. But again, I think that when the members opposite say that we're not providing the evidence — we are. That evidence is readily available in documentation that is available on yukon.ca.

I believe the member opposite asked a question about social assistance. That social assistance is increasing by \$1.5 million. The client base has increased, as have costs per client as well. Yes, we have a booming economy, but we have to make sure that we are investing in vulnerable people as well. We need to invest in shelters. We need to invest in housing —

Housing First. We know that the former government didn't want to spend social housing money to the tune of almost \$20 million when the member opposite was in charge of housing. I believe it was him personally who stopped that. We are working on a whole gamut of housing initiatives and dealing with concerns when it comes to our vulnerable people. That does cost money, but that money up front is, again, going to have long-term benefits.

All of these initiatives that do cost money — and, as I said, there is a \$1.5-million increase in social assistance this time — are supports that try to help people get off of social assistance. This is extremely important to us. It's giving a hand up as opposed to a handout. It is especially for people who can't work for a variety of reasons. It is meeting them where they are and trying to make sure that people with disabilities or people who are unemployed or vulnerable, et cetera, have the supports necessary. We believe that this is a sound financial decision — to have that increase in social assistance. Again, the minister responsible can do an excellent job of expanding on the \$1.5-million increase as she is going to be available for conversation in debate for the supplementaries, because that department does have a budgetary consideration for the second supplementary.

Mr. Cathers: One of the things that puzzles us about the government's claim that these costs are unanticipated is that, at a time when the government is touting how low the unemployment rate is — seeing a \$1.5-million increase in social assistance seems strange. The Premier made reference to an increased cost per client. Unless government has changed something — and please tell me if they have — social assistance rates were indexed to CPI — to the rate of inflation. So those costs should only be going up based on the inflation rate, which should be relatively known at the start of the year or at least very close to it, since CPI can change in an unanticipated fashion. But generally speaking, the rate of inflation is — the last several years, including this last fiscal year — pardon me, the current fiscal year — should have been relatively easy to predict pretty close to the mark.

That does leave us wondering whether these costs are due to increased discretionary funding or other elements. I would ask the Premier whether these increases are due to structural changes made in Health and Social Services which, as reported to me, have eliminated the internal audit function by the investigator — which, previously used to result in, I believe it was 40 case files a month being reviewed by someone who reported directly to the director — I believe that was the reporting structure — to a second set of eyes on the initial approvals being done by the initial approving person.

Has the Premier looked into this issue? If not, will he look into whether any of these increased costs are due to the change in the internal review structure? If at the end of that, he comes back with the answer that they aren't, it does leave me wondering why the government was not able to more accurately predict the cost increases per client in social assistance in the 2019-20 year — which does, as the Premier will understand, leave us wondering whether the Premier made a choice just not to include those numbers in the mains.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don't know why this would necessarily be a question from the member opposite. He would know that the situations in people's homes and lives change on a daily basis. Numbers that we would have in July about who is on social assistance would completely change by the time six months goes by or even a week goes by sometimes. And again, whether that's people with disabilities or people who are on social assistance for a variety of reasons, for not being able to work, these numbers — they're fluid. They do move. So, the members opposite can be assured that we use the best statistics that we have readily available at the time of budgeting. For those dollar values that we still need to account for, we still need to account for them, and that's what we're seeing here.

Now, that's not to say that we're not trying our best to meet people where they are and make sure that we can use the social assistance in a proper way to make sure that we can help support our most vulnerable citizens and people who have disabilities as well to thrive in our beautiful territory.

We've done a lot of work outside Social Services as well. A lot of the things that we can do internally in the department really helps us with these numbers.

The launch of 1Health Yukon is an extremely important part of our Health and Social Services systems. Being able to take our health information that supports the Yukon hospitals and our health facilities and services that will update the current system and support transition where Yukoners move from one service to another is another way that we support these individuals who come in and out of our Social Services systems.

We've signed an agreement with the Government of Canada to increase the quality of treatment services for people with substance use disorders as well. Again, these things feed into the greater health of our community.

