

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, April 10, 2012 — 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.

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of the Battle of Vimy Ridge

Speaker: Today I will be giving a tribute. In doing so, I would normally address this Assembly from my chair — the symbol of the authority you have vested in me — but on this day I will stand, symbolic of the humility I carry as a citizen, an old soldier and a man of peace.

I rise today on behalf of all members of this Assembly to give tribute and attention to so many Canadians long passed, their deeds, and the lasting results of their actions. Each year on the 11th of November, we remember the great sacrifices of all Canadian veterans, past and present, and the accomplishments they have achieved in the name of our country, Canada.

Today is not November 11, nor is it even November, yet at dawn on the morning of Easter Monday, the 9th of April, 1917 — 95 years ago yesterday — after three weeks of preparatory artillery bombardment, the four divisions of the Canadian Expeditionary Force for the first time participated in a battle as a cohesive formation. They were up against the well-fortified, three divisions of the German Sixth Army. The Battle of Vimy Ridge took four days, and on the 12th of April, “The night saw all of Vimy Ridge, with the exception of a few trenches on Hill 145, secure in Canadian hands.” This quote is from the official announcement by the Canadian War Records Office on the Battle of Vimy Ridge, April 1917.

There were those who knew then what had truly been achieved. The victory of Vimy Ridge won for Canada a signature, separate from Britain, on the Versailles peace treaty, which officially ended World War I. The Battle of Vimy Ridge remains an iconic event in Canadian history. It is celebrated in history books, resonates in popular culture, and is firmly lodged in Canadian consciousness. It is considered Canada’s coming of age.

After the war, Brigadier-General A.E. Ross declared, “It was Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific on parade.” I thought then, “In those few minutes I witnessed the birth of a nation.” A nation, by definition, refers to the people who share a common territory and government, irrespective of their ethnic makeup. Canada — truly a nation.

By the end of the war in 1918, at least 50 percent of the Canadian Expeditionary Force consisted of British-born men. Recruiting was difficult among the French-Canadian population, although one battalion, the 22nd, came to be known as the

Van Doos, and was French-speaking. To a lesser extent, other cultural groups were represented, with Ukrainians, Russians, Scandinavians, Italians, Belgians, Dutch, French, Americans, Swiss, Chinese and Japanese men who enlisted. Despite systemic racism directed toward non-whites, a significant contribution was made by individuals of certain ethnic groups, notably the First Nations, Afro-Canadians and Japanese-Canadians. In recognition of Canada’s war effort, France granted Canada perpetual use of 100 hectares of land on Vimy Ridge, under the understanding that Canadians use the land to establish a battle-field park and memorial.

Eleven years in the making, the Vimy Memorial was unveiled on July 26, 1936 by King Edward VIII and dedicated to the memory of the Canadian Expeditionary Force members killed during World War I. It serves as a place of commemoration for the World War I Canadian soldiers killed or presumed dead in France and who have no known grave.

On the monument, there is a group of figures at each end of the front wall next to the base of the steps. The “Breaking of the Sword” is located on the southern corner of the wall, while “Sympathy of the Canadians for the Helpless” is located at the northern corner. Collectively, the two groups are the defenders and represent the ideals for which Canadians gave their lives.

Inscribed on the outside wall of the monument are the names of the 11,285 Canadians killed in France, whose final resting place is still unknown. Despite the dangers of France being overrun during World War II and the ravages of weather, the Vimy Memorial remains a site of memory, mourning, victory, hope and commemoration.

A non-profit organization, the Vimy Foundation, inspired by the heroic victory of the Canadian forces at Vimy Ridge, believes that the key to a successful future lies in knowing one’s past and that the remarkable story of Vimy should be shared with all Canadians, young and old alike.

A Dominion Institute poll taken at the time of the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge revealed that only 30 percent of Canadians recognized the unique importance of the event in our nation’s history. This startling statistic suggests that many Canadians do not immediately recognize the significance of this battle and how its legacy contributed to Canada’s emergence on the world stage.

I would like to thank the Vimy Foundation, which has taken the initiative to share the remarkable story of Vimy with Canada’s youth. A tribute, recognition, and appreciation — I ask all here today to please stand and pay your respects for all that we cherish and hold dear in the name of Canada.

Please rise.

“They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:

“Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

“At the going down of the sun and in the morning

“We will remember them.”

We will remember them.

Please be seated.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that moving and eloquent tribute. I, too, wish to stand and pay tribute to the Battle of Vimy Ridge and its status as a preeminent

and iconic event in Canadian history. Many historians consider the Canadian victory at Vimy Ridge as a defining moment for Canada when the country emerged from under the shadow of Britain and felt capable of greatness. It has been said of the victory at Vimy Ridge that Canada's sons left their homes as young colonials but returned as Canadians.

At Vimy the Canadian corps captured more ground, more prisoners and more guns than any previous British or French offensive in the two and a half years of war. The capture of Vimy was more than just an important battlefield victory. For the first time, all four Canadian divisions attacked together. Men from all regions of Canada were present at this battle. Brigadier General A.E. Ross declared after the war, "In those few minutes I witnessed the birth of a nation."

The price was heavy — 10,500 casualties, including 3,598 dead. The cost, however, paled in comparison to the 200,000 casualties suffered by the British and the French in previous failed attacks. The architects of the victory at Vimy Ridge were Lieutenant-General Sir Julian Byng and Major-General Sir Arthur Currie. The Canadian corps would institute a change in strategy and approach that would truly bring about the beginning of the end.

Byng and Currie would revamp the old habits and inflict the first Allied victory of the war against the German lines. They developed a Canadian offensive strategy that led to victory. Four Canadian soldiers won the Victoria Cross at Vimy, but only one of them survived the war. The Victoria Cross is the highest award for gallantry in the British Commonwealth.

The day after the war was declared in 1914, Canada's Minister of Militia and Defence, the Hon. Sam Hughes, announced that Canada would send 25,000 officers and men to fight for the empire, and a call went out to every militia unit across Canada to send volunteers.

Many Yukoners answered that call. Jack Hulland, the much-beloved teacher, superintendent of education and former member of this Legislature answered that call. He fought at the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

Joe Boyle, King of the Klondike, answered that call. Shortly after the war broke out, he telegraphed Minister Hughes and offered to raise a force of 54 men, complete with equipment including four machine guns. The Yukon contingent became known as Boyle's Yukon detachment of the second regiment, Canadian Mounted Rifles, Canadian Expeditionary Force and included a large husky dog mascot named Jack.

George Black, Commissioner of the Yukon Territory and later Member of Parliament for Yukon and Speaker of the House of Commons of Canada, answered the call. Captain Black mobilized the military unit known as the Yukon Infantry Company, comprised of 226 officers, non-commissioned officers and men who served in France. It was renamed the 17th Machine Gun Company and went into France as C-Battery of the newly formed Second Canadian Machine Gun Brigade.

Sam Steele, the legendary lion of the Yukon, answered the call. In July 1898, Superintendent Sam Steele was appointed to command the North West Mounted Police in Yukon. He brought law and order to the territory. He raised, organized and led the 2nd Canadian Overseas division in England. Major-

General Steele made every effort to ensure that the Canadians under his command would be as well-prepared as possible to go into action and is credited for reducing the number of Canadian casualties because of this training.

Yukon, like Canada itself, contributed more to the war effort than anyone would expect, based on the size of their representative populations. The cenotaphs in Dawson and Whitehorse list those soldiers from Yukon who fought in the Great War and gave their today for our tomorrow.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the Speaker for his tribute and for his leadership in our commemoration today.

I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to the men and women — the 100,000 who 95 years ago fought at Vimy Ridge. Women, not allowed in active combat duty, served on the front lines, caring for the soldiers. There were 3,598 Canadians who paid the ultimate price at Vimy Ridge. They were ordinary folks who left their jobs as clerks, farmers, church ministers and factory workers — everyday Canadians — to fight in a foreign land.

There were 10,602 Canadians wounded in this conflict, which broke a German stronghold and became a major turning point in the war. Countless thousands back home were affected by that day on Easter Monday, 1917. I speak of the children whose fathers would not come home; the mothers, mourning the loss of children; the sisters, who would never again see their big brother; the men and women of Canada who lost their friends.

It has been said already that our experience of World War I, in particular the unity and selfless heroism of Canadians at Vimy Ridge, was a watershed moment in the development of our country. It was the first time in the war that the combined Canadian force was united in combat, and the entire Canadian contingent was commended for their bravery.

The sheer volume of death and casualties in World War I ushered in a new industrialization nation of warfare through the use of trench warfare, chemical warfare, repeating rifles, and air forces.

War is abhorrent, even when the cause is just. On this, the anniversary of Vimy Ridge, my thoughts are with the families who lost brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, children and fathers and how they coped with such a loss.

My grandfather was a combatant in World War I. He was exposed to mustard gas and died shortly after returning home. My grandmother, a teacher, was left with two young girls to raise. I never met my grandfather, but his loss was felt in my home while I was growing up. I felt it through my mother and aunt and their childhood stories.

Mr. Speaker, versions of their stories remain in the hearts and minds of many Canadians today. The sacrifices are not forgotten. On this day, we recognize the bravery and the horror, the achievement and the loss, in such a brief moment, starting on Easter Monday, 95 years ago — lest we forget.

Mr. Silver: I rise today on behalf of the Liberal caucus to mark the 95th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. The assault on Vimy Ridge began April 9, 1917, with four Canadian divisions fighting together for the first time in Canadian history. The fight to take Vimy Ridge cost Canada dearly. In four days 3,600 Canadians soldiers died and another 7,000 were wounded. Canadians helped turned the tide of battle when they won a major victory at Vimy Ridge and established Canada as an independent nation on the world stage.

With the passing of Canada's last surviving veteran of World War I in 2010, it is important that we remember the sacrifices and bravery of our Canadian soldiers.

To promote the legacy of Canada's important contributions to the Allied victory in the First World War, the Vimy Pin was first introduced in February 2009 by the Vimy Foundation. The pin is a symbol promoting the memory of Canada's historic victory at Vimy and will help ensure that the legacy of Vimy and the sacrifices of our soldiers remain alive. The Vimy Pin is emblazoned with a symbolic maple leaf representing Canada; the two towers representing Canada and France, bound together by sacrifice; and the four coloured text boxes representing the four Canadian divisions who fought together for the first time on April 9, 1917 at the Battle of Vimy Ridge. So wear the pin in recognition of the remembrance of our Canadian soldiers who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom.

The Canadian National Vimy Memorial is a symbolic and lasting testament to the sacrifices made by Canadians during the First World War. In Vimy, France, a special commemorative ceremony will commence on April 9, 2012, in the presence of 5,000 Canadian youth who have travelled to Vimy Memorial to mark the 95th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

We all owe a debt of gratitude to our soldiers who have fought and sacrificed their lives for freedom and for the families they have left behind.

Today, we also honour the men and women who serve in our military. Like the veterans at Vimy Ridge, foremost, they are people — the men and women who serve wherever they are needed. They face difficult situations bravely and bring honour to themselves and to the loved ones of their country. They are ordinary Canadians who make extraordinary sacrifices.

We ask that on Monday, April 9, as you celebrate Easter with your families, you take a moment to remember and give thanks for the freedoms we celebrate today because of the sacrifices that were made so long ago.

In closing, I would just like to quote from King George VI: "Without freedom there can be no ensuring peace and without peace no enduring freedom."

Mr. Speaker, may they rest in peace and may they never be forgotten.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I rise today to pay respect to the Vimy Memorial. I was a young soldier in 1988, and I partook in Remembrance Day ceremonies at Vimy Ridge. It's a huge memorial; it's the largest one overseas.

I just will remember looking at it for the first time. The biggest figure there — a 30-tonne block — a soaring figure of a woman representing Canada, a young nation mourning her

dead. Below it is inscribed on the memorial: "To the valour of their countrymen in the Great War and in memory of their sixty-thousand dead, this monument is raised by the people of Canada".

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Today I would like to introduce Ray Anderson, Red Grossinger and Darcy Grossinger from the local Legion. Please assist me in giving them a round of applause.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

Ms. Hanson: I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to take immediate action to protect Yukon renters from the negative impacts of condo conversion by:

(1) supporting the Federation of Canadian Municipalities in their call for the creation of a Building Canada Rental Development Direct Lending Program to stimulate investment in rental units;

(2) developing a strategy, based on models developed in other jurisdictions, to protect tenants from the impact of condo conversion;

(3) establishing territorial regulations to protect rental housing stock; and

(4) working in collaboration with the City of Whitehorse and the Association of Yukon Communities to establish guidelines to protect the supply of rental stock through development and enforcement of municipal condominium conversion policies.

Mr. Silver: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to collaborate with the administration of Dawson City, as has been taking place in the City of Whitehorse, to cooperatively develop municipal mineral-staking policies that will respect the needs of all residents and provide certainty for land users, including those with residential, recreational and mining interests.

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Environment to address low and declining chinook salmon stocks in the territory by:

(1) facilitating the Yukon River Panel's work as it encourages Alaska fishermen to allow sufficient numbers of breeding

salmon through to the Yukon, conducts test fisheries, monitors salmon populations throughout the Yukon River drainage within the territory; and

(2) advocating on behalf of Yukoners with his federal counterpart for an international joint effort to conduct a complete and thorough examination of why our salmon agreements are not working and where and how the management of our salmon runs have failed and work to fix it.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Environment to follow the law by tabling a 2011 state of the environment report and 2009 and 2010 interim state of the environment reports, thereby discharging outstanding obligations under sections 47, 48 and 50 of the *Environment Act*.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: *Financial Administration Act* amendments

Ms. Hanson: It has been a well-established custom for the members of this House to receive briefings on new legislation or on amendments to legislation the government is intending to bring forward. So my question today is for the Premier. It's a simple one. Why is this practice being abandoned?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: This is a matter that has come up among House Leaders' meetings, and, in fact, to correct the Leader of the Official Opposition, that practice has been and will continue to be that on major pieces of legislation, the government does provide briefings on minor amendments. The practice has been to have that discussion occur in this House and through the opportunity during Committee of the Whole review on those pieces of legislation.

