

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Monday, April 15, 2013 — 1:00 p.m.**

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order. At this time, we will proceed with prayers.

*Prayers*

**Withdrawal of motions**

**Speaker:** Before we move on to the Order Paper, the Chair wishes to inform the House of a change that has been made to the Order Paper. Motion No. 401, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake, has been removed from the Order Paper, as the action requested in this motion has been taken.

**DAILY ROUTINE**

**Speaker:** We will now proceed with the Order Paper. Tributes.

**TRIBUTES**

**In remembrance of Barry Bellchambers**

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** It's truly my honour to rise today on behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly to pay tribute to Barry Bellchambers, a long-time resident of Whitehorse and a true champion to Yukon's tourism sector. Barry's exceptional talents, abilities and personality were well known in many sectors across Yukon, from his early days of gold mining through to his work in Yukon's tourism sector. Barry embraced a sense of community commitment to customer service that really lives on today.

Barry came to Yukon from the small island of Tasmania over 40 years ago. For the past 20 years, Barry devoted his life to Yukon's tourism sector, committing time and resources to the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon, the Yukon Convention Bureau and the Wilderness Tourism Association of Yukon.

For those who knew Barry personally, he was a man driven to a purpose, who believed passionately that tourism was not only an economic generator, but it was truly a way of life. He believed that by working together we could accomplish great things. Throughout his involvement in the tourism sector and the business community as a whole, Barry was truly a leader like no other.

It is hard to imagine anyone else taking a concrete maze that was the old YWCA building and turning it into a quality hotel, or filling in the Lions swimming pool and turning it into a convention centre. His knack for spotting an opportunity and seizing on it when most others would walk away was well known.

Barry believed that all things were possible. Whether it was establishing the first-ever airport courtesy shuttle, serving his own brand of beer, or selling out rock concerts, Barry helped to redefine Yukon's tourism industry.

Barry also had a keen understanding of the importance of client services. If a client was not satisfied, Barry was the first one to make it right. He was not daunted by challenges, but was

driven by opportunity. To him, success in business wasn't complicated; it was simple — with hard work, creativity, and no fear, he made his mark on Yukon's tourism industry, and whether you knew Barry personally or professionally, you will know that he was driven to succeed.

While Barry's business achievements and successes are well-recognized and will forever be remembered, we believe his greatest legacy is that, at his core, he cared about people. Barry wanted people to succeed and would make extraordinary efforts to help them do so.

In closing, on behalf of the Government of Yukon, I wish to convey our deepest sympathy on the passing of Barry Bellchambers and to extend heartfelt condolences to his wife Maggie, his family and his friends. At that, I would ask that all members of this Assembly join me in welcoming to the gallery for this tribute his wife, Maggie Holt Bellchambers.

*Applause*

**In recognition of Yukon Education Week**

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to Yukon Education Week, which runs from today, April 15, through to April 19.

This year's theme is "Every Student, Every Day", because the daily pursuit of new knowledge and skills is a journey that fosters innovation and creativity in all of us.

When we as Yukoners commit to being lifelong learners, we build healthier and stronger communities. This week is a time to celebrate the important role of education in Yukon. It is a time to recognize that learning is a holistic process, which includes all aspects of our lives. It is also a time to raise awareness of the many educational opportunities available to our residents.

Mr. Speaker, it is when people share their passions, their experiences and their opinions about education that the foundation of learning is strengthened.

Education Week is also a time to thank our teaching professionals for their hard work and commitment in helping learners succeed to the best of their ability. We also recognize that learners' success is supported by families, First Nations, schools, school councils and communities.

This year's calendar of events boasts over 40 different individual activities happening throughout the Yukon. Some of them are being put on by schools; others will be held by community partners with vested interests in education.

To highlight a few of the events: the celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* is currently happening at the Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre and runs until 3:00 this afternoon. There are concerts and school displays, in partnership with the Rotary Music Festival, which is being held every day at the Yukon government main administration building over lunch. The Every Student, Every Day attendance initiative will be happening this Wednesday at MacBride Museum, hosted by the Victoria Gold Student Encouragement Society. It starts at 5:30 p.m. and all are welcome to attend.

There is also Yukon Education's annual open house, where anyone from the public can visit and complete challenges set out by our hard-working staff for prizes. They can perform

science experiments; learn some fun design engineering principles and find out more about the educational resources available to Yukoners.

There are also a number of events happening in our communities. I mentioned the First Nation participation, as well as francophone participation. The CSFY are hosting an open house and an evening of games on Wednesday the 17<sup>th</sup> at École Émilie Tremblay, and to close out the week there is the spring school council conference.

I would be remiss in not mentioning the fact that, through the support of the Yukon Amateur Radio Association, a class at Grey Mountain Primary on Saturday will be in touch with Commander Chris Hadfield on the international space station. They're looking forward to asking Commander Hadfield a number of questions. I would invite all members and indeed, all members of the public, to check the local papers or visit the Department of Education website for a full listing of Education Week events.

With that, I too would like to welcome the Deputy Minister of Education, Valerie Royle, and one of our communications officers, Paige Parsons, who was instrumental in putting this entire week together. Thank you.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** I am very pleased to rise on behalf of the Official Opposition during Education Week and pay tribute to the many people in our territory involved in education. We would like to thank the dedicated educators and other professionals in our education system. They demonstrate their commitment to learning and to our students each day. We thank elementary and high school teachers and educational assistants, tutors, secretaries, bus drivers, college instructors, public servants, early childhood educators and non-governmental organizations such as Yukon Learn and Skills Canada. Accredited trades and training programs complement post-secondary education offered at Yukon College.

As well, our education system would not succeed without the many volunteers who provide support. We thank the volunteers who sit on school councils and boards, help teachers in public schools and with extra curricular activities and who work with children and adults with special needs.

The theme for Education Week this year is "Every Student, Every Day." Learning takes place for all people at every age and stage of life. We have a diverse group of learners in the Yukon. This includes adult learners, English-as-a-second-language students, as well as those in elementary and high schools.

In Yukon, we are privileged to have a strong First Nation community. First Nations in particular see education as the means to activate and preserve their heritage and culture. Some creative accommodation has been made within the larger culture to engage First Nation communities in the curriculum and programs of our school system. With land claims and self-government agreements, there is the means now to respond to the keen interest that First Nations have about the education system in the Yukon.

In its 1972 policy statement on the education of Yukon Indians, the Council for Yukon Indians noted in *Together Today*

*for Our Children Tomorrow* the need for First Nation-relevant curriculum for improved First Nation graduation rates and a move away from paternalism toward First Nation control of the education system. All of these issues still resonate 40 years on.

Here in the Yukon last week, we acknowledged the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Yukon College and were particularly proud of our education for the learners at the college.

Yukon College is truly a lifelong learning centre with its many community campuses and programs in almost all communities, ranging from early childhood development, through to programs for seniors. Along with university transfer credits, the college features trades and skills training and labour market participation for First Nations, youth and communities. The Yukon native teacher education program is currently accepting applications for its 2013 intake. I think we can all be proud of the many graduates of that program who are often found teaching and contributing in our schools.

In honour of Education Week, the Yukon NDP would like to take this time to celebrate the many successes of Yukon students and educators. I look forward to the many activities that have been organized through this Education Week. I think it demonstrates what a large range there is when we think about education. It encompasses not just the K to 12 classrooms, but music, art, heritage and culture. Thanks to all the people in the Yukon who contribute to those.

**Mr. Silver:** I rise today on behalf of the Liberal caucus to pay tribute to Education Week with this year's theme, "Every Student, Every Day". Every Student, Every Day is an initiative to help improve students' attendance in our territory's schools and emphasize the importance that education plays in our lives.

This week is an opportunity to highlight the important role knowledge plays in expanding the mind and transforming lives and how education helps to shape the future of our young people and, in turn, our territory.

As Yukon First Nations celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*, they recently held meetings on education. They are ongoing, as we heard from the minister's speech today, as well. As the First Nation governments reach new levels of maturity, their education departments are growing and producing many great ideas and focusing on moving forward. We congratulate them on the success of their meetings and their continued initiatives in education on a grassroots basis.

With many partners, such as the Department of Education, the Individual Learning Centre, First Nations and Yukon College, it's a great time to be involved in education. As we challenge our youth and encourage their interests in learning, we need to stress the importance of daily attendance, staying in school and getting an education. The future depends on their knowledge and skills.

As a former educator, it was my privilege to be a part of a system and a team of dedicated educators whose chosen profession is guiding and nurturing young minds and helping them to prepare for the future. Education is a lifelong learning ex-

perience and a partnership, not only with teachers and students, but with parents, industry and community.

Each child is unique, Mr. Speaker, and we must develop that uniqueness by giving them the essential tools, skills and 21<sup>st</sup> century technology to help them develop to their full potential.

During Education Week, we celebrate teaching excellence and student achievement. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many, many volunteers, tutors, mentors, educational assistants, NGOs and businesses for their commitment to education and skills training.

Education Week is an excellent time to focus on the importance of education and the many educational opportunities available to Yukoners. Education and learning and a thirst for knowledge is not limited to students, but to Yukoners of all ages.

As previously mentioned, throughout the week there are many activities and events showcasing education resources and opportunities available for each and every Yukon community. I encourage Yukoners to take part.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, this tribute is to our future, for our students of today will be the leaders of tomorrow. Thank you.