We began covering the cost of medical abortion medication to ensure that Yukoners have low-barrier options and more equal access to abortion services in Yukon. We have a lot of programs and services. We also have a lot of supports.

Now, this particular supplementary is a reflection of an extra need for people who are on social services, but the member opposite can be assured that we use the best numbers we possibly can as we apply a budgeting treatment to the programs and services that are absolutely necessary for Yukoners to make sure that they are living healthy and happy lives.

Mr. Cathers: The Premier seems to have missed the crux of my question and I would just point out that one of the reasons I am asking this is that, if you look at the unemployment numbers according to the Bureau of Statistics over the past year, in January 2019, Yukon's unemployment rate was 3.6 percent. In July — which the Premier was just making reference to how, according to the Bureau of Statistics, the unemployment rate was 3.1 percent — a decrease of nine percentage points, compared to June, when it was four percent. All of those are low unemployment numbers and it does raise the question: With unemployment numbers lower than one would typically predict that they might be in a year, why is the cost of social assistance going up in that time period?

It does raise two questions: Whether government underbudgeted for the amount, or whether there are increased costs internally due to changes that have been reported to us that were made in the internal oversight that have reduced that second set of eyes that had previously occurred — again, according to what we have been told. The Premier ignored that part of the question.

So, is the Premier aware of changes that have been made related to social assistance payments and oversight internally, and if not, would he agree to stop being defensive and simply commit to looking into it and providing the information to this Legislative Assembly?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think I might just have to smile more or something. I am completely not being defensive. I am just questioning where the member is coming from with his questions and providing answers.

We do know that the changes per year is not a large increase. The 2018-19 actuals for social assistance in Whitehorse was roughly \$17.6 million. We are forecasting for it this year to be \$18.1- to \$18.2 million — not a big increase. We do know that there are 74 more clients than forecasted, and that is exactly where this new pressure is coming from. The member opposite can speculate as to other reasons, but we're telling him that this is what is happening here.

I am also adding to that, that we believe our approach of collaborative care is extremely important when it comes to how we work with citizens of Yukon who are on social assistance. We believe that opening up a low-barrier shelter in Whitehorse — the emergency shelter — and allowing Yukoners to access those much-needed services is extremely important. We are going to continue to work closely with stakeholders to ensure that the clients, the Whitehorse residents, and the business community can all thrive and support that new facility.

We are also taking many more steps when it comes to strengthening our partnerships with organizations such as the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre to enhance those drop-in and shelter services to Yukon youth. I can't state enough how important the new health and wellness centres in the communities are. Working with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government, for example, we will be locating the first new health and wellness centre in Old Crow. This centre will bring together regional social services, home care services, mental wellness services, substance use services, community nursing, and health services in one building to better integrate the services and supports to respond to the community's needs and to facilitate collaborative care.

Better management of the referred care clinic is another important piece and supporting the downtown outreach clinic, which is a partnership between the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Yukon home care program — in 2017 this clinic had 954 visits. The numbers are still being compiled for the next year after that and we will continue to monitor those numbers. Again, we are doing an awful lot of great work of a collaborative nature when it comes to supporting citizens who are on social assistance, and the numbers that are reflected in the supplementary budget are reflected there.

Mr. Cathers: Can the Premier indicate why, in the case of — I see here in Community Services that the Whitehorse air tanker base was “... deferred to future years due to delays in land selection and a functional program assessment.” That would appear to be something that is a cross-departmental issue. Can the Premier indicate what is happening there? Why, rather than coming to a decision that would create certainty on this issue, is the Whitehorse air tanker base upgrade, which is needed, being deferred to a future year due to a delay in land selection and program assessment?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, this isn’t necessarily one of those one-off projects; it’s part of a bigger upgrade to the airport. There’s lots of moving pieces here as far as septic and water systems. But again, it is a priority of this government and it is still in the five-year capital plan. It is now scheduled to begin in 2022 and end in the 2024-25 budget year, with a total cost of between \$9 and \$16 million. Again, the ministers — there are a couple of ministers who are responsible in this file who can also help provide some more information. Again, definitely an important project — not a stand-alone and definitely being coordinated with a bigger picture of the upgrades to the airport.