There is and will be the opportunity for members of the opposition to ask the ministers responsible questions about the bill and to engage in debate about what that bill is during that time period.

Ms. Hanson: We have seen the effect of debate in this Legislature, and oftentimes it is statements by the members opposite as opposed to debate. What we are simply saying is that briefings on new legislation or amendments to existing legislation do provide members of this House with technical information so that they are better able to participate in the debate on the public's business. It is a shame that a government that styles itself as open, accountable and collaborative does not match its word with action. Not providing legislative briefings is but one example of the worrying trend. Because we have no opportunity to ask questions in a briefing, I will use this opportunity in Question Period to ask the government's plans with respect to the *Financial Administration Act*.

Can the Finance minister explain the proposed changes to the act and the implications to Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, as I indicated to the Leader of the Official Opposition, contrary to what the member indicated, we are following what the practice has been.

The practice has been for the government to provide briefings by officials on major or comprehensive pieces of legislation, but on more minor amendments and smaller bills to bring them before this House and to have the opportunity during Committee of the Whole for members of the opposition to ask questions — directed at the ministers, who will have officials beside them at that time and be able to answer detailed questions — very similar to what occurs in budget debate. Again, we are following what has been the practice. The legislation brought forward this spring — all of those amendments are relatively minor pieces of legislation.

Ms. Hanson: The words of the minister opposite give faint promise of any debate and any sort of meaningful dialogue or response. The *Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act* would allow for the creation of regulations respecting the management, maintenance, proper use, and protection of public property and confer power on the ministers for enforcement.

You know, it's interesting, Mr. Speaker — absent a briefing, one is left to conjecture. For example, with the arrival of spring and with it seasonal workers, coupled with no housing vacancies, it is realistic to suggest that some folks might be forced to pitch a tent on the grounds of the Legislative Assembly. Is this government, through these amendments to the *Financial Administration Act*, attempting to prevent the return of tent city?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, that piece of legislation, as with all of the bills brought before this House, will be brought forward for review in Committee of the Whole. There will be the opportunity for members to get into detailed questions and detailed responses by the ministers responsible on each of those pieces of legislation at that time. I would encourage the member to direct her questions to the minister and to officials during debate.

Question re: Affordable housing

Ms. Stick: Any reduction in stock of affordable rental accommodations would be a crisis for renters. What if a tenant were told that the apartment they've been living in for years has become a condo? To stay in the unit, they would need to purchase it; otherwise, face eviction. Imagine the impact this would have on a senior, a single-parent family, or a newcomer to the territory. We know the current availability of rentals, and it's not good. We have seen this process occur in Whitehorse where whole apartment blocks have been converted to condos. Pitched as "affordable" for young professionals across Canada, the market solution of condo conversion has backfired. Condo conversion displaces long-term tenants by increasing real estate speculative values and driving up rents.

Mr. Speaker, what is the government doing today to protect long-term renters from seeing their homes converted to condos?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Of course, across the housing continuum, this government has been very active. We certainly want to ensure that among the housing options there are options for the private rental market.

Of course, the recent announcement of a request for proposals on Lot 262, which will include some affordable rental

units, is very encouraging. As well, the Yukon Housing Corporation has programs — the rental rehabilitation program, which helps owners of rental housing to upgrade accommodations; and a rental suite program that includes loans for rental suites in private homes and for garden suites on private property. So there are a number of initiatives that this government has undertaken, and will continue to undertake, to ensure that a private rental market continues to be part of the housing continuum here in the Yukon.

Ms. Stick: The Federation of Canadian Municipalities recommends investment in new rental construction to remedy a housing system that's pricing new Canadians, young workers, low-income seniors and single parents out of the market. We heard today on the radio of individuals coming here to work, finding jobs, but not finding a place to live. Across Canada, condominium conversion has not solved the housing shortage. The problem with condominium conversion is that it removes rentals from the market. Can the government assure Yukoners it has a plan to address condominium conversion and associated decrease of available rental units?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my previous answer, I think it's extremely important that the rental market and private rentals be a significant part of the housing continuum — the continuum that includes, of course, emergency shelters, transitional housing, supportive housing, social housing — which is the responsibility of the Yukon Housing Corporation — as well as that private market rental I spoke of, and home ownership.

That's what we endeavour to do. It is witnessed by the request for proposals for Lot 262 here in Whitehorse and ensuring that part of that proposal includes affordable rental housing.

I know that the Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors is undertaking the renewal of their strategic plan so, as part of that, I will certainly mention what the Member for Riverdale South has brought up here today, which is the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' work on rental housing.

Ms. Stick: On March 27, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources told the Legislature, and I quote: "We will certainly evaluate what we see through the tender process of Lot 262 for determining how we might apply similar approaches to disposing of land in the future — again, addressing specific needs such as rental accommodation."

It is my understanding that this project will not be completed until 2014.

In the meantime, is the minister telling Yukoners to wait until then for an evaluation of the plan for Lot 262, before it will begin to address the immediate needs for more rental accommodations?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, as I indicated to the member with regard to the specific lot, that specific project — in fact the member is a year too late in her timelines. We expect the development of this lot — hopefully by a year from now, perhaps even later in 2012. Timelines for the required approvals on Lot 262 from the city perspective are in the hands of the city itself. So, no, that project will proceed quicker than the member indicated.

Again, I would elaborate on what my colleague, the Minister for Yukon Housing Corporation, indicated. The government has taken significant steps through Yukon Housing Corporation investing in new social housing stock with an increase of some 40 percent in social housing units over the past nine years. We are currently, through the Department of Community Services, primarily investing significant amounts in the development of new lots. We have almost \$35 million invested in this year's budget in the development of new lots for Yukoners within this current fiscal year's budget.

Again, as I emphasized, the Lot 262 process is a process we committed to specifically during the election. It is an innovative approach and we will evaluate how well that works to determine where we may be able to better develop land that is currently titled and owned by the Yukon government, especially within the City of Whitehorse.

Question re: Chinook salmon stock

Mr. Elias: We've recently learned that our imperiled chinook salmon stocks are in even greater danger. Last year, the pre-season predictions were for a below-average run from Alaska. Steps were taken to let as many chinook salmon as possible through to breed. Although some chinook salmon were unavoidably caught in chum salmon fisheries, fishermen weren't allowed to sell the chinook they did catch and that helped limit the by-catch. This year, the joint Alaska/Yukon River panel warns that the chinook salmon run has worsened, and the outlook is now for a below-average-to-poor return.

We'd like to know how the Minister of Environment is planning to advocate on behalf of Yukoners to turn this trend of failing salmon stocks around.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: When it comes to the management of Yukon's fish and wildlife populations, the Yukon government, of course, works collaboratively with its partners, which include the renewable resource councils, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board — which of course is identified by the *Umbrella Final Agreement* as the primary instrument for the management of fish and wildlife in Yukon — and the sub-committee of the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, the salmon committee.

I haven't had a chance to meet with that specific committee yet, but I intend to listen to any recommendations that they might have with regard to managing our chinook and other salmon populations in Yukon.

Mr. Elias: Here's a bit of history for the minister. Over the years that I've been in the Assembly, we've seen several poor runs of chinook salmon in the Yukon and Porcupine rivers and the worst ever run in the Klukshu River. We've seen Yukon-wide salmon conservation closures. We've seen only 399 salmon get through the Whitehorse Fishway. We've seen the Alaskans taking too many chinook salmon. We've seen the pollock fishery by-catch in the hundreds of thousands out in the open ocean. We've seen the parasite *Ichthyophonus* also hurting the salmon run in our territory, and we've seen retail store owners around the territory lose hundreds of thousands of dollars in retail sales because of salmon closures. That's what I've seen during my time in this Legislature. When is the Environment minister going to make this a priority issue?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: As I said, of course we work collaboratively with our partners, whether they are the renewable resource councils, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, or the Yukon Fish and Management Board sub-committee on salmon to manage our fish and wildlife populations in Yukon. The relationship between Yukon and Alaska is an important one when it comes to management of species that are shared by both Alaska and Yukon, so I anticipate that we'll be raising any issues we need to raise with our colleagues in Alaska as well.

Mr. Elias: I hope that what I am hearing is not that the minister is going to wait for someone else to act. We need the international *Yukon River Salmon Agreement* to work at the highest levels. History has proven that the management of the salmon fishery needs serious attention in our territory. Here is one thing that the minister can do: He can be a part of an international joint effort to conduct a complete and thorough examination of why our agreements are not working, where and how the management of our salmon runs have failed and work to fix it.

I recognize that the Yukon Party's previous premier brought this to the Prime Minister's attention and we need to do this again. When is the Minister of Environment going to make the Yukon chinook salmon run a priority issue? Will the minister commit to doing this?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: As I said, we have an excellent working relationship with the co-management bodies such as the Fish and Wildlife Management Board as outlined in the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. The salmon sub-committee of the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board is doing a lot of excellent work with regard to managing our salmon species in Yukon. Of course, I look forward to hearing any recommendations that they might have and look forward to meeting with them to discuss this matter.

Question re: Social inclusion policy

Mr. Barr: Recently, we have been advised by some rural families that they had to approach the Whitehorse Food Bank to use their services. The fact that rural families are now turning to the food bank is alarming. Is the Minister of Health and Social Services aware of the increasing use of the Whitehorse Food Bank by rural families and what is his response to this need?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'm aware that families from several rural communities take advantage of the food bank services when they're in Whitehorse. All I can say is there are a variety of reasons. I've talked with the president of the Whitehorse Food Bank, and he informs me on an ongoing basis of the clientele that is coming into the food bank. There are a variety of reasons why this is happening and it's something that we're trying to deal with.

Mr. Barr: It is understandable that with high costs of rent, families in Whitehorse would find it necessary to use the food bank. But food banks are meant for emergencies and not for consistent use as a regular source of food, which appears may be the case. The increasing use of the food bank and the fact that rural people will travel into Whitehorse to use it, pre-

sumably spending gas money to do so, brings up a serious question about rural poverty.

Will the Minister of Health and Social Services consider rural families as being a special category of need and look to assisting them to access the Whitehorse Food Bank or to create a rural food bank?

Hon. Mr. Graham: That's why we have a social assistance program and that's why the social assistance payments are indexed. Social assistance is clearly available, not only in municipalities but in rural communities as well. We are quite convinced or quite happy with the fact that the current social assistance rates are adequate, but in these times of high rent and difficulties, in some cases, with obtaining rental accommodations because of prices, we're taking a look at that from a social assistance viewpoint.

Mr. Barr: The rising number of food banks across Canada is a consequence of the increasing gap between rich and poor. Food banks and other charities that support the poor in emergencies do little to change the situation. We look to the day when these charities are no longer needed.

How will the inclusion policy being developed by the minister include a strategy that will solve some of the differences between rich and poor and between rural and urban families?

Hon. Mr. Graham: That's one of the reasons we have a consultation process in place for the social inclusion policy. I won't jump ahead and pre-determine what the results of that social inclusion consultation will be. We will wait for it to occur.

Question re: Acutely intoxicated persons at risk

Ms. Stick: In reply to budget questions, the Minister of Justice stated that anyone brought to the arrest processing unit in the Whitehorse Correctional Centre would "... indeed need to be under arrest". This means that anyone found to be intoxicated to the extent that they may harm themselves or others is arrested and taken to the adult processing unit. Some of these arrests do not necessarily lead to charges. In that case, they are allowed to become sober and then set free, perhaps with a ride back downtown. This is a policy that's not far removed from where we found ourselves months ago with the drunk tank at the cells in downtown Whitehorse.

With several reports on his desk indicating other solutions, does the minister have a plan to deal with severely intoxicated persons at risk that is not just a repeat of what we have done in the past?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. Indeed, the APU, or the arrest processing unit, is being established. It's currently in the admissions area of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. In the coming months, we will start construction to place the APU on the back of Whitehorse Correctional Centre. In that facility there will be medical care for people coming in and regular checks for people who have been arrested and who are being detained for a period of time, whether it is for release into the community or pending court appearances.

Ms. Stick: Evidence is readily available to both the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Health and Social Services that the corrections system is not the place for people

who are at risk due to substance abuse. Other jurisdictions have found other solutions, as indicated in the Beaton and Allen report, which was completed 16 months ago. The minister also has access to models that advocate a policy of housing first, to combat this chronic problem, such as the Northern City Supportive Housing Coalition proposal. We are told that a medical detox is in the works for the distant future.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a panacea.

Will the Minister of Health and Social Services or Justice assure the House that they are considering more progressive solutions to the problems of substance abuse?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, we've already taken a number of steps. We now have a clinic established outside of the Whitehorse General Hospital in a downtown clinic for persons with addiction difficulties. We also have recently made the announcement about the medical detox unit at the Sarah Steele Building. We hopefully will be coming up with a few more solutions so at least the rebuild of the Sarah Steele Building will give us an opportunity to look at additional solutions.

Ms. Stick: There is an abundance of evidence from research and opinions from medical associations and legal associations, both nationally and in the Yukon, to support a policy of harm reduction. Intoxicated persons at risk of harm should be treated as a medical or a social problem, not taken to jail to sober up and then left to their own devices. They need supportive housing and a broad array of social supports.

Does the minister support a harm-reduction policy and, if so, when will we see a policy in action?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Once again, I can only indicate some of the things we've done. We are in the process of implementing or building or renovating 207 Alexander Street to make that available for people who are hard to house. These are all parts of the puzzle. We're not saying that we've solved it, but what we're saying is that with the number of items that we are putting in place, we are gradually getting to a point where we will better be able to deal with addictions in the territory.

Question re: Water management strategy

Ms. White: The *Environment Act* establishes that the Government of Yukon, and the Minister of Environment in particular, is, and I quote: "the trustee of the public trust and is therefore responsible for the protection of the collective interest of the people of the Yukon in the quality of the natural environment", end quote.