**Speaker:** Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, we have a number of people in the gallery today, joining us for the tribute to Barry Bellchambers. I will name a few of them here. From the Department of Tourism and Culture, we have Linda Bierlmeier, Shannon McNevin, Deborah Greenlaw, Robin Anderson, John Spicer and Pierre Germain.

Friends of Mr. Bellchambers: Carson Schiffkorn, Betty Schiffkorn, Pam Blackburn, George Asquith and Craig Tuton. From TIA, we have Neil Hartling, who is the chair of TIA Yukon; John Robertson, who is the second vice-chair from TIA, as well as the GM of Coast High Country and Best Western Gold Rush. We have Heather McIntyre, who is the chair of YCB and also a board member for TIA. We have Blake Rogers, who is the executive director for TIA; and last but not least, Adam Gurley, who is a friend, a constituent and the VP of marketing.

If we could have all members of this Assembly extend a warm welcome to the family, friends and business associates of Barry Bellchambers.

*Applause*

**Ms. McLeod:** It gives me great pleasure to have some constituents of mine come to visit us in the Legislature today. They are Rachel O'Brien, who is a home school student; her mother, Cheryl O'Brien, who is the president of the Watson Lake Chamber of Commerce; and Terry Skergit, along with her friend Max, who's lying on the floor there. Welcome to the Legislature.

*Applause*

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

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** I have the *Yukon College 2013 Report to the Community* for tabling.

**Speaker:** Are there any other returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions for presentation?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Is there a notice of motion?

## NOTICES OF MOTION

**Ms. McLeod:** I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to continue to implement the housing and land development commitments outlined in the Yukon Party's 2011 election platform, "Moving Forward Together", by developing a housing action plan that builds on strategic investments and addresses the needs of Yukoners for a variety of housing options.

**Ms. White:** I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to rectify the mistake of not recording First Nations elders' oral testimony as part of the Peel land use planning consultation and ensure that oral testimony is recorded and forever a part of the public record.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to proceed with regulations governing LNG so that Yukon Electrical can switch over generators from diesel to LNG.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

**Question re:** Peel watershed land use plan

**Ms. White:** The *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* goes to the heart of the relationship with Yukon First Nations. Yukon First Nations relinquished huge amounts of land to reach settlement agreements with this government, but Yukon First Nations were promised a meaningful role in land use planning. The voices and wisdom of elders are central to aboriginal culture, tradition and practices. The oral nature of these traditions is well known by all. Given the central and important role of elders and their wisdom, why didn't the minister ensure that, during the latest round of consultations, their comments would be transcribed word for word and put in the public record?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** I'd like to say that during the public consultation, we in fact received over 2,000 comments re-

garding the Peel land use plan — faxes, letters, e-mails and website comments on the [www.peelconsultation.ca](http://www.peelconsultation.ca) website, and responses from the householder that was sent out to residents all over the territory.

I certainly want to thank all of the officials for the hard work that they put in while this whole process went on and the engagement that occurred and the engagement that occurred in Whitehorse and affected communities as well.

Certainly, oral comments helped to form the general comments in the *What We Heard* document that was out there. Certainly, people were encouraged to provide written comments, in light of the fact that there always can be some interpretation around oral comments that are made.

Mr. Speaker, certainly over and above the public consultation, there was targeted consultation with the affected First Nations prior to the public consultation and, in fact, going on as we speak right now before the conclusion of this. Of course, the First Nations themselves will be listening to their elders and helping form their response as a result of the comments they heard from their elders.

**Ms. White:** Last week, we heard from the Government of the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun about comments their elders made on the proposed Peel watershed land use plan. According to Chief Champion, the elders' comments and the comments of others who gave oral testimony at a government open house were not adequately reflected in the Yukon government's *What We Heard* document. This is one more example of this government's inability to properly consult with Yukoners.

What action will the Premier take to ensure that the oral comments made by elders and citizens of Yukon First Nations regarding the Peel land use plan are properly recorded and included in the public record?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** As I've mentioned, certainly, while rural comments helped form the basis of the *What We Heard* document, the officials were there tasked with providing information and gathering information, and that certainly helped form that document. We encouraged people to provide written comments, simply because oral comments can be interpreted. Two people, three people could listen to a comment and may find different meaning to that comment or take it in a different context, so I think from one perspective that is important. As I mentioned, certainly the affected First Nations have their own specific consultation with regard to the Peel land use plan. Certainly, I will assume that the First Nations will be listening to the elders as part of gathering their information and putting forward their thoughts on this when they come back for that specific consultation with the government and then to move forward with this plan.

**Ms. White:** The Premier's handling of this whole land use planning process has gone from bad to worse. First the government did not allow staff to engage in any substantive way while the recommended plan was being developed. Second, the government unilaterally revealed this new set of principles. Third, the government tried to go around the First Nation final agreements and trotted out a new set of plans for the public to comment on. Last, but not least, the government is now

now deciding whose comments are more valid than others. Now the words of the elders are being left out.

The Premier has yet again failed the process and the people. Will the Premier recognize his fault and ensure all the comments made by elders and citizens of Yukon First Nations are included in the public record?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Once again the member is wrong. I know the NDP like to rely on their carefully written rhetoric rather than reflect the facts. I would point out first of all, as the member knows, that what the government has done is consistent with the commitments and statements the Premier made at the leaders forum on the environment during the 2011 election campaign.

Secondly, as far as the consultations that went on, our staff went the extra mile in trying to hear from Yukoners. In this situation, Na Cho Nyäk Dun, at the request of the chief, went into a room where others were meeting to hear directly from people at the chief's request.

As the Premier noted, comments that were included and posted in specific comments online have not been transcribed from what was heard orally at meetings. But what was heard orally at meetings does form part of the *What We Heard* document. As the Premier noted, elders of First Nations also have the opportunity to speak directly to the First Nation government and we have an obligation, which we have followed and will continue to follow, to consult directly with the First Nation government. So their comments do form part of what government has done in the public record and undoubtedly will be a major part of what the Na Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation puts forward in their comments and input to government in the remaining stages of the consultation process. We're certain that that First Nation will undoubtedly take steps to address their comments —

**Speaker:** Order please. The member's time has elapsed.

#### **Question re: Residential school curriculum**

**Ms. Moorcroft:** I'd like to ask the Minister of Education to picture this: He and his brothers and sisters, friends, cousins — indeed all the children under 16 in his neighbourhood — are hoisted up into the back deck of an open-stock cattle truck on a sunny fall day and transported to Carcross, Yukon or Lower Post, B.C., housed in cold dormitories, and not allowed to keep any personal effects.

Gifts from family were taken away and destroyed from the First Nation students who attended, quote, "residential school". The 2007 Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in publication *Finding Our Way Home* documents the role of the government and the church, who were complicit in this injustice. The impacts of it can still be seen today and the graduation rates among First Nation students is just another reminder that governments need to do better.

Reflecting on the fact that neither the minister nor I were dragged away from our families for educational assimilation, although many of our First Nation contemporaries were, can the minister give us an update on the development of residential school curriculum in Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** Yukon Education has a workplan with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation to develop a teachers guide for the book, *Finding Our Way Home*, which the member opposite referenced, to be piloted at the Grade 10 level in the fall of this year, 2013. There will be teacher professional development also offered to support the new resource.

Yukon Education has also hired an additional First Nation curriculum consultant who will be working on the residential schools curriculum and other First Nation curriculum initiatives.

So as I mentioned in a previous sitting of this House, we take this very seriously. We're monitoring the rollout of the residential school curriculum in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut and looking to use that as a template to develop our Yukon-specific curriculum. So there is already activity underway for this fall, and we look forward to continuing that.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** Here are some stark facts. The Anglican Church established Yukon's first mission school in 1891 at Fortymile. It was moved to Carcross in 1919, where the Chootla Indian residential school closed in 1969. The Lower Post Indian Residential School, south of Watson Lake, was run by the Roman Catholic Church until 1975.

*Finding Our Way Home* is only one of many great resources that could form part of a residential school curriculum to help today's youth understand the impact this system had on families and communities. A residential school curricula would particularly benefit non-aboriginal students.

Has the Minister of Education directed his department to work also with Yukon First Nations heritage departments, Yukon College and Yukon Native Language Centre to develop residential school curriculum that is based on all of the current resources available at these institutions?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released an interim report in February 2012, which included recommendations on education support for survivors, reconciliation and commemoration. The First Nation Programs and Partnerships unit in Yukon Education began work several years ago on the development of resources on residential schools. As I mentioned in my first response, in addition to hiring an additional First Nations curriculum consultant, Yukon Education is also working on the residential schools curriculum and other First Nations curriculum initiatives. We are following the lead of our sister territories, and I know this was something that was very important at last year's CMEC meetings in Halifax where the ministers of Education from across the country were addressed by Justice Murray Sinclair. Obviously a lot of work is underway and a lot of work is still to be accomplished on this very important file.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** I'm pleased to hear the minister's reports of additional resources for the First Nation Programs and Partnerships unit at the department and the work that they are doing. Forty years ago when First Nation leaders presented *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* as a manifesto for sovereignty over lands and resources and the social development of indigenous peoples, they reflected on the need to improve graduation rates; they talked about the alienation of students and parents and having more First Nations teachers.