Mr. Cathers: Earlier, the Premier made reference to the growth of FTEs. Can the Premier indicate as of the end of the current fiscal year — of course, coming up at the end of March — what the estimated total number of full-time equivalent positions within the government will be at that point in time or what it is based on his most recent numbers — whichever he prefers?

Hon. Mr. Silver: In the 2020-21 main estimates — we will be starting those main estimates. There will be 5,104.8 full-time equivalents which are reported for the Government of Yukon to support programs and services. We are announcing in this budget an increase of 30.9 FTEs, which is pretty astounding — a 0.6-percent increase from the 2019-20 numbers.

Now, with minimal FTE growth, the Yukon government continues to offer a high level of services required by Yukoners where there is expectation to deliver and we are doing so on that.

What we are seeing here, with a whole-of-government approach with a focus on efficiencies therein, is a reduction in our FTEs this year, based on some great collaborative efforts by all the departments involved. Where we are going to see some areas of growth will be in Health and Social Services, with an increase to mental wellness and home care service delivery areas — such as emergency medical services at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, for example — and the advancement of midwifery in Yukon and also support to develop a final Yukon strategy on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

In the Department of Environment, we see with the Peel land use implementation, the north Yukon wildlife management support and habitat stewardship — we will see some added growth there.

In Education, there are going to be some new teachers due to population growth.

In the Public Service Commission, there will be a modernizing and reorganizing of the commission.

We continue to assess programs and services that could be more appropriately delivered by the private sector, another level of government, or a non-governmental organization. As we look at our FTE count, while this government is making the necessary and significant progress on cost-savings and efficiency measures, we are not making cuts to programs that Yukoners depend on. In doing so, I am very proud of the work that we have done with the whole of government to have this year’s increase to the FTE complement under 31 FTEs for this year.

Mr. Cathers: The Premier made reference to midwifery. There is a posting that the Yukon government had for a midwifery consultant that was shared on social media. It also appears to be on a number of other sites for the government. What was brought to my attention by a Yukoner was the fact that the job posting encouraged people to take advantage of the opportunity to move to the Yukon. Has the government already predetermined that this job is going to go to someone outside of the territory? If not, why would a job posting specifically be encouraging people to move to the Yukon when, in fact, there might be qualified people here?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The answer to the members opposite’s question is no. We put out things to tender all the time. At least here on this side of the House, we don’t mind people coming to the Yukon. Again, you don’t have to be born and raised here to be a Yukoner, but we are not predisposing anything as far as this particular hire. I would even add that, in our territory, I believe that we have a plethora of experienced people who hopefully will be applying for this job.

Mr. Cathers: Well, the ad certainly didn’t seem to suggest it.

So, the Premier interestingly was touting an increase in FTEs as somehow being a reduction, when it’s only the reduction of growth. In fact, it does raise the question as well, both in the 2019-20 fiscal year — and we will also ask again in the upcoming fiscal year when we get into that debate — of: How many of the new positions in government created in 2019-20 were in Yukon communities, and how many were just in Whitehorse?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don’t have that number with me right now. I will endeavour to get back to the member opposite.

Mr. Cathers: I look forward to hearing that number.

I’m just looking at the questions I had here. The question I was going to ask next is — we see an increase in the budget for the Yukon Water Board. Can the Premier indicate how much, if any, of this budget increase is related to the delays that are occurring and affecting placer miners across the territory, especially in the Indian River area? How much of that cost is related to those additional delays and additional costs to industry?

Hon. Mr. Silver: What we’re seeing is an awful lot of projects that are coming forward to the Water Board, and that’s good news. I know that Alexco is in the process right now, and I know that’s taking a lot of the resources of the Water Board to deal with that amazing project with a really great proponent

who has a really good history of reclamation, not only in Yukon.