We've heard rumours yet again that the wholesale responsibility for inspecting water licences for mining projects is about to be transferred from Environment Yukon to the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. Will the Minister of Environment confirm or deny this transfer of his responsibilities?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Of course, when it comes to Yukon's water resources, the Department of Environment plays a significant role in assessing Yukon's water resources and monitoring water resources. Of course, when it comes to mining developments, we provide a number of baseline data, and a significant amount of information that we work on collaboratively with Energy, Mines and Resources in providing.

Ms. White: The Minister of Environment's colleague, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, is on record agreeing with industry's desire to streamline the environmental inspections by making Energy, Mines and Resources the lead for a one-stop inspections process. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources replied to Yukon Zinc that he agreed with the company's preference for streamlining environmental processes to make them more efficient.

Given that Energy, Mines and Resources is the department that promotes industrial development, will the Minister of Environment tell us what his position is on letting Energy, Mines and Resources be the lead on environmental inspections that are currently done by Environment Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: What the member is not reflecting is the fact that indeed there are a number of areas in which the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Department of Environment work collaboratively.

An example is that inspections relating to water for placer mining and the inspections related to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' responsibilities have been delegated to and carried out effectively by staff of the Client Services and Inspections divisions of Energy, Mines and Resources for quite some time. The area the member is referring to — again, I would point out that the Minto mine inspections have been dealt with by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources.

I would again emphasize to all members that what this government expects of staff of respective departments and what we get is people fulfilling their responsibilities to accurately provide information at the assessment point and at the inspection and monitoring end. They fully discharge their responsibility to the public in doing that inspection and doing that monitoring effectively and appropriately.

Ms. White: Yukon's environmental regulatory regime has been built on a division of responsibilities that lead to a greater oversight in accountability. We all remember the disaster in the Gulf of Mexico with the blowout of the Deepwater Horizon drilling platform. In that case, the department that was responsible for inspections was also the promoter of oil and gas development and the collector of licensing and lease fees.

It was this streamlining that was partially to blame for that disaster.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Environment commit to upholding the public trust and maintain the proper division of environmental inspections separate from the department that promotes the resource extraction industries?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, Mr. Speaker, what I, as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, find quite offensive is the attitude by the NDP toward staff of my department. All of my colleagues and I expect staff of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, and the staff of each and every Yukon government department, who have legal obligations related to monitoring and inspection, whether it be water, whether it be land, whether it be air quality — to name but a few — we expect those people to fully fulfill their responsibilities under the law. We are confident that they do so, regardless of what department they are housed in. We have trust in them, and we expect them to fulfill the public's trust in upholding

their obligations under the law and fulfilling their obligations on behalf of Yukon citizens. I am offended by the NDP's characterization that the staff of my department does not do exactly that.

Question re: Trapper support program

Mr. Elias: We have 334 traplines and 17 group trapping areas in the Yukon. We cannot put a value on the skills, abilities and knowledge of Yukon trappers who know the land like the back of their hand. Over the past 25 years, Yukon's fur harvest has fluctuated in value between \$200,000 and \$1.7 million annually, with economic spin-offs up to \$2 million to \$3 million. The economic, social and cultural value of trapping is significant here in the Yukon. It is a winter revenue source in smaller communities when unemployment is traditionally high.

Is the minister prepared to implement a trapper support program here in the Yukon and truly diversify our economy?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I have to say that, in general, I agree with the member opposite's characterizations of the trapping industry. It is indeed an important aspect of Yukon's economy, society and cultural history. The Yukon Department of Environment has maintained a positive relationship with the Yukon Trappers Association and does continue to provide funding to that organization to the tune of, I believe, \$35,000 on an annual basis. We have a positive relationship with the Trappers Association, and I look forward to working with that association to develop programming to assist the trapping industry in Yukon.

Mr. Elias: There are excellent programs around the north that do diversify the economy with regard to trapping. There are successful models out there that we can build upon here in our territory. Getting Yukoners out on the land and trapping during the winter months is great for wildlife management. I'll give an example here. Let's say Yukoners notice an increase of beaver dams being built across creeks around the Yukon and what that does to block the fish from getting to their spawning grounds, including salmon. Some of the objectives of the trapper support program would be to increase financial returns to trappers, promote and recognize excellence in fur harvesting and pelt handling, encouraging the participation of our youth and be market-responsive and market-driven. Will the minister at least give the proper direction and resources to the Department of Environment to conduct a trap exchange program and begin the development of a trapper support program?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Of course, as I said, Environment Yukon is fully willing to engage with the revived Yukon Trappers Association, and, of course, any First Nation or renewable resources council wishing to participate in a discussion regarding the challenges facing the industry and the identification of policy options that will support the development and growth of Yukon's fur industry over the longer term.

To reiterate, the Department of Environment does provide financial assistance to the Yukon Trappers Association and is engaged with them in developing policy options, including some of those mentioned by the member opposite.

Mr. Elias: I have been advocating in this Legislature for a trapper support program for some time now because I believe it is a realistic and responsible approach to revitalizing our trapping industry in the territory. This is the kind of initia-

tive that could be part of a pan-northern vision for a stronger north and a better Canada with our sister territories. For example, the Genuine McKenzie Valley Furs program in the Northwest Territories provides a comprehensive fur marketing service and security for the industry. So, you see, there are successful examples out there that can be built upon for a more prosperous Yukon to diversify our economy and to get people out there trapping.

Is the minister prepared to implement a trapper support program here in the Yukon and truly diversify our economy?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: What I am prepared to do, of course, is continue to engage with the Yukon Trappers Association, which is the primary industry association for the trapping industry. I believe that the Yukon wild fur industry has a significant amount of potential, but this potential will not be realized until a widely acceptable means can be found to promote utilization of traplines. Environment Yukon has worked closely with the Yukon Trappers Association in reviewing their business plans and identifying resources to support the association as the representative organization for trappers. As I said, of course, I remain committed to remaining engaged with that organization and look forward to any policy recommendations they might have.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of opposition private members' business

Mr. Tredger: 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, April 11, 2012: Bill No. 102, standing in the name of the Member for Riverdale South.

Mr. Silver: 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, April 11, 2012: Motion No. 45, standing in the name of the Member for Klondike.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 6, *First Appropriation Act, 2012-13*. Today we are going to be discussing Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works. Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 6: *First Appropriation Act, 2012-13* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 6, *First Appropriation Act, 2012-13*. Today we will be debating Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works.

Department of Highways and Public Works

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Madam Chair, Highways and Public Works is a diverse department that is responsible for constructing, managing and maintaining Yukon's roads and highways, airports and government-owned lease facilities.

The department also provides the entire government with information technology, Queen's Printer and fleet-vehicle services as well as procurement services. The branches within the department share the responsibility for planning, procurement, construction, maintenance and disposal of Government of Yukon infrastructure and assets. The challenges of maintaining infrastructure and assets in the north are many, trust me. Our vast territory and limited population base mean that my department has to be innovative in how it manages responsibilities to protect the public and its assets. Other challenges for our department include our remote location, harsh climate, a limited construction season, aging infrastructure, melting permafrost and increased resource and economic development activities.

We need to be strategic in our planning, make good decisions and prioritize our projects in a manner that makes best use of the public purse. We do this while ensuring that Yukon roads and highways, buildings and other resources are maintained in an effective manner and ensuring the public safety. The department recently adopted a new vision and value statements that drive how we carry out our responsibilities. As a department, Highways and Public Works is building foundations with our federal, municipal and First Nation partners working together.

We seek to inspire innovation and aim to exceed expectation in the services we provide to Yukoners and the rest of the government. Our values include protecting the public and Yukon's assets and being innovative while achieving this goal. Within Highways and Public Works, we collaborate with our client departments in order to meet their needs.

We also recognize each other within the department and the contributions we provide to the rest of the Yukon's government. These responsibilities and challenges result in the initiatives identified in this budget. I am pleased to present to the House today Highways and Public Works' budget for the 2012-13 fiscal year.

I would like to address the \$56.5 million in transportation infrastructure, \$40.8 million for building assets and \$10.8 million for information technology assets that are led by Highways

and Public Works. I will speak specifically to some of these projects now.

Critical infrastructure such as roads, highways and bridge improvements contribute to healthy and viable Yukon communities and they are essential to the economic and social development of the north.

Highways and Public Works is committed to improving the safety and functionality of the Takhini Hot Springs Road by completing work that will accommodate the area's population growth which we know is increasing; enhancing recreational opportunities in the area; providing safer recreational trails; and providing a widened road with BST, more commonly known as "chipseal".

As part of our planning process for this project, local residents and businesses were consulted and a functional planning report was developed. Primary engineering and design work is complete and we are ready to proceed with this construction. These improvements will provide a higher quality ride for road users, and safety improvements for both motorized and non-motorized traffic in this road corridor.

Mr. Chair, my department has allocated \$2 million for this project to proceed. Highways and Public Works recognizes the high volume of traffic on Takhini Hot Springs Road. This road is crucial to the quality of life and economic well-being of the people and businesses who are regular users of this road. These improvements will benefit a variety of users of this road that include vehicles, ATVs, snowmobiles, cyclists, cross-country skiers, dog mushers, joggers, hikers, and horseback riders.

As I mentioned above, Madam Chair, strategic planning is so important to an operational department such as highways and Public Works. To this end, we have also invested \$1.03 million toward the planning of local safety improvements for our primary highways. This planning provides for the delivery of small-scale projects in response to specific highway operations or maintenance problems.

Projects proposed for the 2012-13 fiscal year are: sub-grade strengthening at kilometre 1240 on the Alaska Highway; rock scaling at various locations between kilometres 50 and 60 of the Klondike Highway; guardrail repairs which are definitely needed in various locations between kilometre 192, in junction with the Alaska Highway, and kilometre 538, the Stewart Crossing and the Klondike Highway; rip-rap installation at various locations between kilometres 660 and 675 of the Klondike Highway; and active speed-limit signs installation in the Beaver Creek and Tagish areas.

Small projects of this kind arise on a short-term basis and present difficulties in forecasting over the long term. Allocating funds for this type of planning helps the department deal with these difficulties and ensures that Yukon's primary highways remain safe for the travelling public.

Most of us know that the Yukon's population is growing at a rapid rate, and the department must incorporate this into the planning process to accommodate higher traffic volumes. An important corridor for Yukoners is the Whitehorse corridor along the Alaska Highway, kilometre 1404 to kilometre 1437.

Traffic volume with this corridor is increasing to the point where the existing two-lane highway is approaching its limits in terms of capacity and safety performance. A clear long-term plan for eventual reconstruction is required before any construction work is initiated, and the department has allocated \$200,000 toward moving this necessary planning project forward. The plan will make it clear to all stakeholders what to expect and when to expect it. The planning process will provide an opportunity for all interested and concerned parties to make their views known. Future construction phases will result in construction jobs for Yukoners. Once completed, the safety performance throughout the corridor will be improved and delays due to large traffic volumes will be reduced.

Another road that has been experiencing increased traffic volumes over the years is the Silver Trail. Highways and Public Works is dedicating \$500,000 to restore and rehabilitate the highways infrastructure, including the driving surface, the road subgrade, safety barriers, and adjacent drainage structures. This initiative has been developed to bring the road surface to a gravel standard that can be adequately bladed. Commercial traffic, tourists and other highways users will benefit from these improvements, as it will lessen the negative impacts on highway users such as vehicle upkeep — flat tires.

Work continues on the Dempster Highway, a vital link to Canada's most northern communities in the Northwest Territories. This year, the department has allocated half a million dollars toward the ongoing rehabilitation of this highway that will include restoring the road surface. This will improve the driving surface and repair safety barriers and adjacent drainage structures. Summer traffic has steadily been increasing on this stretch of the road. Tourists and local area residents will appreciate these improvements, as will freight carriers and mineral and oil and gas exploration companies. This work will result in an improved travelling experience on the highway without a large decrease in speed due to a rough highway surface — once again, flat tires.

As part of the department's planning process, we use inspection reports for our bridges and roads, and building condition reports to assess conditions of our facilities. This information helps us allocate resources to the projects that are the highest priority. Inspection reports at Too Much Gold and Allgold creeks on the Klondike Highway in Dawson indicate that culverts need to be replaced at both creeks and some road construction will also be needed. We have set aside \$1.6 million, and we are committed to this important work. Replacing these culverts will reduce maintenance costs associated with routine cleanouts of these culverts and provide a safer driving environment on this road.

Highways and Public Works considers the environment in its decision-making process. These new culverts will also better enable fish passage that benefits the downstream fishery resources.

Due to the current exploration boom, industrial traffic has increased on the North Canol Road. Interim upgrades and safety improvements are required to ensure the usability of the road and maintain a level of safety for service providers and all road users. Highways and Public Works has allocated \$1 mil-

lion to undertake this work. In addition, we have committed \$450,000 to conduct geotechnical investigations to secure long-term gravel sources through finding gravel pits for ongoing maintenance as well as finalizing ongoing environmental assessment. This work is required so the department is prepared, should there ever be a need for any large-scale reconstruction on this route.

Secondary roads are generally low-volume roads accessing residential or recreational areas. We have lots of these roads and they are typically gravelled though some have been treated with BST. A BST surface is an inexpensive paved surface that is an alternative to the more expensive asphalt/concrete surface. The department has allocated \$1 million toward secondary road upgrades that will include improvements to the Judas Creek and Pilot Mountain subdivisions. Commercial and recreational vehicles will benefit from the reduced travel time and reduction in truck and vehicle repair costs and the improved road surface will also increase traffic volumes that will benefit the tourism business, which is a good thing.

We debated that last Wednesday.