These issues are as current today as they were back in 1972. This knowledge of Yukon First Nations heritage and culture is essential if we want to live in an open and inclusive society, and the words of elders, as well as the work of organizations such as the Native Language Centre, have a lot of information that should be gathered and shared before it's lost.

**Speaker:** Order please. The member's time has elapsed.

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** I didn't quite hear the question there, but perhaps I can talk about some of the partnerships that we have with Yukon First Nations. The department has been working with a number of First Nations to develop formal partnership agreements and accompanying workplans to move the desired programming of First Nations into Yukon schools.

This morning at the kickoff to Education Week, which was at the Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre, I also made a pre-announcement that a First Nations grade 5 social studies component will be mandatory this fall to assist students in that class. It's mandatory for all grade 5 students across the territory to learn exactly what the member opposite was talking about, to learn about the significant contributions of First Nations pre-contact and since contact.

There are a number of initiatives underway, including the MOU we signed between the Yukon government, Yukon First Nations and Canada. There was a First Nation education summit a number of weeks ago, which will lead to the development of a workplan. A number of initiatives are underway with respect to providing quality First Nation education in the territory, closing that graduation gap and closing the labour gap that exists between First Nation and non-First Nation people.

#### **Question re: Yukon Hospital Corporation funding**

**Mr. Silver:** I have a question for the Minister of Finance. The centerpiece of the budget we're debating this spring is a \$27-million bailout of the Yukon Hospital Corporation. It was only a couple of years ago that the Yukon Party government brushed off concerns about the amount of debt the Hospital Corporation was running up, insisting it was not biting off more than it could chew. It was only a couple of years ago that the Government of Yukon was insisting, despite the fact that it generates almost no revenue, the Hospital Corporation was capable of paying off almost \$70 million in loans by renting space back to the government.

It was a financial agreement based on fantasy. Well, that fantasy came to an end this spring in the form of a \$27-million bailout.

Why was the corporation allowed to borrow this money in the first place, when there was really no plan to pay it back?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** As I said before, this government is proud of its record in the 10 years that the Yukon Party has been in government. We've gone from a time, with the previous NDP and Liberal governments, when there was a mass exodus from this territory. Thousands of people left, primarily our prime young workforce of 25- to 40-year-olds. Why did they leave, Mr. Speaker? They left because there were no jobs — because the economy of the two previous administrations had created an environment where there weren't any opportunities out there.

Look at where the economy is today. We're very proud of the job that we have done. We are in a position where homeowners have an opportunity once a year to make a lump-sum payment on their mortgage to reduce the time that they will have a mortgage or reduce their payments. Like a good financial individual, the government is doing the same thing — we're going to ensure that we can pay down some money because we have some money right now. We have money in the bank — one of the few jurisdictions in this country that does.

We'll use this opportunity to reduce some of the debt load for the long term.

**Mr. Silver:** The bottom line is that it's not good fiscal management when the centrepiece of an annual budget is a \$27-million bailout of a corporation that can't pay its bills because it is swamped in debt-servicing payments. These loans should never have been allowed in the first place, and the government should just admit that.

When the Auditor General released his scathing report on the government's handling of this project, he questioned why the corporation went to the banks in the first place — and I quote: "The Corporation could not provide us with any explanation regarding why the loans were secured through banks rather than from the Government of Yukon."

The decision to go through the banks means higher interest rates than if the government had given the corporation the funds directly. The corporation could not provide any explanation. Can the Minister of Finance explain to the public why this more costly option was chosen in the first place?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** The centrepiece of the budget would be continued growth and prosperity — a \$250-million capital budget, reinvesting in Yukon, creating jobs, creating training opportunities, creating business opportunities for Yukoners — moving forward with such projects as the new seniors complex at 207 Alexander, moving forward with the rebuilding of the Sarah Steele Building and dealing with addictions problems and countless other projects we have going forward.

By paying \$27 million of debt down, we are saving \$12 million in interest over the long term. This government thinks that's a good decision.

**Mr. Silver:** The minister wants credit for bailing out the Yukon Hospital Corporation, when it is the government that got the corporation in over its head in the first place. The Hospital Corporation was so overextended that it needed a \$27-million bailout to get back to solid financial footing. This government let the Hospital Corporation borrow money with no plans to pay it back. Taxpayers are also paying higher interest rates on these loans because the corporation went to the banks for financing instead of to the government. Taxpayers are on the hook for many years to come because of the way this project was financed. This year alone, there is \$3.6 million in the budget for loan-servicing costs for the Dawson and Watson Lake facilities. Again, to the Finance minister: Why was the corporation forced to borrow from banks and pay higher interest costs?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** Of course, I can't speak to the decisions that were made prior to this administration being here, but I can tell you that the citizens of the member opposite's

riding of Klondike and, in fact, the citizens of the riding of Watson Lake do appreciate and think it is important that we do have enhanced medical care and hospitals or health centres in their communities.

I think that member opposite could go back and ask the residents of his community if in fact they think it is a good decision or not.

We are saving \$12 million in interest payments as a result of moving this debt down. Of course, we have all kinds of room and flexibility, as you are aware, Mr. Speaker. We are nowhere near our debt ceiling as a government. The federal government did raise the debt ceiling for all three territories. The other two territories certainly were in a position where this was very important for them; however, that wasn't the case for us. Certainly we have more money and assets than we have liabilities and in fact have money in the bank.

This is a different situation because when the interim leader of the Third Party — when they were last in power, I believe that they were borrowing money just to pay government salaries, Mr. Speaker. I think it's a stark contrast to the financial management that occurs today and what happened under the previous Liberal government.

#### **Question re: Yukon Liquor Corporation social responsibility**

**Mr. Barr:** Yukon continues to lead the nation in per capita alcohol sales — nearly twice the Canadian average, according to numbers released by Statistics Canada on Thursday. The average Canadian spends \$724 on booze in a year; Yukoners spend nearly double that — \$1,319.

Tourists and seasonal workers are not enough to explain these dramatic numbers. I am not interested in the minister's explanation about alcohol sales in Yukon; I'm interested in how the Yukon government plans to prevent alcohol-related harm in our communities.

Fetal alcohol syndrome disorder is a preventable, lifelong disability. Can the minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation inform the House how many babies born in the Yukon last year were exposed to alcohol before birth?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** I will defer to my colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services, for the specific statistics the member opposite is asking for. However I will inform the House that the statistics that were announced do refer to liquor sales per capita and not to liquor consumption in the Yukon. The latest Yukon addictions survey from 2005 indicates that Yukon residents consume similar amounts of liquor compared to other Canadians. And although he may not want to hear it, Yukon liquor sales are much higher between May and September, when Yukon typically experiences an increase in population from seasonal workers as well as tourists.

**Mr. Barr:** The Yukon government has an explanation for our high liquor sales. What we do not have is a strategy for dealing with the downstream consequences of alcohol abuse in the territory.

The latest Yukon addictions survey was in 2005. Since then, the prevention team at Alcohol and Drug Services of the Department of Health and Social Services has released a couple of very good resources. The *Women and Alcohol: A Women's*

*Health Resource* report states, “Alcohol abuse... is a major public health concern, begging for...leadership...direct alcohol-related costs for health care and enforcement exceed the direct revenue from alcohol in most jurisdictions.”

Does the minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation monitor the direct costs of alcohol abuse on our health care, justice and education systems?

**Hon. Mr. Graham:** I’ll attempt to answer the member opposite’s first question with respect to FASD and the prevalence of FASD in the territory. FASD is a very difficult affliction to diagnose. We have set up several diagnostic teams in the territory that we bring in from time to time, but we are also in the process of establishing a diagnostic team that will be home-grown and will live in the Yukon. Several years ago, we also had a five-step FASD action plan set out and we have now accomplished most of the activities set out in the FASD action plan.

We have diagnostic clinics, as I said, for preschool and school-age children. We have assessments for adults through a contract with the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society of Yukon, FASSY. We have enhanced housing support, as you’re aware, through Options for Independence, OFI. We have also increased our supports dramatically for children, families and adults affected by FASD. We’re also approving substance abuse prevention programs, including a public awareness social program that we continue to run to date.

**Mr. Barr:** What seems very clear is that Yukon has an alcohol problem and its main distributor, Yukon Liquor Corporation, must admit to and deal with the downstream impacts of alcohol abuse. The downstream impacts of alcohol abuse are mopped up by different departments — Health and Social Services and Justice, primarily. There has to be a better way.

There used to be a position within the Yukon Liquor Corporation that was specifically trained in and dedicated to social responsibility. That position is cut. The minister has said he is not responsible for personnel issues, but the minister is responsible for the overall direction of the corporation.

Will the minister direct the president of Yukon Liquor Corporation to reinstate a full-time position specifically trained for education about and prevention of the terrible downstream impacts of alcohol abuse?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** The Yukon Liquor Corporation does have a strong social responsibility mandate to regulate the sale and consumption of liquor products and promote and enforce their legal and socially responsible sale, service and use. I know in the House last week we spoke about our commitment to the MADD Red Ribbon campaign. There’s also a significant commitment to the Preventing Alcohol and Risk-related Trauma in Youth, or the PARTY program; the Liquor Corporation has committed \$180,000 over the next three years to support the PARTY program.