But, again, to say that it has something to do with the placer industry — the Water Board has definitely been working with the placer industry for many years. They know the size. I will say that last year was one of the most successful years in recent history for the placer mining community as far as ounces of gold coming out of the ground and supporting our local economy in the Klondike.

Again, it is a busy board — lots of applications — and I am very confident in their ability to get processes out. I am happy too that, in this last year, I met with the chair of YESAA and the chair of the Yukon Water Board — probably the first time that a premier has met with those two chairs in the same room to discuss regulatory certainty. I am really proud of the memorandum of understanding and the reset as well for YESAB and the work that we are doing there and of course the memorandum of understanding with the Water Board. It is a busy time to be in the Yukon. It is a busy time for the Water Board.

Mr. Cathers: Does the Premier have statistics on the number of placer miners who are currently waiting for a water licence? Secondly, related to that, does the Premier have statistics on how many of those placer miners have been waiting in excess of one year and how many have been waiting for as long as two years?

Hon. Mr. Silver: As these applications come in — and they are coming in more and more. We get those notifications on a daily basis these days, especially in the placer mining community. I don't have the current numbers with me right now in general debate, but I will endeavour to get those numbers back.

We do know that there are an awful lot of current Water Board licensing applications of note — Minto Explorations, for example, and Pembridge. We know that they have a current type A water licence and that, in August 2016, they filed an amendment application to submit an updated reclamation and closure plan as per an existing licence condition. In addition to submitting the reclamation and closure plan, the company requested additional amendments to conditions, including new underground workings. I'm really excited with Pembridge breathing life into the Minto mining project.

It's nice when I take a drive back up to Dawson to see the ore trucks heading down to Skagway. It's hard for me to not give the thumbs-up. I know a lot of the drivers of those trucks are actually constituents of mine and it's always great to see them working here in the territory.

I do know that the board had made some preliminary findings that further assessments under the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* are not required in this particular case, which is good news.

We also know, like I mentioned earlier, that the Alexco Keno Hill mining corporation — that company did apply to renew their existing type A water licence, which expires in August 2020. Included in the renewal application is the addition of the Birmingham deposit, which was not previously licensed and is extremely exciting.

Right now, as we found as we head out with Invest Canada North or head out to the UK to the financial districts there or to Toronto — what we're hearing internationally is that there was a time in the last couple of years, as Canada was legalizing cannabis, that a lot of the speculative financiers were heading that way. It was a new and shiny thing. That has definitely plateaued. What we're seeing is a resurgence in investments in specific type of resources like very fine silver, for example. You cannot get a better example of a silver deposit on the planet than you can when it comes to Alexco and their current applications. So, it's really exciting to see a resurgence of this company in Yukon.

The company did respond to the interventions and to outstanding information requests in August of this year. The secretary did hold a technical working session, and also intervening parties were involved in early December of last year as well.

I believe that a public hearing was held in Whitehorse very recently — February 18 and 19 — and the board is currently deliberating on that application.

I know that there's an application in for Mount Nansen which was made for a new five-year water licence by Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada for care and maintenance of the Mount Nansen mine site.

Kudz Ze Kayah BMC — this project is in the assessment process. No application for a water licence has been made yet by the board. We have a couple of different other projects under hydro or municipal.

When it comes to placer undertakings, I know that there's an application for Tamarack. They applied for a type B water licence and also placer mining land use approval for a project in Dawson.

Also, Indian River wetlands — the board has a number of active applications in the Indian River wetlands complex. I don't have the specifics, but there are quite a few that are there.

I know that when you take a look at the types of applications over the years — we know that last year — 2019 — there were 102 type B applications received and seven type A applications, for a total of 109. The previous year — 2018 — there were 126 applications — 121 type B and five type A. The previous year to that, there were 142 applications, 135 of which were type B and seven were type A.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the information the Premier just provided. I would note that the applications that he's referring to — I forget whether his term was a "number" or a "lot" or something related — in Indian River area — those are some of the ones that I'm asking him to look into. I'm sure he's not going to have that information here this afternoon, but the time delays affecting placer miners — especially in the Indian River area, but also in other parts of the Yukon — are of great concern to a number of Yukon small businesses and families whose livelihoods are affected by those applications and who in some cases are not able to do work at this point in time and in other cases are concerned that their permitting will not be in place to allow them to continue to work past a certain point.