Another important program the department manages is the rural roads upgrade program. The rural roads upgrade program provides for an application process where upgrading may be provided for non-industrial rural roads. This program identifies potential smaller scale projects and minor road upgrades to improve access for a variety of users. Specific projects are identified from applications received and approved under the policy on an ongoing basis. These projects are proponent based and therefore reflect local needs in the rural communities. Typically, these small projects have an immediate positive effect on access for people, thereby improving the economy and quality of life for Yukoners. The department has again committed \$200,000 to this program for this year.

The construction of the Campbell Highway is also an important initiative for the department this year. We will continue the reconstruction of the remaining unimproved sections of the Campbell Highway. These sections lie between the end of the pavement at kilometre 10, which is north of Watson Lake, and kilometre 110, which is just north of the junction of the Nahanni Range Road.

Work will include reconstruction of the roadbed, resurfacing with BST, alignment improvements to meet the 90-kilometre-per-hour design standard and drainage improvements. This project is ongoing from the past years, and this year the department has allocated \$7.25 million toward the continuous improvements.

Also slated for the Campbell Highway are interim surface repairs from kilometre 110 to 190. These improvements are meant to maintain the integrity of the road surface until future road reconstruction can happen. \$1.5 million is slated for this work and will be carried out, in collaboration with the department's Transportation Engineering branch and private equipment rentals. Both the commercial trucking industry and private citizens will benefit from these upgrades.

On one of my rural tours, when I was up that road, we listened to the truckers on there talk about the increased work on

the road and how it was a lot safer for the other people traveling that road.

Work continues also on the Atlin Road. This year, Highways and Public Works have allocated \$2.6 million for reconstruction that will happen from kilometre 32 to kilometre 36.5. This work will include earthwork, drainage improvements, base construction, guide rail replacement, and BST surfacing. The resulting road will meet an 80-kilometre-per-hour design standard and have a BST surface.

Preliminary engineering and environmental studies will be undertaken to ensure the department is ready for additional improvements and upgrades in the future. Although this stretch of road has low traffic volumes, the road must endure adverse weather conditions, and improvements will increase the operation and safety, as well as reducing the maintenance costs and vehicle operating costs. This project will also generate work for contractors, as well as potential employment for some of the local area residents.

Another critical element of the department's planning and management processes is a comprehensive pavement management system that has been in place for a number of years. This system indicates that much of our asphalt pavement is long overdue for rehabilitation. Part of this rehabilitation process includes pavement overlays with warm mix asphalt. The department has allocated \$2.93 million for this type of work, and this is going to happen on the Alaska Highway from kilometre 1437 to 1442, and on the Klondike Highway from kilometre 24 to 25 and 36 to 37. This work increases the level of operating safety and also, again, reduces maintenance costs in the short term, and improves the surface quality of the highway for all users.

Near and dear to my heart here, in its 35th year, the Shakwak project continues in partnership with the Government of Canada, the Government of the United States, the Government of Alaska and Government of Yukon.

To date, this project has encompassed the rehabilitation of the Alaska Highway and Haines Road and the replacements of the Beaver Creek, the Donjek, the Duke and the Slims River bridges, which are great bridges — worth the travel up there. The rehabilitation work on the Alaska Highway is quite challenging due to the impacts of melting permafrost. Most travelers on the Alaska Highway are well aware of the frost heaves created by melting permafrost underneath the roadbed. We have talked about this before.

We continue to analyze data that is being collected at the department's permafrost testing site near Beaver Creek, in collaboration with our partners, the U.S. Federal Highway Administration, Public Works and Government Services Canada, Transport Canada, the Yukon Research Centre of Excellence at Yukon College, the Alaska University Transportation Centre, and the Université Laval in Quebec. This research provides much needed information required to develop cost-effective techniques to protect roadbeds from the melting permafrost. This will help to reduce highway repair costs and improve road safety. Both Canada and the United States realize the potential economic impacts of climate change, so this is quite a necessity. Permafrost remediation work is also part of the Shakwak

project, and this year \$7 million is committed to repairing the road at various locations on the Haines Road. This work will include stabilizing the roadbed and BST patching and upgrading.

The department will also continue its paving program on the Shakwak project with another warm mix asphalt application at kilometre 232.5 — Quill Creek — and at kilometre 245 on the Haines Road.

Another \$8 million will be spent on repairs at various locations from kilometre 1700 to kilometre 1902 on the Alaska Highway under the Shakwak project. These repairs will include work such as grade restoration, repairing or replacing culverts, BST patching to lessen the impacts caused by melting permafrost. This work will not only increase safety, but may reduce damages caused to private and commercial vehicles.

In addition to work being done under the Shakwak project, the department plans to restore existing highway surfaces from Whitehorse to the Yukon-Alaska border, west of Beaver Creek. The most severe frost heaves are between Whitehorse and the Takhini River and in Destruction Bay to the north Yukon-Alaska border. The remediation work in these areas will improve the quality of the ride and increase safety for travellers. These improvements will also reduce driving time. Commercial and recreational drivers will benefit, so will the local residents and, of course, Alaskans — their only link to Alaska.

Tourism business will also be pleased about the capacity for increased traffic volumes. The department is allocating \$1 million to this rehabilitation of the Alaska Highway. Along with the 4,850 kilometres of roads, the department also maintains 128 bridges and crosses the many rivers and creeks flowing through the Yukon. While roads and highways connect our communities, the bridges are critical for Yukon's transportation system. As some of you know, our partners in the Northwest Territories that deal with —

Chair: The minister has one minute left.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I have one minute left? That's it? Okay. Well, I'll talk slower.

This year, Highways and Public Works has committed \$6 million to replacing decks and bridges and to retrofit some of our infrastructure. The department will dedicate another \$500,000 toward resource-based upgrades to some of these existing mining roads.

The Highways and Public Works mandate is to provide necessary infrastructure and support safe air travel and support commercial growth. The other thing I wanted to touch on is allocating \$3.31 million toward —

Chair: Order please.

Ms. Moorcroft: I would like to thank the minister for his opening remarks and the department officials for a fairly thorough briefing earlier in this sitting.

I would like to ask the minister if he can reply with the total number of full-time equivalencies employed in the Department of Highways and Public Works. As well, I'm looking for a breakdown of the number of positions and the total value of the communications budget across all branches and management areas. Also, if the minister would also like to finish his

sentence from his introductory remarks that would be fine as well.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. The FTEs were something that were brought to my attention earlier.

I know that when I first started working for Highways and Public Works years ago, we had a lot of employees — a lot of auxiliary, on-call positions and stuff like that. Actually, through talking to the department, I asked the same question as the member. I was wondering where we were going with that. We have fewer auxiliary employees and more permanent jobs. We can attest to that. To go to some of the grader stations, a lot of the employees went on to auxiliary positions; some are in winter. A lot of them have now been able to have a permanent position, which helps toward their holiday time, pension — and they do not get hit so hard by the tax man.

The other question the member asked was about our communications people. I think we have 3.5 dedicated people towards communication, but each individual group — a little department. We have communications people who work in all our little departments also. There is always somebody who is identified, and that comes out to 3.5 with 900 employees — 3.5 people cannot do all of the media work, so we like to go across to each department to be hands on when it comes to that stuff.

Chair: I would just like to remind all of the members to address their questions and answers through the Chair, please.

Ms. Moorcroft: I didn't hear an answer from the minister. I had asked if he had with him the figures. We had indicated in the budget briefing that this is information that we would be seeking. I would like to know how many full-time equivalency positions there are in the Department of Highways and Public Works, including the two special operating agencies — the Fleet Vehicle Agency and the Queen's Printer Agency? I would also like to know the number of auxiliaries and the number of casuals who are employed in the department.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Madam Chair, we have a grand total of 853 FTEs. We have 14 casuals and also seasonally active — we would have 32.

Ms. Moorcroft: Can the minister tell us how many auxiliaries have been employed in the workforce for more than three years as auxiliaries?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I can't answer that for you right now. I can get back to you with that information.

Ms. Moorcroft: Looking at the summary page for Vote 55, the Department of Highways and Public Works, the total expenditures have increased by more than \$10 million and the revenues have decreased by almost \$9 million — \$8,955,000. Does the minister have any concerns about how increasing costs with decreasing revenues may not be sustainable?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: A lot of the cost increases are through the collective agreement and projects. The decrease was because that's Building Canada funding that is for finishing up on some of these projects.

Ms. Moorcroft: Yes, that's an important factor that the minister has just raised. The stimulus funding that was

forced on the previous minority Conservative government by NDP and Liberal opposition members has now been decreased and I want to know how the government is going to deal with it. They know that their revenues have decreased and yet their expenditures have gone up more than \$10 million. The minister did mention the collective agreement increases, but I think that that would be a fairly small fraction of the \$10-million increase overall.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Most of our investment is on our overall capital plan — the whole plan — and a lot of the increases are through collective bargaining with O&M. We go through an extensive list of our buildings, our infrastructure, our roads. We prioritize projects that need to be done.

As I was just talking about — the 128 bridges that we have and the kilometres of roads — but that is just what people see out there. Our Internet technology and stuff like that — we look at ways of streamlining and saving money, for one. Stealing from Peter to pay Paul — that's what we have to do, Madam Chair.

Ms. Moorcroft: When I met with the minister earlier this winter, I had a copy of the strategic plan with me for Highways and Public Works from 2011 to 2016. He indicated that it would be substantially changed when they brought forward a new strategic plan for 2012 to 2017. Is that ready yet? Have the revisions to the strategic plan been undertaken and can the minister table those?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I will table that. It is just about finished. As soon as it is done, it will be tabled. There will be some changes, Madam Chair, but I will table it as soon as it is finished.

Ms. Moorcroft: All right, thank you. Well, looking at the strategic plan that is presently in effect, it does set out a number of goals that I would imagine would be similar to what this minister will be undertaking.

One of their goals to advance strategic corporate initiatives though interdepartmental cooperation — they set out a number of ways to accomplish that. Interdepartmental cooperation is so important to the efficient running of government. I applaud the minister's efforts on that.

I'd like to ask him how he is building new First Nation relations in a modern treaty environment just to start with one, and how the department is working to combat poverty and promote social inclusion. What actions have been taken to date on those corporate initiatives in the Highways and Public Works strategic plan?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: First Nation relations are dealt with under ECO and are probably best taken up with the Finance minister, under ECO.

I would like to speak a little bit about interdepartmental working relationships. Near and dear to this government's heart is cooperation and collaboration between the departments. Some of the stuff that has been looked at, whether it's space management through departments when it come to the smaller communities, whether it's procurement services and having my department, HPW, work with the other departments in contracts.

It was evident in the past that we need to do a better job. Highways and Public Works has really worked hard at that and engaged all the deputy ministers and the other departments to have a better working relationship.

Ms. Moorcroft: The Highways and Public Works strategic plan on page 9 of the document says that, to advance strategic corporate initiatives through interdepartmental cooperation, the department will build new First Nation relations in a modern treaty environment.

I'd like to again ask the minister to come back to this question and indicate what kinds of initiatives Highways and Public Works has undertaken to accomplish this goal the department set out?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: At this level, the Yukon asset construction agreements — the YACA agreements when we get into contracts with contractors, when we build facilities, when we do things that are over X amount of dollars — this is some of the stuff we talk about — working with the First Nations on that, the agreements set out under the *Umbrella Final Agreement*.

Ms. Moorcroft: Throughout the strategic plan for the department and as well, in the minister's opening remarks, there were comments about climate change and the resulting permafrost melt and polar ice loss, which increases the wear and tear on our infrastructure. One of the solutions to climate change is to take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the department has said it will play a leadership role in the greening of government operations. I've taken a look at the green procurement policy and it defines environmentally preferred products and services, assessing that they perform the intended function and are available at a reasonable cost.

Can I ask the minister if he would tell us a bit more about how they measure the greening of government operations, and what the plan is to reduce the energy consumption and environmental impacts of Yukon infrastructure, assets and operations?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: As I spoke to a little earlier about the permafrost and our test facility, working with Alaskan or different government counterparts and some of the universities is one way. Also, the utilization of a lighter coloured BST up there is something that we did, and looking at what it costs to resurface.

We should get 10 years out of BST surface. The life of BST — sometimes you only get one year out of it with melting permafrost. In Dawson, Main Street is one of our test projects that seemed to work — using a lighter coloured material when we paved Front Street in Dawson. That seems to be paying off.

Through Highways and Public Works and through some of our other stuff, we have a green action committee that has been put together that is looking at all our infrastructure. We have baseline data that we work with. We look at what each facility that we have — buildings that we have — how much energy they use and what it costs to maintain them. I talked about doing space management, moving people together. Some of the older facilities — maybe they are past their life and we need to go forward on new infrastructure. That is the department working with interdepartmental relationships working with the other

departments. If we need a seniors facility somewhere and a nursing station, maybe it is better to put them together rather than to build a seniors facility and have a nursing station in an old building that costs us more to heat than the new building we build. Through the department, that is something that we work with.

When it comes to procurement services — at the level of buying, if it's something through fleet vehicles — when we look at vehicles, we start to take into consideration maintenance costs on them, but also green energy — looking at fuel economy, looking at how often they have to be in for service and maintenance, lifespan — stuff like that.

Ms. Moorcroft: As the minister just referenced, the Department of Highways and Public Works is responsible for instituting green procurement directives and recommending standards for adoption, also working with departments to bring forward proposals for new standards to Management Board, where there will be a significant financial implication in a proposal for a new standard.

Could the minister give me some examples of green procurement directives and new standards that he is adopting?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: We're talking new procurement stuff to promote the green governance — so, our contract regulations, policies, procedures that are fair and consistent for our local business community. Some of our staff have brought forward things like better products — like cleaning supplies, stuff that is more environmentally friendly, some of the stuff that comes with recycled packaging, for example — stuff like that.

The procurement framework really focuses on improving rules and processes for current and potential suppliers for goods and services to the government, including electronic access to tender documents, the ability to look at contracts online, as opposed to printing them off — waste of paper. We all know what that is like with the big binders. Also, through e-technology — looking at tablets, looking at some newer technology that we can use, so we do not have to have big binders like that, and that is a big saving to the environment and also to our pocketbooks.