In 2011-12, 198 people completed the Be a Responsible Server program, which focuses on providing responsible liquor service. There’s the Check 25 program, our partnership with the RCMP on conducting regular ID blitzes at our licensee holders. There are a number of initiatives that I could go on

about with respect to how the Liquor Corporation takes its social responsibility mandate very seriously. With respect to the member opposite’s question, I did address this last week in the House: that it’s not my responsibility to direct the departments or the corporations on the issue of how they deploy their personnel. That said, I will take this specific issue up with the president of the Yukon Liquor Corporation.

#### **Question re: Archives expansion**

**Ms. White:** Our Archives house an amazing collection of Yukon history. Five years ago government recognized that Archives were nearing full capacity and that storage space was needed to safely preserve our public treasures. After spending \$291,000 in public funds for planning, the minister stood up on the occasion of celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Yukon Archives and promised a new vault would be built — but now he has broken that promise. The Yukon Party may spin their irresponsible approach as great fiscal responsibility, but it has broken a promise, clear and simple. This broken promise has cost hundreds of thousands of taxpayers’ dollars.

Why did this government break its promise to build a new facility to house Yukon’s records and history and why did this government waste hundreds of thousands of taxpayers’ money in planning for a project it has cancelled?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** The Government of Yukon is truly committed to ensuring that Yukon Archives is able to continue the very important role it plays in preserving Yukon’s documentary history. The Archives’ record storage is in fact nearing capacity but it’s not full yet. It continues to provide safe, secure and environmentally sound storage for Yukon’s irreplaceable documentary history.

As we move forward, there was consultation with affected parties. This government is going to practise its due diligence when looking at projects like this and, if there’s a better suit, then we need to re-look at how we’re moving ahead with the storage vault that was originally intended up at the college. There is the chance we may have an opportunity to merge archeology and paleontology, perhaps even the Yukon permitted art collection, within an off-site vault for archives.

We are moving forward on this progress.

**Ms. White:** Just moments ago the Premier spoke of all the extra money his government has, so why not just build the vault? On Thursday the Premier said, “This is a project that, once we began to look at it, we began to realize that there might be other ways to work symbiotically to maximize the investment...” Really? I quote again: “...once we began to look at it...”

Is the Premier saying that the Yukon Party only began to look at the project after \$300,000 in taxpayers’ dollars had already been spent and after making a big \$2.6-million promise for a new vault based on what officials from Archives and Property Management recommended five years ago? This is a project mismanagement of the highest order. Will the Premier stand up and apologize to the Yukon public for his latest project bungling and commit to building a vault that Archives so desperately needs?

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** A little disappointed in the end with the member opposite there: Will you just ...? Will you just....? Will you just....?

We're committed to fiscal responsibility and, as the Minister of Tourism and Culture mentioned, there are other departments that also hold assets that need to be looked at. We have space management within the government and a space management committee and, through DMRC, we look at that and we have addressed the fact that there might be more bang for our buck when we combine some of these. We're committed to the Archives, but we're committed to being fiscally responsible for all Yukoners.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** 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):** Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is Vote 52, Department of Environment, of Bill No. 10, *First Appropriation Act, 2013-14*.

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. 10: *First Appropriation Act, 2013-14* — continued

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is Vote 52, Department of Environment, Bill No. 10, *First Appropriation Act, 2013-14*.

#### Department of Environment

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** Thanks, Madam Chair, for those opening remarks about the budget today. Of course, we're discussing the Department of Environment's 2013-14 main estimates. We will discuss both the capital and O&M budgets today.

I would like to start by thanking and welcoming our Deputy Minister of Environment, Mr. Kelvin Leary, to the Assembly today. I mentioned this as well — I think he's the longest

serving deputy minister in the government currently. We're happy to have him — I'm especially very happy to have him at my side, I should say.

I rise today to set out some of the Department of Environment's plans for the coming fiscal year, plans that are captured in the budget documents before you. Before I start, I would like to commend the staff of Environment Yukon for doing their best to achieve the department's vision: to be a recognized leader and a trusted partner in environmental stewardship. Their actions support a healthy, sustainable and prosperous Yukon now and into the future.

This is a department that embraces opportunity with new and talented people joining every month as biologists, assessors, analysts and more. I should note, Madam Chair, that as of fairly recently, with some new hires in the department, I am no longer the youngest person in the department, either, so that's some good news for me. I guess that means I have some challenges for the rookie of the year at the ice hockey games they sometimes have outside of the building at 10 Burns Road. That's one challenge I face, I suppose.

The appropriation the department seeks today is about 6 percent higher than the 2012-13 estimates. Most of the increase is due to capital investments to increase camping opportunities for Yukoners, improve the workspace for our staff, or repair water monitoring infrastructure.

One of the highlights for the capital budget, as I've mentioned, is the Parks branch, leading the planning and development of a new territorial roadside campground on the shore of big Atlin Lake. This is something we've discussed previously, and I don't need to describe it too much because I feel that I have, in past debates and discussions, explained some of the details of that particular campground. We anticipate the new campground will be ready for campers in 2015 and will feature a boat launch and a dock, as well as about 45 campsites. The Atlin Lake campground will be a welcome addition to our network of 42 campgrounds across the territory, especially for Southern Lakes residents, who sometimes find their favourite campground full when they're heading out for a relaxing weekend. As I've noted before, we have noticed over the past several years that a number of the campgrounds in the southern Yukon, particularly within about a two-hour drive from Whitehorse, tend to be very well used and are full for pretty much the vast majority of the summer, especially those weekends and long weekends when Yukoners like to get out and experience Yukon's environment.

Of course, campgrounds are one of the key ways that Yukoners often participate with the Department of Environment and with some of the services we provide, including the park officer program.

The campgrounds within about a two-hour drive of Whitehorse have been very well used and filled to capacity. When we are looking at a new place to identify for a new campground in the territory, we looked around the general area of the southern Yukon and within close proximity of Whitehorse. We thought the Atlin Lake campground was a prime candidate. It was negotiated in the land claims with the Carcross-Tagish First Na-



tion back during the negotiations of land claims. It was also identified previous to that as an ideal spot.

Some planning work has been done already. I would note that there was some money in the previous supplementary budget from 2012-13, which included some early-stage planning documents. Further to that, this budget contains \$780,000 to begin construction on the campground this summer. I would note that we have already had some discussions with some of the stakeholders in the area, but we have yet to have official consultations. Those are the kinds of discussions we will be having in the weeks and probably months to come as we begin preparing for the construction season.

There are a few key stakeholders in the area who do have an interest in the campground and how it's going to be developed. One of them, of course, is the Bible camp, Camp Yukon, which is on the shores of Lake Atlin as well. Of course, there are a few individual cabins and small landowners in the area who will have an interest in seeing the campground developed in a reasonable way. We'll do our best to take those considerations into account when planning for the campground.

With respect to improved space, the largest project we have planned for 2013-14 is replacing the existing district office in Watson Lake with a new building that will meet the needs of community members as they seek the services of Conservation Officer Services, Fish and Wildlife and Parks branch staff. The current set of buildings is small and in poor condition, due to their age. They were cobbled together over the years as programming was added in Watson Lake.

We will also be constructing an addition to the district office in Carmacks to house the conservation officer and field operations assistant. Members may recall that the department established a presence in Carmacks last year. The current space is shared with Energy, Mines and Resources and is far too small to meet the public service needs.

An urgent capital project the department is undertaking is the repair of a cableway on the Rancheria River that was severely damaged in the flooding last spring. This project is cost-shared with the Government of Canada, with each government contributing \$60,000. As a little bit of context, Madam Chair, you will recall the washouts that occurred last year. I certainly remember seeing pictures. I believe they were even in the newspaper, which showed some of the cables dangling perilously over the gap. I know we were lucky in a few cases but perhaps unlucky in some other cases, and the work being done with the Government of Canada is to repair some of the infrastructure there.

With respect to the proposed operation and maintenance expenditures, an important new initiative I would like to highlight is a wildlife-human conflict-reduction project led by Conservation Officer Services branch. Conservation officers were very visible last summer, with too many incidents reported involving bear activity. Prevention of human-bear conflict is a high priority for this government. We know that Yukoners value wildlife but it's clear that more education is needed so we can reduce wildlife-human conflict in future, especially bear encounters.

This is an issue that we have discussed previously in the Legislature, but with last year's — I think it's fair to say — unprecedented increase in bear activity in the Whitehorse area, and other communities throughout the Yukon, we certainly saw a significant mobilization of our CO services at all hours, of all days, throughout the summer, and that was certainly very taxing on them individually. Of course, we appreciate their work over the last year. I know, from speaking to a number of Yukoners, that they received excellent services from the conservation officers, whether it be an older lady calling in because she sees a bear in her backyard and doesn't know what to do, or a family having concerns about damage done to their property by a bear. There are any number of reasons why COs get called, and those are just some of the ones that I've heard about. But I know that pretty much every CO you talk to has some pretty interesting stories about cases where they have been called out under very interesting circumstances.

To this end, the government will launch a three-year-long program led by the Conservation Officer Services branch to increase the capacity of the branch for dealing with wildlife-human conflict complaints; support the delivery of public awareness and education measures; and assist with the development of partnerships with NGOs and community members. This program will strive for innovation and collaboration to achieve its goals.