So, it is something that is of significant concern to me and to my colleagues. I would ask the Premier to look into the information I requested and to get back to this Legislative Assembly.

With that, I will cede the floor to the member from the Third Party for questions that she may have at this point in the supplementary estimates. I thank officials for their diligence in providing the answers that we did receive this afternoon to the Premier.

Ms. Hanson: As I had said in my comments with respect to the second reading, it was my intention that we would be focusing our discussions on the actual departments where there are supplementary estimates.

I'm not intending to get into a general debate with the minister. I would just point out to him that I would request that the Minister of Finance go back and read the budget speeches for 2017, 2018, 2019, and again for this year. Perhaps then he would have some comprehension of some of the concerns that have been expressed with respect to the claims and the assertions of open and transparent governments. Part of the openness and transparency is the provision of timely, accurate information to all members of the House without having to seek through multiple layers of various websites to try to find it.

I know that the Minister of Finance recalls his days as a member of the Third Party and knows the lack of resources that were available to him. That doesn't diminish the role of the Third Party or the Official Opposition with respect to our responsibility to hold the government to account, as I said earlier, for the stewardship of the fiscal resources of this territory.

We would look to the Minister of Finance to — as he has said repeatedly in the past — work in a cooperative manner with the opposition. When I've been told repeatedly, as Finance critic for this party, that systems have been developed or are being developed — and I recognize that it takes time; I've said to the officials that I understand that it takes time to develop systems — and then I see a material decrease. The minister may find this amusing, but it's actually not. It's not amusing that, as we go forward into the fourth year of a budget tabled by this minister, the information to help explain and help us comprehend where the changes may have been made have decreased rather than increased.

The minister himself has talked about how the activities of government, as we mature as a provincial-like government, become more complicated. This is all the more reason why all members of this Legislative Assembly should be able to walk out of this House without having to make assumptions, but have the same base information.

I am not going to go on, Mr. Deputy Chair. I have made that point and I will continue to make it. I think that is my job, my responsibility as an elected member. I hope that the Minister of Finance shares that expectation and that he will work with us to try to ensure that we have access to timely, accurate information. I hope that he would — this is a small one, but it speaks to the issue of sort of the "gotcha" kind of stuff that occurs. The Premier asserted this afternoon — again, I don't know why the Minister of Finance felt he had the need

to do this — that, in fact, the arrest processing unit is not called the arrest processing unit. Holy goodness — that is what it was called, that is what it is called, that is what the stats show, that is what the press releases say, and that is what the joint funding arrangement with Canada was for.

I hope we are going to get beyond that petty kind of stuff in terms of the to and fro with the Official Opposition Finance critic who, I think in this case, actually rightly pointed out that there was an error. It's simple; it's not a big deal. Why do we have to make it such? There are a hell of a lot more important issues in this budget, but if you can't tell where you got your data from in your performance plan, or your performance report, to substantiate it — and we don't see it attached to anything — that is a problem for all members of this House.

Certainly to goodness, if we're getting our information from CIHI with respect to ER, then somebody in the Department of Health and Social Services has that information. Why not attach it to the budget? Why do we have to have it on a request, or a question coming from a member opposite, as opposed to it just being data that is available?

We will get into the budget debate, the supplementary estimates, at some point, I'm sure. At that point, we will have a number of questions specific to each of the 13 departments and agencies that are listed in the supplementary estimates.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 201, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2019-20*?

Seeing none, we will move to Clause 1.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Deputy Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress. Otherwise, we would be moving from general debate into the departments, as I understand it, and there would not be sufficient time for them to arrive with seven minutes left in the day.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Deputy Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 201, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2019-2020*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: 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 5:21 p.m.