Ms. Moorcroft: The standards that are adopted provide the clearest direction to staff and the most direct guidance in making procurement decisions, so what shifts in the supply chain have been necessitated by this policy, which is referenced in their green procurement policy?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: The change we made is for researching stuff that we have — that are green products and then making them available to our staff, like our janitorial staff; getting it out there to the other departments — what we stock at our Supply Services space there. So when somebody looks to buy some cleaning supplies, or looks to buy some paper, it is stuff that's environmentally friendly and it's stuff that is good for the environment.

Ms. Moorcroft: Another strategic corporate initiative that the Department of Highways and Public Works has set out in its goals to accomplish is interdepartmental cooperation — states that it will work to combat poverty and promote social inclusion.

Can the minister speak about how Highways and Public Works is involved in this goal?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: All departments support that main goal. Through HPW, some of the initiatives that we look at, like I discussed earlier, are space management and supporting through our contract services and other things that we do.

Ms. Moorcroft: The department is responsible for contract administration and bid challenges. In our statistics, we see that there were two bid challenges out of 220 public tenders issued. Can the minister indicate the forecast on the stats page for 2011-12 — were those bid challenges successful or were they resolved?

Can the minister provide some information on that?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: On average, we have two to three bid challenges a year. The answer to whether they won or not — I don't have that answer, but I can get back to the member.

Ms. Moorcroft: I'd like to ask the minister — in relation to contract administration, what is his understanding of design-build?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: My understanding is that design/build is when we put out an interest and we look for someone to come with complete services — basically to design and build. Sometimes it is a bunch of contractors who get together who put something in there, or it is just one contractor who has all the capabilities, or an engineering service — they can do everything. That's the idea behind design/build.

Ms. Moorcroft: That is a fairly significant difference, I would think, between the two possibilities the minister just mentioned. Could I ask him to try and explain how the design/build process works?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Well, I am not really going to elaborate much more.

When the contract or the bids are put out, the contractor will look at what's required within the bids and come forward with what's required — put out what we require.

Ms. Moorcroft: So, when the minister puts out the expression of interest or request for proposal — I'm not clear if it's always the same approach — I'd like the minister to speak about that. Does he put a comprehensive package together of everything that will be needed?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: In the tendering — it has the package that explains what we require. With a design/build, the expertise sometimes is on their plate and they come forward with stuff, but every tender has a package that explains what's needed. We look for the tenders to come in and that's when we look at them.

Ms. Moorcroft: Does the minister think that the design/build process was a success in the case of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Design/build is what they went with for the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. I wasn't the minister at the time. I'm pretty impressed with the facility and the inmates, I'm sure, are quite impressed and I think the staff like it also. I've heard only good things. Design/build, as opposed to having an engineer design something — each time you go to design, or go to build something, or construct something, some-

times you use different methods. Sometimes it's a design/build; sometimes it's not.

Ms. Moorcroft: Certainly the concern that we have raised in this Legislature about the design/build process as it was applied to Whitehorse Correctional Centre is that it started out as a \$30-million project and in the end cost \$70 million and then we still have a few million left to complete the arrest processing unit up there, so the budget estimates were revised upward every year from the initial year of construction.

Is the minister aware of how many change orders there were with all of the changes in design as that building progressed? Can he tell us how many walls were torn down and moved? How much wiring was redone? How much plumbing was redone?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: No, I can't tell you how many wires were changed and walls were rebuilt. What I can tell you is that a change order is not always a bad thing as things will come up during construction — different products, things that don't work.

Ms. Moorcroft: Would the minister be able to tell us the financial value of all of the changes that were made during the construction period?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: No, I can't. I can look into that a little bit and get back.

Ms. Moorcroft: I would certainly appreciate an answer if the minister could get back to us with the information regarding those changes throughout the construction period, and the effect it had on the dramatically increased pricing of that facility over several years of construction.

When I was asking questions of the minister during Justice debate, regarding an estimate for destruction of the old Whitehorse Correctional Centre building, the minister did not have answers but asked me to ask the Minister of Highways and Public Works the very same questions. Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell us when he thinks that the contract might be let for the demolition of the old Correctional Centre and if his department anticipates that it would be completed within the 2012-13 fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: The approximate cost that we budgeted for is around \$1 million and we look at destruction, tearing it down, later this year.

Ms. Moorcroft: Does the minister know when the tender would be ready? Could the minister also advise how long of a process it normally is from the time they might have a tender document ready until it is awarded and then completed?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: We still have some environmental assessment to do on it. The tendering process, once the tender is put out, is usually two to four weeks. We are looking at getting the tender out sometime late this summer, and two to four weeks after, we will award the tender and then start tearing it down.

Ms. Moorcroft: I also wanted to follow up on questions that were asked in December by my colleague, the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, regarding the seniors housing on College Drive. There's a problem in that the bathtubs are not accessible. I think there must have been a bit of a flaw in the design when a seniors residence doesn't have bathrooms that

are wheelchair accessible. Have those renovations been included in this year's budget estimates?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: That would be a question for Yukon Housing Corporation. I don't have the answer to that. When we debate their budget, that could be a question asked there.

Ms. Moorcroft: Perhaps I'll just leave that then and, again, put in a pitch for having design work completed prior to construction.

Moving on to Yukon government buildings and the accessibility of Yukon government buildings — one of the pieces of information the minister and officials provided when I met with them earlier was that the government is working to change the terms of leases as they expire and to put in the terms for a lease that public buildings have accessibility. So I'd like to ask the minister how many leases have changed the terms as a result of that new policy of having accessibility become a requirement for leasing public buildings.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Thank you, Madam Chair. Sorry for my long name you have to pronounce every time I stand up.

When it comes to our leasing agreements — just a contract we have signed; they are three-year leases. They're legal agreements. New leases that we're working our way into, we're looking at the changes for accessibility.

We're looking at some other avenues for longer term leases where if we sign into a longer lease, it guarantees the lessee a longer guarantee for revenue, which would help them with going forward on doing some of these renovations on some of these. There are two leases right now that we're looking at with their legal obligations under the lease. With any new lease we get into, there are requirements for accessibility through the National Building Code, as with any new building being built. This is what we work toward, but we do have leases ongoing now. Through our legal obligations, we have to follow through with what we signed at the time. So with anything new that we get into, accessibility is a number one priority.

Ms. Moorcroft: Looking at the master space plan issued by the department, it speaks to the accommodation strategy. Just listening to the minister's answer, can he tell me what date the policy came into effect at which time leases would include a requirement for a building that is accessible?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: We don't have a policy. Our new space plan that we put forward — like I alluded to a little earlier and when we had discussed this before — and with the new contracts, new leases, new things we get into, we are trying to work as best as we can for people with disabilities and access issues, whether it is requiring an elevator or hand rails or bigger bathrooms for disabled people. That's sort of what we look at.

Ms. Moorcroft: Well then, I will call it a plan and not a policy. My question comes down to this: How much of a priority is it to the minister that government buildings, whether they're owned or leased, are accessible and comply with the *Human Rights Act*?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: To me, it is a priority, Madam Chair. The department works as we go along to do the best we can to meet these obligations.

Ms. Moorcroft: Can the minister tell me, then — I'm informed that the department is notifying landlords and they're renewing leases and now negotiating accessibility upgrades — whether, in fact, any new leases have yet been signed that do include accessibility upgrades?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: What I was trying to get across to the member was that with the new leases, this is something that we are working on. I do not have a specific lease coming up or anything like that. It is just that, as we sign into new leases, we look at options for disabled people so that access is available.

Ms. Moorcroft: Would this apply only to leases for the 2012-13 year and beyond, or would it apply to any current leases?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Like I said earlier, we are under legal obligation with leases that we sign. We do not — we cannot put other things on top of a lease or acquire other stuff. I was alluding to earlier, again, that when new leases come up, this is some of the stuff that we are looking at. It is a priority for me that every building that a Yukoner goes into meets requirements for accessibility. Funding wise, that all costs money, and as money comes and as we sign new leases, as we build new buildings, we are trying to get things up to the best standard that we can, as fast as we can.

Ms. Moorcroft: I'm pleased to hear the minister say that accessibility for public buildings is a priority. It needs to be a priority. And I would point out to the minister that complying with the Yukon *Human Rights Act* is also a legal requirement. If an employee is hired, who has a disability and may require accommodation, how long would it take before renovations were made? Would the fact that there are so many buildings that are not presently accessible impede the hiring of qualified people who may have an accessibility requirement? Would it take six months, or would it take one year to renovate in order to accommodate an employee with a disability?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I don't think I want to get into hypothetical stuff. When we post jobs and we hire, if there are needs then we address it at that situation. We're talking about some ongoing examples to accommodate people. The north entrance here with wheelchair access is something we just did last year.

So, we are working on it. When it comes to staffing requirements, we look for the best candidate. Many times, if they do have access issues, that is something we will deal with on a case-by-case basis.

Ms. Moorcroft: I'd like to move on to the Queen's Printer Agency, which has produced the 2012-13 business plan. The Queen's Printer is currently engaged in a review. I would like to ask the minister if he has seen the final report yet. The business plan indicates that the review is scheduled to be concluded within the 2011-12 fiscal year, and I am just wondering if the minister has seen the final report.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: First of all, I can't believe that somebody read the Queen's Printer report. I think this is a first,

but this is something that we are reviewing internally, basically looking at cost-saving measures throughout the Queen's Printer staff.

That's basically looking at ways that we can save money through the department. We're not quite finished with the review yet.

Ms. Moorcroft: I'm sure the minister meant to say that that would make two of us who have read the report. I'm sure he must have read the report in preparation for the debate in this sitting, as did I.

Looking at the departmental expenditures with the Queen's Printer Agency and the private sector, the budget for private sector printing out-of-Yukon in 2011-12 was \$1.238 million and the estimate for the current fiscal year in the main estimates is \$1,296,900. The private sector printing in Yukon estimated for this year is \$3.3 million.

Can the minister explain the high value of private sector printing being done out of the Yukon? Would this include ads regarding the Peel River watershed, for instance?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Yes, I did also have questions. I did read that also. The question asked — that is staff's best forecast; it's not individual, no ideas — it's what they plan. Like everybody, they have plans. Each department does estimate costs for the next year.

Ms. Moorcroft: Is the minister able to provide a breakdown of the kinds of printing work that's done? In the current year, it's \$1,238,000 and the forecast for next fiscal year is \$1,296,000.

The minister must have some information regarding what private sector printing costs outside of Yukon are covered with more than \$1 million in expenditures in his department.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: What I want to get to is that we do stock printing, like *Hansard*, Madam Chair. That's some of the stuff we do, but it depends on the departments and it changes. We contract out when a departmental contract needs something. Maybe it can only be handled by a company out of the territory, so that would be it.

For the member opposite, I can go through and get her the exact where whatever went, but a lot of it is different departments, there are different contracts. It's different wishes, not everything is the same, and not all printing is the same.

Ms. Moorcroft: I do have a number of general questions across the department in general debate, but I would appreciate a breakdown of how that money is being spent on private sector printing outside of Yukon.

I also have some questions related to the private sector printing within Yukon, which was over \$3 million in the 2011-12 fiscal year and is estimated to be over \$3 million again this year. How is that tendered? Is there a standing offer agreement put out for tender? Does the Queen's Printer Agency sole source a number of private sector printers? How does this process work for the bulk of printing? \$4.5 million is spent in private sector printing and \$649,000 within Queen's Printer Agency. If the minister could give some information regarding the contracting process, that would be helpful.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: We follow our procurement, our contracting process that we have within the department. Some

of them will be a standing offer. It all depends. They are all different — whether it's one of the corporations doing something — whether it's brochures. It all varies on what we are after, but we do follow our contracting regulations.

With the other departments, too, procurement 101, contracting services, we are working with the other departments to get some of the newer employees who are new to the game — so they understand our contracting services and we all adhere — so we don't wind up with some of the — sometimes you hear that contracting services within a department is different from another one. We would like to all be standardized and make it easier for people who are putting in contracts.

Ms. Moorcroft: So, are these standing offer agreements for printing done on an annual basis? Would it be a two-year agreement or is it put out for tender every year?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: When it comes to standing offers, no more than three years. Some of them are different. Some are one year, some are two — but no more than three years.

Some of the other stuff that we also do within that — it's not just printing stuff, but a lot of promotion stuff too through the different departments.

Ms. Moorcroft: Another term that's used in this report is "decentralized printing". What is decentralized printing?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: That is about modern technology — better printers. Some of the departments before, with Queen's Printers — we were the only people that could do such a large work. When it comes to printers now, we've all been seeing the technology come in — colour printers and stuff like that. So, some of the departments have them within their department now, as opposed to that.

Ms. Moorcroft: Looking at the chart of private sector printing, there is a rather dramatic increase in the costs of advertising out of Yukon. For 2011-12, the budget estimate was for \$600,000 and the forecast is now at \$1.2 million, so that is a doubling of the cost anticipated for out-of-Yukon advertising.

Can the minister tell us what advertising firms out of Yukon have been hired, what advertising and promotion they have been doing and why out-of-Yukon advertising firms were engaged at double the price estimated?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I do not have that answer here, but I can get back to the member on that.

Ms. Moorcroft: Perhaps while the member is looking for that information, I note that not only has the estimate doubled to \$1.2 million for the 2011-12 fiscal year, but the advertising budget for out-of-Yukon for 2012-13 continues to increase, and that line item is above \$1.2 million in the estimates.

Will the minister commit to bringing back a legislative return with that information before the end of the sitting — unless, of course, he does have it handy — why the estimate is so high this year?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: In response, I can get that to the member opposite before the end of the sitting. That was a question that I had also, Madam Chair.

Ms. Moorcroft: I'm pleased that the minister has some of the same questions that I have. I would appreciate having answers to them as well. I'll look forward to that return.