An important step will be enhancing the bear conflict page on the department's website to help the public and media stay on top of where bear activity is taking place and to take appropriate action. The conservation officers will also step up enforcement when they find problems, such as poorly managed bear attractants. This will range from issuing warnings to individuals and businesses, to dangerous wildlife protection orders, tickets, and — hopefully, it never actually comes to this — in extreme cases, there is always the avenue of prosecution.

I would like to highlight the fact that as a part of this new initiative, the department will also work with a new local organization, WildWise, on innovative awareness and conflict prevention measures. The preliminary work to integrate aversive conditioning into the toolkit used by conservation officers when dealing with bears will begin as well. Relocating or destroying bears is a last resort for our conservation officers. Grizzly bears, especially, are an iconic species that we must do our best to conserve for both environmental and economic reasons. As I've noted before, destroying or relocating bears is absolutely a last resort and one conservation officers take no joy in, and it's terribly unfortunate when it comes to that.

One of the things we need to realize is that a lot of the practices we as citizens have in terms of the way we manage our garbage or the way we manage attractants in our yard really do matter and they can have a direct impact on whether or not a bear needs to be destroyed or relocated. As I noted before, relocating bears, unfortunately, has a fairly low rate of success. Oftentimes, when you relocate a bear to a new region, you're either relocating it to another bear's territory and then it causes those bears to have a conflict and usually it results in one of them being killed, or you don't move it far enough away and it simply finds its way back.

Growing up in Yukon, we've all heard some of the education measures previously, that once a bear gets into the garbage, it's very difficult to dissuade that bear from eating garbage further. Unfortunately in those situations, destroying the bear is often the last resort and one we're loath to resort to.

A minor change for the Conservation Officer Services branch is that they will assume responsibility for trap line administration in 2013-14. Up until now, the Fish and Wildlife branch handled this work. An internal transfer between the branches reflects this decision. This decision reflects the branch's current responsibility for trapper education and fur industry assistance.

I know the relationship between trappers and us is always one that is interesting to me. I know that the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin has raised a number of questions about this over the years. I'm sure he will have some questions about that particular issue.

The Department of Environment has also budgeted significant operation and maintenance funds to continue the work needed to clean up contaminants found on sites the government owns as a part of our commitment to protect environmental and human health. The remediation will resume at the Klondike Highway maintenance camp and the old Dawson highway yard. This work is coordinated by the department's site assessment and remediation unit, which manages the assessment and remediation of Yukon government-owned contaminated sites.

Remediation work will take place for the first time on the riverbank in downtown Whitehorse where revitalization work is taking place this spring. This work will be led by Community Services with technical assistance from the site assessment and remediation unit.

I would note that the contamination found on government-owned sites is usually from petroleum hydrocarbons such as diesel fuel and, in some cases, salt or metals. Often the contamination took place many years ago when the sites were used by the military or even the paddwheelers. The government owns 78 sites where contamination has been identified; 23 of these are landfills.

We use a risk-based approach to ensure we deal with the most problematic sites first since we don't have the financial or technical resources to do all the sites at once. Another important remediation project underway is the cleanup at the Marwell tar pit. Over the coming year we will complete the in-depth site assessment work, develop remedial options, identify a plan of restoration and provide the plan to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board for review. Cleaning up Yukon's largest hydrocarbon-contaminated site will minimize the risks to human and environmental health to the benefit of present and future generations. I know the Marwell tar pit is a topic we've discussed at some length in this Assembly.

When it comes to the assessment of other contaminated sites throughout the territory, we try our best to prioritize those sites and come up with key sites that we identify in any given year that are in need of the most immediate attention.

Turning now to another very important issue — one that I've always had a great interest in: the work of the Climate Change Secretariat.

Continuing with operation and maintenance-funded initiatives, I would like to highlight the \$500,000 invested by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada in climate change adaptation research that the Climate Change Secretariat is managing on behalf of the government. This is the second year of the four-year funding agreement, which is intended to help aboriginal and northern communities to address risks and challenges posed by climate change impacts and to become more resilient.

In Yukon, nine projects are underway that address a fascinating array of topics, including how climate change impacts on the Yukon River watershed may affect the hydroelectric-generating capacity of Yukon Energy Corporation, which climate change considerations the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board should be taking into account in its assessments, and what are the best management practices for farmers to use when dealing with changing permafrost conditions on their property. I have a full list of the nine projects that are funded, but I'll leave that for further debate in the House later today.

The Climate Change Secretariat has had a busy year, given its responsibility for coordinating the Government of Yukon's response to climate change, with a focus on research and adaptation. Last fall, we released a progress report on how the Yukon government is implementing the *Climate Change Action Plan*. In short, we are moving ahead in many ways, having completed 18 of the 33 actions called for, with a further 10 underway, and the rest remain under development.

We also reported on the quantity of greenhouse gas emissions generated by the Yukon government's own operations in 2010. This is an important number because the government has committed to cap its greenhouse gas emissions at this level and then work toward reducing emissions to 80 percent of this level by 2015. As verified by the climate registry, the Yukon government operations emitted 41.6 kilotonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents in 2010, which means our target to reduce emissions is nine kilotonnes by the end of 2015.

This year the secretariat will continue working with government departments and their green action teams on measures to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change. It will also continue its work with key players in the electricity, building, energy efficiency, industrial and transportation sectors to identify actions that will lead to realistic and measurable outcomes to minimize growth of Yukon's overall greenhouse gas emissions. We will maintain our funding support for climate change research taking place at Yukon College, as well as youth engagement around climate change.

Complementing the interdepartmental efforts of the Climate Change Secretariat is the department's Water Resources branch, which is coordinating the development of Yukon's water strategy.

In March, it was my pleasure to announce the start of public review of a draft water strategy, which will end on May 31. Once completed, a water strategy will help Yukon government

manage water in a coordinated way so that our water supply remains healthy now and into the future.

I appreciate the contributions by many individuals and organizations with water management responsibilities that have shaped the draft of the strategy to date. We share a common interest in having a long-term direction for economically and environmentally responsible water use. The department will continue to lead the coordination of Canada Water Week activities. With over 30 activities to choose from, the 2012 Canada Water Week we celebrated in Yukon this past March was the best so far.

Department staff will continue to maintain the on-line water catalogue, [www.yukonwater.ca](http://www.yukonwater.ca), launched almost two years ago. This service helps individuals, industry and regulatory agencies get the information they need on everything to do with water in Yukon. We will continue to maintain the water monitoring networks and studies that Yukoners rely on for accurate and timely information.

I see you gesturing, Madam Chair, that my time is up, so I will save the remaining notes around the Fish and Wildlife branch, the Parks branch, and some closing remarks for after we hear the next comment from the member opposite.

**Ms. White:** I am very pleased to stand here today in this debate on the Department of Environment. I'd like to take the opportunity to thank all the employees of the department for the hard work they do and to acknowledge the conservation officers as they go into their next season, the parks attendants, policy-makers and everyone within the department. Thank you for the work you do and all the rest of it.

In an effort to get through the department today, my questions will be short and to the point. The first document I'm going to reference is the *Draft Yukon Water Strategy: For Public Review*. It's very easy to read and very nice on-line. Under the water strategy, it speaks about the steps being taken to develop a wetlands classification framework. I was wondering — could we describe the work to date in the development of a wetlands classification framework?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** Before I carry on with the specific question the member opposite asked, I did want to finish the overview of some of the highlights of the budget to aid in our discussions today.

The Fish and Wildlife branch, the largest branch of the department, undertakes a wide range of activities to support evidence-based decision-making with respect to wildlife management and habitat protection. While the two-year-long White Gold baseline study has concluded, branch biologists continue to undertake research that supports the department's ongoing population monitoring and harvest management programs. We will be conducting 36 inventory projects over 2013-14 on species at risk, species that are important ecosystem indicators, and animal populations that encounter human harvest and potential impacts from land use activities.

Extensive research on the Aishihik wood bison herd will take place, consistent with the new management plan for the herd. Fall composition surveys will take place for the following caribou herds: Chisana, Ethel Lake, Finlayson, Aishihik,

Kluane, as well as the herds found in the Southern Lakes region.

Moose censuses are planned for the Haines Junction, Teslin burn and south Canol areas. There will also be ground-based moose monitoring. Biodiversity research will look at bats, pica, lemming, and gyrfalcon populations, among others.

On the habitat front, work is underway — or will begin later in the year — on four land parcels to be designated as habitat protection areas. The management plan for what will be the Pickhandle Lake's HPA is now being drafted, following extensive consultation by the joint planning committee with residents of Beaver Creek and Burwash Landing, and we expect planning work to begin later this year with the Whitefish wetlands, Lewes Marsh and Tagish River.

The department will continue to provide funding support to the Northern Research Institute for promoting Yukon's biodiversity. Transfer payments formerly made by the Fish and Wildlife branch to the University of Saskatchewan to support research into wildlife issues will now be handled by the Animal Health branch.

A special mention should be given to the collaborative and positive relationship between the department and Yukon's prime wildlife viewing attraction. The Department of Environment is proud of its support for and partnership with the Yukon Wildlife Preserve. We propose a modest increase in the operational funding we provide. It is almost 10 years since the government purchased the property and its assets from the Nowlan family. Our role has been to provide ongoing and stable operating and technical assistance to the Yukon Wildlife Preserve Operating Society.