I'd like to ask questions regarding the Fleet Vehicle Agency operations as well. While a majority of the fleet vehicle operations is with government vehicles, there are also expenditures for third party rentals. I'd like to ask the minister: What is the contracting process for third party vehicle rentals, and how many service agencies — how many rental businesses have contracts with the Government of Yukon to supply rental vehicles?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: We use rental vehicles, with the need for more vehicles, and quite often having a vehicle on standby that would sit parked all winter long is pretty much a waste of taxpayer dollars. So using the rental vehicles in the summertime, when we do have increased work to be done, and the contracting procurement services for those would be the same as with everything else — it's a standard contract agreement that we sign with them. It alleviates the number of fleet vehicles we have, so we're not over-tasked, and it provides us with more equipment during our busy times of the year.

Ms. Moorcroft: Does the minister know if there are a number of standing offer arrangements with vehicle rental businesses in effect?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I don't know the answer to that, Madam Chair.

Ms. Moorcroft: I applaud the efforts of the department to work on addressing the climate change action plan and working at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. I'd like to ask the minister about the energy efficiency rating of fleet vehicles. What steps is the minister taking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to support the purchase of less expensive and more energy-efficient vehicles?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Our department does push with the new vehicles that we buy — part of the green procurement — some of the stuff we have been discussing is when we look at fuel mileage, we look at size. There are some departments that do require bigger vehicles, with freight. If you look at some of the vehicles — you see when you walk into work here every day, the smaller van-type of vehicles that we have purchased for the mailroom. We are not running a big van; we are running a smaller one. They are more fuel efficient. They get around the city easier for parking. Everything depends a little bit, but when it does come down to that — I know when I went and did my tour this year, we didn't have a big, fancy pickup truck. We had a smaller vehicle and the mileage was — I did notice a difference.

Ms. Moorcroft: The Department of Highways and Public Works is responsible for information and communications technology across all of government. Although many departments have their own information technology departments, what monies would be saved if there was coordination of information technology in Highways and Public Works?

Can the minister explain how that operates?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Here is one for you: 80 million spam messages were filtered from incoming emails in 2011-12. That is crazy.

When it comes to IT stuff — it is crazy. Imagine that. Or you would never be able to get to work because your inbox would be filled with junk mail.

When it comes to the individual departments, some of the ICT stuff that they have is departmental, sort of, in exactly what they do. But what we do at the big scale stuff, saving money, is getting out to the departments that — for example, we are signing an agreement with Microsoft on a product that another department would not need to go and do, because we already have this. That is just one example. So at the big level we work with the departments on that, but, like I said, for some of the interdepartmental stuff they need different applications, but for some of the major applications we use through design and through other systems, we do try to include all the departments.

Ms. Moorcroft: The minister's Information and Communications Technology branch budget statements indicate that its function is to provide leadership and advice for both a centralized network and software and telecommunication services and managing the government's information assets. We like to talk today about a knowledge-based economy. That doesn't mean simply jobs in the information technology sector; it also refers to the use of information technology for all research, science, arts, trades, and applied arts. I think we have a particular responsibility to ensure our children and youth have access to computer technologies in a place like the Yukon. New technologies can really help to reduce the distances between communities and this can be particularly beneficial for education of rural students — allowing rural students to take courses that they might not otherwise be able to take by using the new Promethean boards.

So I would like to ask the minister about what investments the Information and Communications Technology branch is making in ensuring that the Department of Education in its delivery of school services to our youth is offering adequate and appropriate information technology resources.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Within HPW and ICT, we take the big corporate look at it — within Education, getting the model education — the programming that they want is more an education thing. I just know some of our discussions that we've been having lately through Yukon College about video conferencing — now that we have cell service in all our communities, and trying to get better cell service and work with the industry on that — utilizing that and utilizing some of the newer technologies to work with Education in providing some of this with some of the new infrastructure that we build.

Education puts out their plan and how they want to work together. Some of the stuff that we have through the big corporate stuff is coordinating, modernizing the government, with our government websites allowing people to access on-line rather than have to, for example, drive to Whitehorse to talk to somebody in person.

Ms. Moorcroft: I thank the minister for that. I think Yukon College first brought in its video conferencing capability close to 15 years ago, so I would certainly expect that that has improved over time. I do want to come back and ask the minister about his commitment to working to ensure that there is good access to information technology in the schools and that some of the newer initiatives like the Promethean boards will be made available to rural schools, as well as in White-

horse where there may be some sharing possible, and that the minister will be playing the leadership role, not only in ensuring procurement of those new technologies, but in ensuring there is adequate support and training.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I think at the bigger corporate level we do the servers, the network connectivity, the hardware, the network components, the network security, the data centres and some of the stuff we do through printing. Each individual department, whether we are talking about telehealth that you can get into when we debate the other departments' budgets — some of that stuff will come up more. At the larger level, stuff that we do — this is sort of what our department does.

Ms. Moorcroft: The access to information and protection of privacy is also housed with the Government of Yukon and I'd like to ask the minister about his commitment to open government and to providing access to information held by a public body.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I guess our priorities would be promoting the inclusion of quality assurance for record management within the departments' strategic plans, integrating electronic records into a lifecycle records management regime, developing and communicating additional best practice guidelines for government employees who deal with access to information. That's basically it, Madam Chair.

Chair: Order please. Would the members like a recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order. We will continue with debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works.

Ms. Moorcroft: As we left off, we were speaking about the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, and I'd like to ask the minister about a number of specific items related to the purpose of the act to give the public a right of access to records that would allow individuals to request correction of personal information, for instance, and prevent the unauthorized collection or disclosure of personal information. Public bodies need to embrace the right to access information stated in the law and resist any tendency to withhold information without valid reason.

I'd like to ask the minister for his comments on developing an updated and coordinated record management system across government and for all public bodies, so they can respond efficiently to access requests and protect privacy.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: ICT is leading a group to have that, so all records across the board, through all departments, are together.

Ms. Moorcroft: Is the minister able to give us an estimate of when an updated and coordinated record management system may be completed?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: There is a three-year program in place, where they pull members from departments and then

train them on this, so each department is trained the same for the access to records. We have done a few of the departments and are working on getting more of them done.

Ms. Moorcroft: I've certainly heard that people will find there is not necessarily a consistent response to access to information requests across government.

I want to stress that the purpose of the act is to give the public a right of access to records unless they are protected for reasons of personal privacy and other legitimate reasons that are specified in the act. There needs to be that proper balance between providing information if it can be released and protecting information that can't be released.

The minister spoke about training. I wanted to ask if there was regular and consistent training and support for the ATIPP coordinators for every department, because some access to information and protection of privacy coordinators would be dealing with information requests frequently, but others less frequently. There's a need to have good training being regularly offered and support for the ATIPP coordinators. Can the minister give me a little more detailed information about that?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: The ATIPP coordinators meet every year. They pass on information — things that could be done better; things that they've learned. Also, last year they developed new guidelines. Some of the amendments in the past to the act, which were really good, extended to some of our major institutions: Yukon College, the Hospital Corporation, Energy Corporation and Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board — stuff like that.

Ms. Moorcroft: Does the minister think then that it might be useful to have the ATIPP coordinators meet more frequently than once a year — perhaps three or four times a year?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: They do meet more than once a year. They meet — I'm not sure how many times, but they do meet more than once a year.

Ms. Moorcroft: Is training offered more than once a year?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: It is ongoing training and peer support.

Ms. Moorcroft: I have a question for the minister relating to custodial services. Janitorial services are now being done by contract at Golden Horn Elementary School, as of February 24, to the end of the school year. I was recently at a school council meeting and this is a pilot project at this school. Apparently, the custodians who had been working there were assigned to other work sites and there were no layoffs.

Is the government contemplating moving toward contracting out custodial work for schools?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: We're keeping all our custodial staff. This is just a pilot project to look at how things work and work better, but there is no appetite to get rid of any of our existing custodial staff. This is just a pilot project.

Ms. Moorcroft: The follow-up questions that I would have for that, then, is whether the department is doing this anywhere else or if Golden Horn school is the only place where they have embarked on this pilot project, and could the minister tell us how they will assess the pilot project?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: We're also doing this pilot project at the Law Courts building. With this pilot project, we're looking at performance to see how they do, see the cleanliness, the satisfaction of the tenants of the building — whether it be the school — looking at the cost to see the comparable costs. We have a huge turnover when it comes to custodial service so to see if this would work with keeping custodial staff.

Ms. Moorcroft: In his opening remarks, the minister referred to the high levels of traffic volumes which are particularly increasing between the Carcross Cut-off and the Mayo Road Cut-off. The minister stated that they had allocated \$200,000 to develop a long-term plan for the Alaska Highway between kilometre 1404 and kilometre 1437.

Could the minister first tell me exactly where there is, if that is — it doesn't seem long enough to be from the Carcross Cut-off to the Mayo Road turnoff. So what is the area where they are allocating funding for a long-term plan and looking at the capacity of the highway to tolerate increased volume of traffic and, as well, the safety performance? My constituents have spoken to me about the side roads along the Alaska Highway and in between the Mount Sima Road and the cut-off that come out and there are some safety concerns about some of those. I did raise that in the December — the first sitting of the 33rd Legislative Assembly. I'm wondering if the minister can provide me a little more detail on what his plans are.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: That goes from the Carcross Cut-off to the Mayo Cut-off. The department quite often receives concerns about excessive speed, speed zones, passing zones, signage. We're planning this and they're looking into it right now with — like we had spoken to earlier with the future traffic growth — looking at having it a safer area — maybe a four-lane highway with a slower lane for some of the bigger traffic.

With this plan, there are a lot of things we have to look at. For example, at the Airport Chalet, when you sit down in there and eat, you are on the road right-of-way. Our maintenance building for the airport is also on the road right-of-way. Noise would be a concern. The little bit of work that we have done out toward the Mayo Cut-off — we have had a couple of complaints. People can hear the traffic as you cut a few more trees down. There is lots of stuff — sound barriers — that we have to look at with that — a magnitude of this with so many roads attached to it. We have to have a pretty comprehensive plan for that.

Ms. Moorcroft: For the current fiscal year, the allocation of \$200,000 would begin that plan. Is the minister planning to have a multi-year project in developing a plan for this? Or does he think that over the next current year he would be able to complete a plan?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Most likely it would be a multi-year plan. There are a lot of stakeholders involved in something like this, so it would have to be done over multiple years.

Ms. Moorcroft: Another matter I have raised with the minister is the use of the Aishihik Road, which is presently maintained only as far as kilometre 28.

However, the Aishihik Road is used year-round by Champagne and Aishihik First Nation citizens, hunters of wood bi-

son, field trips that the Department of Education takes students on, the Yukon Energy Corporation, and the Department of Environment. There is also mining exploration in the area and a potential for additional tourism use. I asked the minister about assisting with snow removal so the students could get out to do their cultural activities up the Aishihik Road — usually they have February and March bison hunting and culture camp — and he indicated that there wasn't a budget. I'd like to ask the minister if he might be prepared to support better maintenance on the Aishihik Road to assist all of the many users groups that would benefit from it.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Right now, Highways and Public Works doesn't have a budget from 27 mile or 42 kilometre up. The money for the snow removal that was transferred to Champagne and Aishihik First Nations comes from the Department of Education.

We are working on a plan for this. Education is a huge concern for me and this government — that we have an opportunity for our youth to get out there and enjoy the environment. Having the school bison hunts is a great way to get the youth involved, whether it is snowmobile safety or learning about hunting ethics or some cultural traditional stuff.

Yukon Energy doesn't access the Aishihik Road from 42 mile on. There's an existing contract with a local contractor; he does some of the snow removal on the first part. One of the concerns from the contractor is sometimes he loses money, because it's maintained elsewhere. So we're working together. We have an interdepartmental working group. We're going to be sitting down to discuss the Aishihik Road. In the foreseeable future, access up in that area is becoming more and more prevalent. We set a precedent by maintaining it and there are a lot of elders who like to get up to their village, so we'll be sitting down to figure out exactly how we're going to go about doing this.

As you know, different snow years create different issues with the road. By maintaining the road in the wintertime with the grader, they build windrows, which start glaciating the road. Then in the summertime, we deal with issues with flooding and washed-out culverts and glaciers. So this is something we do have to look at and will be looking at.

Ms. Moorcroft: I'm sure the minister has heard from a number of user groups, as have I, and so I'll expect to stay informed on that file as it moves along.

I heard the minister speaking in his opening remarks about — I think it was \$1 million for improving the North Canol Road. I did not hear any mention of the road between Faro and Ross River. It has been a long-standing concern of people working in Ross River and residents of Ross River that the road width and the road surface between Ross River and Faro is deficient; that it has not seen much in the way of expenditures over the years; that the road is too narrow in some places; and that it has some bad corners. There hasn't been funding applied to do some work on the road between Ross River and Faro.

Could the minister indicate whether or not there are any plans to improve the road between Faro and Ross River?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: As we look at all our infrastructure, we do traffic counts and look at the amount of traffic

when it comes to that section of the road. Rebuilding the top surface of that road — the questions and concerns I have heard have been: Why don't we just BST that road? Well, the sub-base underneath it would create a lot of work, and it would cost a lot of money. If we look at all our roads — all 4,850 kilometres of them — and prioritize on traffic needs that have been identified, that is an issue. We understand that. There have been some clearing contracts for visibility reasons for some of the corners and stuff like that. It is on our radar, but there is only so much money to go around. We are working with long-term projects to see what we can do.

Ms. Moorcroft: I don't think that will be a very satisfactory answer to the residents of Ross River. There are a number of other small communities throughout the Yukon and most of them have very good road access. The exception is Ross River, and this has been an outstanding need for the last decade or more.

There is a huge transportation budget for road construction and road maintenance in this department, and I would like to ask the minister if he can explain to the people of Ross River why the low traffic count to their community would be any less worthy of funding for road improvements than the traffic count to Faro, or to Pelly Crossing, or Carcross, or any other road in the territory.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Not to take lightly the fact that Ross River isn't any less important than Beaver Creek, Faro or anywhere else — we have road indexes, infrastructure indexes for all our infrastructure.