I certainly commend the society's members and the preserve's staff and volunteers for their hard work to make the Yukon Wildlife Preserve a world-class wildlife viewing, educational, research and recovery institution. Gaining accreditation last year from the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums was a tremendous achievement. The Government of Yukon remains ultimately responsible for safeguarding the preserve as a public resource in perpetuity. Over the long term, however, we are working with the Yukon Wildlife Preserve Operating Society to help it become a financially self-sufficient operation.

As I mentioned earlier, the Parks branch will be busy over the coming year with the planning for the new Atlin Lake campground. I should note the department will be consulting with First Nations and the public as part of the planning process and this project will be subject to a Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board review. Otherwise, a small increase in operations expenditure is budgeted, mostly for personnel costs.

With respect to campground permits, we anticipate an increase in the number of annual permits that will be sold for the coming season with a small decrease in the number of daily permits. It would seem more and more people are realizing what a great deal the \$50 annual permit is. All you have to do is camp for four nights and the rest of your camping is free for the summer.

A review of the Tombstone Territorial Park management plan will conclude, or has concluded I suppose. We know from the comments received to date that there is a healthy interest in how the park is managed. That is not surprising, given the increasing popularity of the park overall and its interpretation programs and backcountry campgrounds. Parks staff will continue to come up with innovative ways to help visitors experience the area's culture and biodiversity.

We repaired and replaced the 30-year-old Five Finger Rapids viewing platform and stairway last year. This year we will keep a watchful eye on this well-used recreation site and all of our campgrounds with Parks officers, Parks interpreters and a few dedicated volunteers participating in our volunteer in the parks program.

I've set out some of the important initiatives the Department of Environment will tackle over the coming year and I'd like to finish the more formal part of my comments with a couple of other good news items. First, the Department of Environment is hosting the Environment Fair this May. This will be the third family oriented fair, the first in two years. A wide range of exhibitors will be present, along with representatives from every branch and unit of the department.

With the theme "Born to be Wild", this promises to be the most interesting fair yet. I know that we missed hosting it last year, unfortunately. This will be my first environment fair as minister, so I look forward to attending that and seeing the incredible level of interest in that particular fair.

Next, we will be investing in new computer workstations to replace or upgrade equipment that can no longer meet program requirements, as well as add hardware and software needed for new programs. This will benefit staff in all branches. Lastly, I am pleased to advise the members of this House that there will be no fee increases in 2013-14. In fact, last fall we dropped the price of a bison seal from \$10 to \$50. Individuals and organizations applying for permits will be pleased, as will be hunters, anglers and trappers. That change in fee for the bison permit was the result of the work done by the Fish and Wildlife Management Board around some of the management planning exercises we have for bison.

In closing, let me say that I believe Yukoners will appreciate the new initiatives the Department of Environment is undertaking over the coming year to support our vision of being a recognized leader and trusted partner in environmental stewardship. From research into tiny bats to the huge challenges of climate change adaptation and mitigation, and from enhanced efforts to reduce wildlife-human conflicts to repairing and maintaining our water monitoring networks through these and many other actions, we are doing our best to support a health, sustainable and prosperous Yukon now and into the future.

With regard to the work done to date on the water strategy, the member was asking about specific work around the wetlands classification system. We have adopted a wetlands classification in partnership with Environment Canada and other agencies and groups like Ducks Unlimited. This gives us a common system for classifying various wetlands in the management, environmental assessment and regulatory processes. I would note that the Ducks Unlimited group has been participat-

ing in the development of the water strategy for Yukon. I know this is something they have great interest in and they put out a very positive news release a few weeks ago indicating their support of the process of public consultation around the development of a water strategy and indicated that they will certainly be participating further.

I believe I'll be meeting with them in the coming weeks, or perhaps a month — I'm not sure of the exact timing to meet with Ducks Unlimited — to discuss wetlands and their role in the water strategy.

The development of a wetlands classification framework is some work that has been done to date but I'm sure that coming out of the good work done by staff in the development of a Yukon water strategy and based on some of the comments we've heard from not only Yukoners, but stakeholder groups like Ducks Unlimited, there will be further work done around this particular issue. I look forward to working with groups like Ducks Unlimited Canada and other stakeholders in the Yukon to see how best to move forward with this particular issue in Yukon.

As I've discussed before, there are a number of very important wetlands protected already in the territory. Some of the biggest overall wetland complexes in North America are protected right here in Yukon. I'm sure the ones that are near and dear to the heart of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin are the Old Crow Flats and the Whitefish wetlands — a number of the wetlands that were identified through the north Yukon land use planning process and ultimately the land use plan for that area.

I believe those wetlands are of great importance to the territory, not only to the region of the north Yukon and to the community of Old Crow, but to the entire territory. I know that all Yukoners value the importance of critical habitat areas like wetlands to the Yukon.

So I hope that that answers the member opposite's questions.

**Ms. White:** I have questions on how the government plans on gaining a better understanding of Yukon's groundwater. I was doing some Internet research and I was learning about hydrogeology. It's the area of geology that deals with the distribution and movement of groundwater in the soil and rocks of the Earth's crust, commonly in aquifers. The word "geohydrology" is often used interchangeably. Some make the minor distinction between a hydrologist or engineer applying themselves to geology and a geologist applying themselves to hydrology.

So, in understanding Yukon's groundwater, is there a plan to hire a hydrologist to study the hydrogeology of the Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** I thank the member opposite for the question; it's a good one. I appreciate the stumbling around on some of the wording because I do it all the time, especially in the Water Resources branch where you have hydrologists and geohydrologists and a whole number of other positions that I have difficulty pronouncing sometimes, I guess. I do appreciate that, so I think it's important to highlight some of what we have already and discuss perhaps some ways where we can make improvements as a result of the water strategy.

The Water Resources branch aims to support and promote the sustainable use of water through strategic planning, policy development, the maintenance of hydrometric and water quality monitoring networks, and ensuring best management practices and regulations are being followed. This branch supports the department's vision to be a recognized leader and trusted partner in water stewardship. The Water Resources branch consists of three distinct units plus the directorate and has a combined staff of 14 full-time equivalents. In addition to the directorate, the branch consists of the water inspections, water quality and hydrology sections.

Under the directorate, the staff complement is comprised of the director and the administrative assistant. The directorate is responsible for overseeing the overall administration of the branch, including priority setting, work planning, budget preparation and tracking, as well as departmental communications.

The director also represents the Water Resources branch, Department of Environment and Yukon government on senior governmental and intergovernmental committees at the local and national level. In addition to the section managers, the program advisor, water information specialist and geotechnical technician positions report to the director. The geotechnical support is a position that is responsible for conducting reviews and inspections of engineering designs, participating in environmental assessments related to proposed water use projects, for inspection of water control structures, as well as developing guidelines, procedures and standards for these facilities.

The water information specialist provides data, information and support for all programs in the Water Resources branch; in particular, this position is responsible for managing branch data in various systems, maintaining the <http://yukonwater.ca/> website, disseminating water data and information, as well as participating in system development projects led by the information management team. Other responsibilities include participating in several governmental and intergovernmental committees at the local and national level.

Then we have our program and policy advisors. Those positions perform a variety of roles in relation to water resource management, including policy and legislative development, ministerial briefing and response, stakeholder consultation, cross-government collaboration and effective practice promotion. In addition this position represents Yukon government, Environment Yukon and the Water Resources branch in a variety of local, regional, stakeholder, national and international committees and working groups. The main focus of this position in the current and upcoming year is leading to the development and implementation of a water strategy. The ladies who fill those two positions have been absolutely key in the development of the work that has been done so far.

The water quality unit, which is made up of three people — a manager, a technologist and a technician — is responsible for matters pertaining to the physical, chemical and biological composition of water. More specifically, the water quality unit implements water quality monitoring programs to track long-term trends, identify impacts from stressors — for example, climate change or cumulative impacts or effects — to ensure the sustainable management of Yukon's water resources.

They conduct monitoring activities of undertakings — for example, mining operations or municipal waste sites — for water quality compliance with water licences; reviews and comments on resource development proposals and water licence applications with the goal of identifying information gaps and impacts and recommending appropriate water objectives. They are also key in participating in local, regional and national working groups, committees and other groups that deal with water management issues covering a span of technical, policy and regulatory topic areas.

Under the water inspections unit, there is a manager and water inspectors responsible for enforcement of the *Waters Act*. They advise clients and proponents of water licences about compliance issues and a number of other things.

There is the hydrology unit, which is responsible for providing estimates of peak and low flow for the design and operation of hydraulic structures, such as highway stream crossings, flood protection works and water supply reservoirs; operating the Yukon Territory flow forecasting and monitoring program, including preparing the snow survey bulletin and water supply forecast. Madam Chair, the snow survey bulletin was released a few weeks ago and it provides some very interesting data for Yukon government about what we can expect in terms of melt and flow of water off the hills this spring.

Of course, that's of great importance to us when we plan for the potential of flood events or the opposite, those of dry periods. They also provide estimates of the magnitude and timing of peak stream flow and water levels for flood-prone communities, allowing sufficient lead time for the implementation of emergency measures. They participate in environmental impact assessments and water licence reviews of water use applications and monitoring the compliance of water use licences. They also provide general hydrologic services to the public, as well as interdepartmental and intradepartmental agencies. Of course, they aid us in monitoring climate change impacts to surface and groundwater.