With a very poor subgrade base of it, and the extensive cost to upgrade it — it's something that we are looking into to see what measures can be taken to make the road better. But to get back to the member's comment, it is not that Ross River is any less important than Dawson or Watson Lake.

Ms. Moorcroft: I believe that it was on April 1 that the government issued a media release that the Motor Vehicles branch has been formally moved back to the transportation division. That certainly makes a lot of sense. I just wanted to ask the minister if he will confirm that the expenditures for the Motor Vehicles branch are found in the Highways and Public Works main estimates.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Yes, they would be within Transport Services.

Ms. Moorcroft: Considering that Motor Vehicle Services are now part of the Highways and Public Works, I have a question related to another branch of Highways and Public Works that perhaps doesn't have a good fit there, and that is the French Language Services Directorate. Does the minister think that the French Language Services Directorate is appropriately housed in Highways and Public Works?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: We provide a whole host of services to different central services, so I don't really have a comment on that.

Ms. White: We're going to move right into the French Language Services Directorate, if we could. Can you explain to me what are the responsibilities of the French Language Directorate and how the goals are measured?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: French language services — you'll have to ask the minister responsible for French Language Services when it's her time to come up. I don't have an answer to that.

Ms. White: With the French Language Services Directorate placed in Highways and Public Works, it's not you as the minister, then, who will be answering those questions?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Minister Taylor is the minister responsible for French Language Services.

Ms. White: So my question is for the French Language Services Directorate. Will they be answered now under Highways and Public Works or at a different point during the budget debate?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: It will be answered by the minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate.

Ms. Moorcroft: It's rather interesting that I began discussion on the French Language Services Directorate by asking the minister whether he thought the directorate was appropriately housed within the Department of Highways and Public Works. While he didn't have a comment on that, he is now asking us to direct questions on the provision of French language services to the Minister of Community Services.

We have in fact completed budget debate on the Department of Community Services. We do have questions regarding the French Language Services Directorate. Is the minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate now prepared to answer questions in the Highways and Public Works general debate on the French Language Services Directorate, or would she prefer a recess to call in some other officials, or can the government let us know what their plans are? Surely they anticipated that we would in fact have questions regarding the government following the *Official Languages Act* and providing French language services to the government and to the public.

Chair: Would the members care for a five-minute recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. We are continuing debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Highways and Public Works will be back up again, so we can bring the staff in from the French Language Services Directorate. It's under my budget, so I can answer the question too, if that's okay, so we can carry on with general debate.

Ms. Moorcroft: Right. I'll thank the minister for that commitment. I have a question related to the Alaska Highway in the Marsh Lake area. People are perplexed by the state of the Alaska Highway between — I believe it's south M'Clintock and Mitchie Place. It was pavement and now it's BST. Residents have said the road is worse than before. So I'd like the

minister to explain why there was a switch from pavement to BST.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: When we went from pavement to BST, it was just about money. It costs you 10 times as much — it will cost you way more money to lay pavement than BST. The subsurface underneath — whether it's BST or pavement, it's the same material. So we went with BST because it's a lot cheaper. Also, the aggregate size we use in BST in the wintertime provides a little bit rougher surface, which is actually safer and provides a little bit more traction during slippery conditions.

Mr. Barr: I'll just continue with that a little bit. A constituent actually came in today and asked about the change from pavement to BST. Speaking of the rough conditions — this is also a concern with the last two works — I believe it's south M'Clintock and Mitchie Place, but also near Lewes Lake on the Carcross Road to the Carcross Cut-off. Both those areas were done last year — they certainly don't match up to the BST. It's very rough. At both places, where it switches from the old BST to the new, there is an elevated bump — quite a bump — on the Lewes Lake area, but then on the Marsh Lake area, it is actually a question why there wouldn't even be bump flags or bump signs. It's serious enough that, in speaking with the ambulance drivers who are bringing people in, it causes quite a bit of pain to anybody who is in the ambulance.

Is the construction completed, for one, and what has been the total cost? Are there permafrost problems there? We would like a commitment to look into this, actually.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Absolutely. The two areas that you're talking about were a bit of an issue up in my riding too, actually, where they connected the BST to existing BST or BST to pavement. Some of it goes to compaction and the traffic, after the fact, packs it a little bit more. Some of it has to do with overlap. When it comes to the safety issue, it is a big concern and I will commit to making sure that I know they'll go out with pre-mix or coal-mix and level them out so they're smoother and/or work on them and make sure there are safety flags if it is that bad. I haven't driven it, but I do know what he's talking about, so it's important for safety that we get those fixed. I will commit to that.

Mr. Barr: Costs have also been brought to my attention, moving from pavement to BST in these high population density areas. In both of those areas where it's very much rougher, there are also a lot more rocks flying and many people are very frustrated with the increase in their windshields being chipped in both of these areas. I don't know if that's where the minister opposite has also an increase, but one of the thoughts on this was that from, say, Carcross to Jakes Corner, that it be pavement, given the cost of tire replacement. If you're driving on pavement, your tires wear way less than if it's on BST. I do know many motorcycle users and car owners who have to replace their tires a lot more often. The pavement, I believe, does last longer. Could the minister respond to this?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: The issue with rocks and windshields — sometimes some of the material in an icy season where we lay more sanding material — once the ice melts, the rock stays on the road and it will be on into summer.

After we lay BST, we have a process whereby we go through and clean repetitively. One problem that comes with BST is the fact it depends on weather conditions. Sometimes we have a very short maintenance season, and if we lay BST a little later in the season, it's not as warm out so it doesn't adhere as well as if you lay stuff earlier. So, sometimes you will have rocks that will come out later on. The cost of pavement — we couldn't afford to maintain our highways in the wintertime if we were going to pave every section of highway we have. There would be no money for maintenance in the wintertime, so BST is our only option. The Shakwak project is an agreement with our counterparts in Alaska and the United States. It's their dollars and cents that come into doing that. The rest of the roads in the Yukon will go with BST because it is affordable.

Mr. Barr: I just have a couple more questions. They do relate to both those highways again, and then from Jakes Corner to Teslin.

There were several folks that came up to me from Teslin to Jakes Corner, for example, this winter, who stated that the roads themselves — they would drive to town in the morning and it wouldn't be plowed and they would go back to Teslin in the evening and it still wouldn't be plowed, so it was a concern of theirs. I would like to inquire about that. Also, from Carcross Corner to Carcross, every year there seems to be many people going off the road. Over the years I've lived there and by the candy cane poles — I don't know if the minister opposite is aware of that one corner — but just generally along that road, people have been saying that they would like to see more sand and the plows changed — the graders change their blades to actually get the ice off the road.

This brings me to the second part of the question. Is there succession training in Highways and Public Works, because when I speak to some of the old-timers who have worked on the highways, they attribute this issue to the blades not being changed as often and therefore not cutting down.

Is this a cost of trying to save money? If so, it doesn't make sense with the cars overturning in the ditches, as they do. Also that with the BST in these areas — because this is kind of a new problem that we've seen — some of the old-timers are saying that the people coming up and replacing them lack succession training, so even the mixture isn't quite right. So we have a big difference. Those are my questions.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: First, I will speak to the snow removal and sanding policy. I work on — as all members know — an open-door policy when it comes to concerns from constituents, to come forward and I will address them right away if the road hasn't been plowed and we hear about it. Of course, the member is talking about the main highways, which are a priority because of bus services and ambulance services and stuff like that. We have a snow removal policy and a sanding policy that all foremen know and adhere to.

Climate change is something we have addressed within the department. With my background in my previous job working for the department, I have seen the change — being a Yukoner; I think we've all seen it. We don't get 40 degrees below for three months at a time any more; we sometimes get rain and

quite warm weather. So that's something that I've pushed the department to address and look at other options for that.

I was just actually down with my safety and training guys. To get to your training question, we were talking about some of our older workforce retiring. Most of them we've all had coffee with at Tim Hortons or A&W. We have a process in place for grader training. When it comes to costs with grader blades, there are two types of ice blades. There is sandvic and then there are regular ice blades. The sandvics last a long time; they are way more expensive. But the ice blades depend on how we operate the graders and how we roll your moldboard. Ice blades last the same, whether you're an inexperienced or experienced operator.

The changing times with the environment — I've heard more concerns. I would encourage everyone who does have concerns, if it's brought to our attention right away — it's pretty hard to rely on timing and get a plow truck out when the snow is melting now, but that's how I like to work within this department.

Mr. Tredger: Thank you to the personnel from Highways and Public Works and welcome to the Legislature. I appreciate the briefing that we had earlier on and thank you for working with the minister to answer the questions.

One of the things I was thinking as I heard the answering of questions: a number of years ago the Auditor General did a report on education. One of the things they were looking for was a long-term strategic plan for meeting the challenges of aging buildings and in this case — I'll paraphrase it so it makes sense for Highways and Public Works, with the Auditor General's permission. To deal with things such as aging buildings or roads, in this case, such a plan would take into account emerging needs, current inventory, climate change, in order to make optimal use of the resources in preparing toward its objectives. Such a plan would identify risks and a risk-management plan, helping us to anticipate these risks that could impede the reaching of our objectives.

I know the minister opposite mentioned a couple of those. I'm glad to see that they're being taken into account. This doesn't just apply to roads. We should be thinking about buildings, as well, as witnessed when the school was built in Ross River — as the permafrost melted, the school changed direction. Things like climate change in roads, in buildings, changing needs in the communities as we move to decentralization, as communities take ownership of more of the things that are happening in their communities through decentralization. Many of the buildings are aging, so it would be important to have such a plan so that we could look at how to most efficiently meet the needs of the municipalities or the First Nations as well as the needs of Yukon government. It might include things like a residence or a room for Yukon government officials when they're visiting. It could include things like a licensing area as well as a local area. Many of the buildings are aging. I speak to the people in Carmacks, in Mayo, in Haines Junction, in Watson Lake and in Teslin — the infrastructure is aging.

I guess my question is, if I'll come to the point: Do we have such a plan? Are we working on a plan and, if we do, could it be tabled, please?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I guess I've sort of answered a little bit of it in previous questions. We have more than 350 buildings across the Yukon and we have an inventory of our buildings. One thing that we've started doing, working with all the departments, is not on a who-can-squawk-the-most-to-get-their-new-facility — all the different departments that are all in their different buildings — we'll just talk buildings because the member opposite was going to highways and buildings, but I'll go on to buildings for this one — and we talked about the leasing of buildings too. I think we have 138 separate leases. So when we look at these buildings we have done risk assessment on a lot of the buildings. We've looked at all the facilities that we have. We've looked at coming across from the different departments that everybody has a wish list of what needs to be done and there is only so much money to go around, so when it comes to — is it worth it to look at that building and put another, you know, X amount of dollars into it, or is it better to work with another department to build a new building for the long-term future.

We don't have an actual plan on paper, but we do have through the department — everybody has analyzed the infrastructure that they are in, the state of the infrastructure, prioritizing which is the worst, which need to be done. Nobody goes anywhere if we don't plow the roads, but if you want to come on a tour of some grader stations, I will show you some buildings that are in dire need. But, like we said, we are building a new school for F.H. Collins; it costs money to build stuff and there is only so much money. This is a long-term plan that we have that we are sort of looking at working with on all our facilities across the Yukon.

Mr. Tredger: I realize that we have bits and pieces of it in various areas and in various minds. I think it would be important to put down a long-term plan on paper and include local people in that so that we move away from who squawks loudest gets the candy. I think if you sat down with the various communities, they would see where they are on the list.

I know it worked for schools when we did it with rural schools. They went one, two, three, four, five, and it went over a period of time and Mayo got theirs in turn, Carmacks got theirs in turn, and the various other schools, as well. I think it would also be important to do that. It would save a lot of consternation. It would eliminate some of the concerns that local communities have that they will never get to our community by making such a plan evident and involving the communities in it. I think we can count on the good will of Yukoners to see where they fit and how it works, especially if things are laid out.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: The capital planning initiation phase was formally implemented in 2011. This is where we brought the departments together with — what I was trying to get at there — a holistic approach for property needs. This is not just at the high level in the department but talking to your employees at the lower property management level — the furnace repair guy who says, "Listen, you know, we've been sticking money into this forever. We shouldn't do that any more." That's sort of interdepartmental stuff. A lot of the other departments — they enjoy the facility they're in, but they don't

know or care about the heating costs. So this is the level that we look at.

When you talk about the municipalities and stuff, I think that would be a good question for Association of Yukon Communities. Every community is after the most that they can get at a broad-based level to look at what's next and what's needed in the communities for their infrastructure, whether it's through their official community plans or their stuff.

Through Highways and Public Works we like the integrated government-wide maintenance and capital development process that we look at and sort of have a portfolio management strategy and practices. Before, like we had talked about, just throw money here, throw money there; we've identified this and looked at this. So now when projects and priorities come forward and they come forward to the government at this level, we can look at it and say, "How is this on the overall list?" and we go, "Well, it doesn't rate that high. This would be more important. Is it going to be politically correct? Maybe not, but it's important that this gets done. There is a need for it."

Mr. Tredger: I won't keep going on about this, but I think it's critical that this be made public, that it is shared with —

Chair's statement

Chair: Order please. Can I ask the members to please wait until they're recognized?

Mr. Tredger: I'm sorry, Madam Chair, I just get excited and want to talk.

Chair: Being recognized by the Chair allows your microphone to be turned on so that we can record you for the future.

Mr. Tredger: I will try to remember. I think it is important that we do identify this on paper, so that local communities can see that — can get a sense of how the decisions are being made and can have input into them. I think the leadership shown by a department like Highways and Public Works would go a long way to bringing the various factions and various departments together, as well as the various communities, so that a comprehensive plan can be developed and people know where they fit into it. I think we would find a lot of cost savings in that, a lot of cooperation, and it would allow us to move on it. I'll just move on to another question.