Carrying out this work requires hydrometeorological data obtained through the operation of hydrometric groundwater, snow course and meteorological networks, as well as coordinating research activities at the Wolf Creek research watershed, which is required for model and methodology development and calibration.

There are the two branches, essentially — you have the hydrology unit and the water quality unit, which work in conjunction to provide us with the best information possible about our water resources.

The "hydrology" section — to use the layman's terms they describe it to me with — is sort of about the flow of the water, and the "water quality" is the quality of the water itself, which seems kind of self-explanatory, but it was helpful to me to have it explained like that, where you can understand the differing roles of someone measuring the flow and course of the water with the actual quality or suspended solids or stuff that's in the water.

One of the things we have noted in the work done to date by the Water Resources branch is that a water resources strategy would be of great help to us to plan for our future actions

in the branch. That's why in the water strategy we included a priority for moving forward of: "Better understand and manage Yukon's groundwater regime." As the consultation document notes, most Yukoners rely on groundwater for their drinking water. Groundwater is also used for a variety of industrial purposes, while remaining integral to the replenishment of surface-water systems that support aquatic life. In order to protect Yukon's groundwater from contamination, improvements to our understanding, monitoring and management of this resource are essential. I think in that note you'll note that we have identified understanding, monitoring and management of the resource as being essential.

We acknowledge that we need to probably be doing more on groundwater. In particular, we don't have a very thorough groundwater regime in the territory when it comes to monitoring, and that's something I would expect would come up in the development of the Yukon water strategy — that we could probably be conducting better or more studies or monitoring of our groundwater resources throughout the territory.

On the management side, we will continue to work within the department with the various branches and various sub-branches — for instance, in the Water Resources branch — as well as with other departments and other levels of government to improve our services to the public. One of the things I would note is that, up until the development of a water strategy, there have been a whole lot of players in terms of water resources in the territory. There are municipalities, there are First Nations, there is the federal government and the territorial governments and each and every one of them conducts their own series of studies and monitoring and has their own different type of knowledge to bring to the table.

One of the things it's my hope we're able to do through the strategy is bring all those together and really understand who is doing what and how we can do it better together.

Over the years, Environment Canada or the Department of Fisheries and Oceans have conducted a number of different projects or studies throughout the territory and we don't always have access to their data. If we are able to bring that all together, as we have tried to do recently with the Yukon water website, I think it will be of great benefit to us moving forward.

In short, to answer the member opposite's question, we've identified groundwater as a priority — understanding, researching and monitoring groundwater is going to be a priority going forward. As to whether or not we'll hire a specific classification of employee, I just honestly don't know that. I will rely on staff in the department to advise me as to whether or not we need a hydrogeological surveyor or a technician or a scientist or whatever the title may be. I simply don't know that. But we are committed to improving our researching, monitoring and understanding of groundwater in the territory, and if that means a new position, that's something I'll obviously have to take into consideration and take up with my colleagues.

If it means other physical infrastructure development, that is something we will obviously look for partners in — whether it be First Nations, municipal governments and other levels of the Canadian government — as to how we develop specific

infrastructure projects throughout the territory to better serve Yukoners in gathering information about groundwater.

**Ms. White:** Before I go on, I would just like to congratulate the department. I was out to the first activity for the Celebration of Swans at the Tagish River bridge, and I got to hear stories. I didn't see any swans, but I did hear great stories, and that was fabulous. Thanks to the department for putting that on.

Under the water strategy there is a point, and it says, "Plan for water needs now and in the future." It says, and I quote: "Future developments in previously undeveloped areas require baseline water quality, hydrology and meteorological baseline data. Agencies and proponents need to consider future issues now in developing and implementing research and monitoring programs."

Given the increased development activity throughout the territory and the urgent need for land use planning — we have examples like the recent Whitehorse Trough oil and gas disposition — the territory obviously needs much more water data collection and monitoring. How will the minister's department be dealing with these issues? Will baseline data-gathering start in the Liard Basin and be more broadly gathered in north Yukon in relation to the upcoming development alluded to in the budget speech?

Does the department plan to do a territory-wide baseline data collection prior to disturbance? Has the minister looked at costing out the development of a comprehensive plan and what it would cost in delivering baseline data collection and monitoring of Yukon's freshwater sources throughout the territory?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** The priority identified in the water strategy of planning for water needs now and into the future is admittedly a fairly broad one, but it is one that is meant to encompass a lot of potential changes in the territory, and those don't have to be necessarily human-caused or as a result of industrial activity or resource development or anything like that.

One very important thing that we have to recognize in Yukon's water resources in the territory is the impact and the continued future impact of climate change. We know that the water resources in the territory are changing as a result of climate change. They're not changing uniformly; it's not like all of sudden we have more water across the territory or less water across the territory, but it's changing in how it is behaving, I guess you could say. Of course we see increased snow levels in some areas in the winter and resulting increased flood potential.

We see a number of ways that the cryosphere in the territory is changing, melting at different times, coming down out of the glacial mountains into the rest of the territory and sometimes causing us some grief in terms of how we respond to it. That can mean increased flood potential; that can mean changes to the way our hydroelectric facilities have to operate. All of these things need to be considered when we plan for the future of water in the territory.

Climate change is one thing that we do acknowledge is going to be a key contributing factor to changes in the water resources of the territory in the years to come and that's something we need to consider. That's something we'll be doing, not

just in the Water Resources branch and not just in the Climate Change Secretariat, but across the board in the Yukon government. Whether it's the development of roads or buildings or other infrastructure in the territory, we're going to need to consider the impacts of climate change.

Part of that point that the member noted correctly in the water strategy document that's being consulted on is that need. As well, as she noted, population growth and potential future development are both issues that we are going to have to consider. In the case of population growth, we do understand that in places like Whitehorse we have to be aware of where our drinking water is coming from and plan for that. If we look into the future over the next five or 10 years and get a sense of where we think the population is going to be throughout the territory in various communities and in various parts of the territory, we can start to get an understanding of what sort of demands are going to be on government and the private sector and individual citizens to provide drinking water.

We know that there have been some changes in some federal oversight of drinking water in the country and as a result of that my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, has made considerable investments throughout the territory to deal with the demands of new requirements for drinking water. The commitments and expenditures on infrastructure to date are quite remarkable. I think in this budget there are several millions of dollars identified for just water issues.

In terms of the specific expenditures on drinking water infrastructure, I'll leave that to the Minister of Community Services, perhaps, in the debate on her budget. Again, this is something that is important for the Department of Environment, as well, as we have the responsibility for properly managing water resources in the territory. That's something we're going to have to do in conjunction with the Department of Community Services.

With regard to future development that is, of course, something that we have to consider when we make decisions about where to deploy our resources and where to target areas in the territory for information gathering. To date we have made some very important strategic decisions about where to gather information. We have noted before that we increased monitoring efforts in the White Gold region with new infrastructure at both Thistle Creek and Scroggie Creek, which is an important step in terms of gathering baseline data for a region that we anticipate will experience some degree of development in the near-to mid-term.

So that's one of the ways that we have taken proactive steps to ensure that we have the baseline information needed to make proper, science-based, evidence-based decisions about development projects. It's that kind of information that is very important not only for government as the regulator, but also for the YESAA board in making recommendations to government about project developments. They need to ensure that there is adequate data to make such decisions and we're trying to get out ahead of some of these by beginning to gather some of this information in a proactive way.

Another note that I should make about some of the increased monitoring we've done actually stems from a discus-

sion I had in Question Period with the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin a few Question Periods ago and it was with regard to a monitoring project we're conducting currently in the traditional territory of the Na Cho Nyäk Dun in the north Yukon. We sent folks out to a number of sites throughout the north Yukon to gather baseline data and gather water samples from a number of places throughout the north Yukon and of course that was done in conjunction with the Na Cho Nyäk Dun, who were partners in that project. Recognizing the importance of maintaining high quality water to the community of Old Crow, that survey has been expanded to include the oil and gas dispositions in the Eagle Plains region.

So there will be additional surveys and work done in those regions. The ones of particular focus are going to be in the Eagle River watershed, which flows right through the Eagle Plains highway stop or community — I'm not sure what it is classified as — but the Eagle River flows right across the Dempster and that watershed pours into the Porcupine, which then pours into the Yukon River watershed. We want to make sure that we have baseline data in that area, which will provide us with the information we need to properly assess how that particular project is going to go forward.

With any oil and gas project, the Department of Environment and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources review all planned oil and gas exploration and development activities in detail, including the level of pre-project baseline information available for assessment and regulatory processes. Before a project goes forward, we review that data; if we are not satisfied that there is the sufficient amount of data, we will either undertake to find partners to gather that data or we will ask the company to come up with a certain amount of data themselves. There are any number of options that could come from that. When a project goes through the YESAA process, it is judged on the adequacy of its data. An important stage in the process is the deeming of adequacy. So the assessor, independently of government, determines whether or not there is an adequate amount of data about a particular project.

With regard to the ways we're being proactive, we have a few ongoing projects around water monitoring. There are other aspects to these, including population monitoring of wildlife, but I think the member is specifically asking about water at this point so I'll stick to that.