I brought this up before, but the Stewart Crossing traffic light — it seems to be the only community on the highway that doesn't have highway lights, street lights, and no flashing warning signs. The traffic volume stays the same on its way through Carmacks, through Pelly Crossing, and on into Mayo. It is increasing; the size of the vehicles is increasing. I don't see anything in the budget for it this year, or in the planning.

Can you tell me if it will be or, if it is in the planning, when it will be in the planning, what the threshold is? If it's not in the planning, what is the threshold in terms of traffic — or what the residents of Stewart Crossing need to do to be recognized? This is a very big concern. It's a traffic hazard and a safety concern.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: We assess all requests, such as the question that was asked about street lighting changes and

highway signage and speed zones. It all has to do with Transportation Association of Canada standards — the TAC standards. This is done to ensure consistency across Yukon and across Canada. So when you're driving in Nova Scotia — it's the same in all areas. Now, with increased traffic — like we discussed earlier about the corridor between the Mayo and Carcross cut-offs — this is where our traffic counters look at stuff like this. Another thing that I might add is that some incorporated or unincorporated communities request street light enhancement, and some don't want them. In this case, it is something that would probably be better brought forward to the department in the form of a concern and then we can look at it case by case.

It's not something that has been high on my radar. It has been brought to my attention right now. I'll bring it forward to the department and we can look at it and get back with an actual formal answer on it.

Mr. Tredger: Thank you for that. Sometimes statistics don't tell the whole story. Stewart Crossing is down a long, dark stretch of road. People tend to get mesmerized as they're driving through the winter night or through the summer night. It's different if there's a town or something every 20 minutes than where there's one every two or three hours. I think it's critical that that be taken into account. Also the size of vehicles — I know the truck traffic — the B-trains — is getting heavier and the roads are long. So please take that into consideration when you're looking at Stewart Crossing.

Another issue that has come up from my constituents is the need for public transit, a bus system to connect Dawson City, Mayo, probably Haines Junction and Watson Lake with Whitehorse.

There's an increasingly aging population. A lot of people want to stay in their communities as they age. As they go on, they're not able to drive as much, so that I think something like this would be of value to them, also in terms of making it to medical appointments, things like that. It's increasing and there is no easy transportation unless you know somebody who has a vehicle. It currently costs our medical system a substantial amount to pay for people to come in. It costs a number of people to get into various appointments that are needed for legal appointments, for medical appointments, for dental appointments, et cetera — things like that, that are often being paid by various levels of government. Has the department looked at some type of public transportation system that would be a connector, whether it be a private/public partnership or whether it be done as some kind of encouragement to encourage a private enterprise to go into it — some kind of public transportation, not only for the green energy savings, but the convenience, as well as financial savings to the government?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: That is something that is not on my radar whatsoever. I am also from a small community and I have residents as far north as Beaver Creek, so I do hear their concerns. There is a private company. I'm interested in maybe having that private-public partnership discussion in some other avenue someday. There is bus service to Beaver Creek. There is some small bus service to some of the other communities. I am not sure of the avenue — maybe lobbying through their

local MLA to government. It's something that is not really on my radar, and I don't think public transit is something — I'd probably be more content to build a railroad to get all the heavy ore trucks off my road so they wouldn't be so hard on them or something like that.

Anyway, no, that is something for the public to deal with — or private, sorry.

Mr. Tredger: Could you put that on your radar, please? I think it's critical, especially, as I say, as the population ages, as the roads develop and as the traffic increases. I think it's something that we, as a community, should provide for our elders and our seniors, as well as for people who may or may not want to drive all the time, as well as in keeping with the government's desire to become greener and to save energy.

My question now regards F.H. Collins Secondary School. Can you tell me where and what's happening there, please, with the rebuilding of F.H. Collins?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: When it comes to F.H. Collins, we're right now in the process of reviewing the design and we plan on going to tender in the fall.

Mr. Tredger: Can the minister tell me if he is meeting with the F.H. Collins Building Advisory Committee or if they have any input into that review?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Let me answer that question for the member. Yes, with the building advisory committee, right now the stuff that we're looking at is mainly technical stuff. The building advisory committee was there when we were looking at what was needed during the concept of it. Right now, we're just looking at the technical aspects of it to make sure — some of the stuff we have come up with before so that we can get this to come in on time and on budget.

One of the things is that when we build infrastructure next to existing infrastructure, there is a big safety concern during the construction, as well as it not taking away from the education of the kids that will still be going to school at the old F.H. Collins Secondary School. We are looking at all that stuff right now. We hope to be out with the process in the fall.

Mr. Tredger: Can the minister tell me if the geothermal aspect to F.H. Collins is still in the works? Is it planned? Will it be there by next fall? When can we expect the building?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Yes, it's still in the plan.

Mr. Tredger: I'm glad to hear that. It leads right into my next question. One of the things we had at Pelly Crossing, when I was there at the school, was a wood-chip boiler, and it was an experimental stage. I remember spending some nights shovelling the wood chips into the furnace to make it work.

When we viewed the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, they had put in a new state-of-the-art wood-chip boiler. Can you tell me if that's operating? How is it working? I understand it's experimental, but can we anticipate it to take most of the heat load next year? Is it fully operational?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Yes, it's operating fully. We have a one-year warranty with it, so we're utilizing it. It works completely to heat the facility.

We're using our warranty to run it as much as we can, so we can figure it out as best as possible. But, yes, it's up and running.

Mr. Tredger: Great, that's good news indeed. That's actually very exciting. I look forward to seeing that technology perhaps being used in other buildings. It's something that may employ local people, and I think could go a long way to seeing some of our energy needs met.

Half a million dollars on the Silver Trail to upgrade it to gravel standard — do you know what part of the Silver Trail? Would it be the area from Stewart Crossing to Mayo, or from Mayo on to Keno, because these are two fairly big areas. While \$500,000 sounds like a lot of money, it isn't when it comes to fixing roads, as you alluded to earlier.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I'm not exactly sure, but I can get back to the member opposite with an answer for him.

Mr. Tredger: Thank you to the minister opposite for that. I look forward to that. The minister mentioned \$200,000 for rural roads. Can you let me know what roads that would include or how a local community might access that fund and what kinds of things it is designed to achieve?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: That \$200,000 is a revolving fund that residents — as more people develop down a side road and there are more residents and more traffic on there, they would require an upgrade. They come to the government with an application, and we get many of these yearly. We cannot do all of them with the funds that we have in that, but we look to prioritizing them — how long they have asked for it; what they have asked for. We look at traffic concerns, safety issues, which go with that. That is something that the department does. They can speak to the department for the application and it is residents who will put in an application for it. Then it goes to our department and we look at it on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Tredger: Thank you for that answer.

Rest stops and outhouses along the highways — I had asked you a question earlier about it, and just want to go back to that a little bit. Again, residents have raised the issue a number of times. When you're travelling down the road, sometimes there's a long distance between communities and people depend on access to the outhouses. The minister had mentioned that we are making them more accessible. I wondered how many of those were being built this year. What are the plans? When can I tell people on the road up to Mayo or to Dawson City, where I've heard concerns? When can they expect an accessible outhouse on the way?

While we're talking about this, I've stopped at all of them on the way between here and Mayo. In the wintertime, they're not only not accessible to someone who is in a wheelchair, they're not accessible to anyone. The roads are plowed and leave a great huge berm before you can get across to the outhouse. I don't believe it would take a whole bunch as the roads are plowed to stop and dig a pathway or something, making it a lot easier on people.

The other aspect of that is tourism. As we encourage more tourists to come into the territory, we get people with varying needs and having accessible outhouses, believe me, at our rest stops would be important. I'd like to hear your views on that, as well as the number that are being built this year and the number that are in the budget for future building.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I never thought when I got elected I'd be talking about outhouses, but, as the member has noticed, we've gone from the old design outhouse with the lip on it and the small door to the new cement block ones that are wheelchair accessible. I don't have an exact number. I know we replaced them and we are replacing them more often. The discussion part that the member was looking at from me is that in the wintertime, with increased tourism, we do maintain some of them. We don't maintain all of them. Some of them we don't. From my perspective, and through the department's perspective, I will be getting back to the department. This is one of the things that I have on my to-do list for next winter. Whether residents are travelling from Beaver Creek or Stewart, the member is saying that they shouldn't have to drive for 100 miles without a rest stop and then have three that are maintained and accessible for people like the elderly. As I said earlier, that's something that's on my radar and I'll be looking into that.

Mr. Tredger: The maintenance is critical too. It's getting pretty ripe right now.

I'm sorry to jump around a little bit. Cell service in the communities: I'm told iPhones don't work in the communities. When can we anticipate a more up-to-date cell service into the communities? What's being done on that? At the same time, the areas outside the communities — most of the cell service is within about five kilometres of the community, maybe give or take some. But there are quite a few residents who live farther away. I know that Northwestel is looking to get out of radio phone service as the towers are aging.

Are there any plans to replace that? Can we look for service, especially for the mining companies that are looking for service into their areas where the exploration is happening — where is that going?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I should have fun with this. As you know, the Yukon government partnered with Latitude Wireless in the expansion of cellular phone service in 23 areas in the Yukon and it is better. What the member was getting at with the 3G cell coverage — your iPhones are good within the City of Whitehorse but not in rural areas right now. Northwestel had a monopoly, but the CRTC has opened up the north a little bit more, so we will have to see what comes with that. When it comes to the mobile radio systems, it is just an old, antiquated, outdated system that we can't afford to maintain. The infrastructure part of it is old and decrepit and it just wasn't worth replacing. Satellite phones are almost cheaper than mobile phones and have channels programmed in now so a lot of people who are rural and a lot of mining companies — I know that, as a guide, I always packed a satellite phone.

I have got the department looking to see if we can charge a roaming fee to all the people who come up here in the summertime and utilize our infrastructure. We could gain a little bit off of that so we could put it back into the infrastructure. So it's on our radar. We work as funding comes. We've partnered and it's quite a bit better than it was, but it does need to improve. It does need to improve, because it would make it easier to work with our ICT stuff within the rural communities — when it

comes to some of the education stuff. There were questions asked earlier.

Mr. Tredger: I appreciate that. I got a little concerned when we were looking at 3G and then I went over to pick up an iPad, and they're talking 4G. So we need to get on it. I hear that in virtually every community I visit, as I'm sure the minister does and our other rural counterparts.

I had asked the Minister of Community Services earlier about the transportation of hazardous materials and the training around that. She referred me to the Tourism minister, but I suspect it's going to take cooperation from more than just one department.

All three of the departments are going to need to look at this and develop a comprehensive approach to it.

More and more companies are transporting hazardous materials over our roads. I know of a number of mines that are transporting B-trains full of cyanide gas. These gas trucks pass through communities like Watson Lake, like Teslin, like Carmacks, like Mayo, and there may some day come to be an accident, either a head-on collision or a collision on the road, or a rollover or something. I'm concerned for the responders — for the RCMP. I'm concerned for the local residents, and I'm concerned for other users of the roads. I guess what I'm looking for — and perhaps you would take the leadership with the other two ministers on this — is for some way of reporting, so that when a truck of hazardous material comes into the territory, that's recorded, maybe at the weigh station or something.

So if there is an accident down the way, a responder might have an opportunity to know what he's dealing with before they walk in. With the communication systems that we have, I think it might be a fairly straightforward thing to put in a reporting system, so that if there is an accident, as I say, the responders — whether it's the RCMP or Emergency Measures Organizations — have knowledge of what they're going to deal with, so they can respond appropriately.

The second aspect to that would be signage — to make sure that Highways have signed any routes that dangerous goods are going on, so that people know what is going through their area and that it's well signed and well marked. That's not only for the residents, but for the truckers so that they can ensure they're on a route.

Training of all the various EMO organizations — the fire departments, the ambulance crews — throughout the area — I know Victoria Gold, in their wisdom with Na Cho Nyäk Dun, came up with a plan to train some Na Cho Nyäk Dun members to respond to a potential cyanide spill.

That doesn't help Watson Lake; that doesn't help Teslin; that doesn't help any of the communities along the way where these dangerous goods are being transported. I would look for a comprehensive training system that is repeated, because people move on and change. Each area should have several people who are trained and are able to respond to such things. A fourth aspect would be a public awareness of the types and kinds of dangerous goods that are travelling over their roads and through their communities. So I guess I'm wondering if there is a plan or would the minister take it upon himself to bring Community Services, Environment, and Highways and Public

Works together to come up with a comprehensive plan to deal with the increasing amount of hazardous materials that are entering our area? So that would be reporting, signage, training and publicity. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Okay. Just for the question asked there — the transportation of dangerous goods is federally regulated, so it's standard across Canada.

The Department of Environment has a spill line that you can call about an environmental spill on a highway — that stuff you were talking about. Through federal regulation of dangerous goods, all transporters of dangerous goods — companies and employees — have to be trained. The equipment that they use when they go to get their permits — and they go to get their vehicles checked on a regular basis; the trucks, the trailers and the stuff that they haul — they have to be at a standard. So, there is not a dump truck with cyanide in the back and a tarp on it flying up the Alaska Highway. They are regulated through Transport Canada and the regulations are quite stiff. I've taken all the courses in my day.

When it comes to signage, every dangerous goods vehicle has a placard on it with a number. The RCMP, the firemen, most EMO and a lot of the agencies that we have here already understand what those numbers are, so if it has a certain number on it they will know that it is a diesel-fuel spill or whatever it is. What it comes down to is that there are a lot of regulations, and I know a lot of companies that are transporting have a plan. I know that some of the First Nations and what you talked about with the mining companies — they are going to be transporting some of this stuff.

They've identified through Highways and Public Works, through our weigh scales, that they are hauling this stuff and then they do have a reporting process and a plan.

Seeing the time, I move that we report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 6, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2012-13*, and has directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: 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 stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:25 p.m.