We look around the territory and try to identify areas where we expect there to be development and we try our best to gather information in a proactive way. In an ideal world, if we had endless funds and endless resources, we would just snap our fingers and know everything about the entire Yukon right now, but that's simply not reality. We have to make best judgments about where to go next and what information to gather in a responsible way. Gathering this kind of information, especially in the far north, is not cheap. For instance, monitoring in the remote north is expensive due to the reliance on rotary-wing aircraft, and lab analytical costs to cover hydrocarbon constituents is similarly costly.

It can be expensive, so we're always looking for partners to improve our ability to gather that data, but where possible, we try our best to be proactive about where we go, how we



gather the data and what information to gather. I think that covers the member opposite's question, so I will pass the floor on to her.

**Ms. White:** The water strategy does indeed reference climate change, but I was wondering why it didn't reference industrialization or the industrial use of water and the responsibility of those users to our water.

The minister will be familiar that not everyone shares his views that the department responsible for promoting and permitting mining should also be the department that monitors environmental impacts from such projects, particularly around water monitoring. We've made our position very clear, as has the Grand Chief of the Council of Yukon First Nations and its member First Nation governments who signed a joint letter to the Premier. This is what they wrote, and I'm quoting:

"Although we understand that the Yukon government wants to establish integrated resource management, the protection of waters and natural resources of the Yukon cannot be subordinate to the objectives of mining development and interest of mining proponents. Given that EMR's mandate is to promote the development of mining and mines in the Yukon, the CYFN maintains that mine inspections, enforcement and security under the *Waters Act* must not be the responsibility of the EMR Minister.

"Yukon First Nations and their citizens and other Yukoners must have faith that the Yukon government will carry out its environmental oversight responsibilities in good faith. We must know that the Yukon government will take steps to protect waters and resources in the Yukon, including making submissions to various regulatory bodies, such as the Yukon Water Board. Most importantly, we must know that the fulfillment of mine inspections and enforcement under the *Waters Act* are priority and not superceded by concerns about the impacts of a mine or a mine proponent.

"The decision to transfer responsibility for mine inspections, enforcement and security under the *Waters Act* from the Department of Environment to EMR does not provide assurances to Yukon First Nations that the environmental oversight is a priority for the Yukon government. In the end, if the Yukon First Nations do not have that faith that these responsibilities will be carried out by the Yukon government, they may not be willing to support further mining developments in their respective territories. I confirm that the CYFN is prepared to work with you to address these concerns."

These are very strong words. We know that the Minister of Environment's position on this matter is the same as his take on whether one solitary minister can be responsible for promoting oil and gas development and at the same time be responsible for the environment. There is no problem in his mind. There is no issue of separation of ministerial responsibilities. Wearing many hats leads to better decisions, we've been told. I'm not interested in hearing the minister's position again. What I am interested in is the transfer of water inspections and monitoring of quartz mining projects now from Environment.

Has it now been transferred to the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and is it operational? When it comes to the transfer, has the Government of Yukon addressed the con-

cerns raised by the CYFN and member First Nations? How have the Environment Yukon staff been accommodated in the transfer? Has everyone been transferred to Energy, Mines and Resources? Has anyone been laid off? Is there or will there be a review process to evaluate whether the transfer is working?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** First of all, there were a number of questions in that diatribe, so I'll try my best to respond to all of them.

The first one was about why climate change was included in the water strategy and not industrial activity. That's not exactly true. One of the priorities is promoting the sustainable use of water, which includes promoting best management practices and reducing impacts to ensure adequate water availability for industry, communities and other users. Industry and the private sector are going to play an important role in the management of water resources in the territory. They have a lot of interest in water resources as well and will be involved throughout in the management of water resources in the territory.

But making sure that we have everybody at the table is a priority of ours, so I'm sure industry interested in the development of water resources in the territory or the management of water resources in the territory will provide their input in the consultation process and probably have done so already.

With regard to the member's comments about the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, that department certainly does not have the mandate of promoting mining in the Yukon. The promotion, in a general sense, of the economy in the territory is with the Department of Economic Development.

With regard to her comments on the inability of government to simultaneously protect the environment and allow economic development, that's one where we just simply disagree. The member and her leader have been very, very clear about their position on that particular issue — about the fact that they don't believe that economic development can occur in a responsible way. That's an unfortunate position and one we certainly don't agree with. I think it's one we're going to continue to disagree about over the course of this mandate, so I will prepare to continue to answer that particular question over the months and years to come.

With regard to the transfer, that was something we discussed at length last sitting. I believe it took effect as of April 1 this year. I know the member asked those exact same questions about personnel during the departmental briefing and was provided with thorough responses then. I don't want to repeat what the department has provided already, but there were no staffing changes as a result. I understand that there were no staffing changes made as a result of this — at least, certainly no transfers over to the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources from Environment.

The Department of Environment remains engaged with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources in the inspections of mining water use permits. The Department of Environment leads all delegations before the Water Board on behalf of Yukon government and does so in collaboration with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources.

As we have said before, we have the utmost confidence that the officials in the Department of Energy, Mines and Re-



sources will be able to adequately fulfill their jobs by providing inspection services for hardrock mines, as they have successfully done with placer operations throughout the past decade. We have no reason to believe that by virtue of the fact that they work for a particular department that they will be somehow incapable of exercising good judgment. That's something we don't agree with the Opposition on at all.

So, as I said before, the Department of Environment remains engaged with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. We have been providing training, providing resources, and providing a number of discussions and information to the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and, of course, we'll continue to do so in the months to come. I expect that the transfer of the inspections for mining and water use will be a healthy one and a responsible one — one that will see the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources properly utilize the inspection focus they have in their department.

I don't want to speak too much about the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources — I'll leave that to the minister in debate of his budget — but I would say that what we have now with the inspections unit in the Water Resources branch is an ability to really focus on all of the other things that are going on in this territory with regard to water licences. There are hundreds of water licences presently in the territory, and I know that the mining ones tend to get a lot of focus, especially in the Legislature, but there are other, very important ones as well, for which the Department of Environment will maintain the primary lead for inspections.

Those include municipal water licences, oil and gas water licences, camp water use licences, and any number of other ones. Hydroelectric projects are always an important one, especially with some of the developments we have seen lately in and around the greater Whitehorse area. I have every confidence that the department — the folks in the Inspections branch or the Water Resources branch — will be able to exercise their good judgment in undertaking this important role for Yukoners in inspecting water licences in the territory. I have confidence in their ability to work collaboratively with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources on a number of other files, including the inspections of mining water use in the territory, both on the placer side and on the hardrock side. With that, I'll cede the floor.

**Ms. White:** Although I received a very thorough briefing from the department officials, sadly, citizens can't attend that, so that is part of the reason for me asking questions I have already received the answer for — so it gets documented in *Hansard*, so people can check it out later. So I thank him for answering a question that I already knew the answer to.

Last year we talked about the Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment and it was just referenced how the economy and the environment go hand in hand. In 1988, the Yukon government established the Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment and it was then entrenched in the *Environment Act* in 1989 and in the *Economic Development Act* in 1992. The legislative purpose of the Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment was to “encourage sustainable development in the Yukon.”

In 2005, the Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment ceased to function as an advisory body to the government. In 2008, the department stated that a review was underway to determine whether the body should be resurrected and that this review would produce an opinions paper. No paper was submitted that we could find. The Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment continues to be non-operational and, as a result, the government is not able to satisfy the requirements of sections 22 and 49 of the *Environment Act*: the Yukon's state of the environment report and complaints cannot be submitted to the council as required.

On December 6, 2011, the Premier said, “Mr. Speaker, at this time, the Yukon government has no plans to reactivate or restructure the Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment.” This year, just recently, we've heard the minister talk about how economic development and the environment go hand in hand, so if that's the case, how come this government has not complied with the law and reinstated the Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** The simple answer is that that particular body is, in my opinion, entirely redundant today. It was legislated in a time that predated land claims, that predated devolution, that predated the YESAA process, that predated a number of practices that we undertake in the department to protect the environment and in the government to develop the economy. It's something that was maybe a good idea in the 1980s when it was thought up, but it simply did not reflect what would come to pass in the territory.

What that is, of course, is that we have a number of First Nation governments that are self-governing. We have a territorial government that acts and behaves and administers policies and legislation much the same way as any province does. We have a federal piece of legislation that provides us with an environmental and socio-economic assessment process that is, in my opinion, one of the best in the country. All of those things add up to making that body, which was originally conceived before all of those things were developed, redundant.

The responsibility of ensuring that our economy is developed sustainably is something that every member of this government takes very seriously — whether they are, as in my particular case, the Minister of Environment and Economic Development, or the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources or of Tourism and Culture — any department, of course. We are focused on sustainable development. We believe that you can develop our economy in a responsible way and in a way that respects the environment and protects the environment for future generations.

We don't agree that —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Chair:** Order please.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** Madam Chair, I would like to recognize David Millar, who has joined us in the gallery. David was, of course, a former MLA representing the riding of Klondike. I invite all the members to welcome him today.

*Applause*

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** It is probably a fortunate time, with our guest in the gallery. He is probably very familiar with these discussions, as I am sure they happened back in his time in this House as well.

As I was saying, we believe that it is possible to responsibly develop our economy in a manner that protects the environment. We have a number of mechanisms in place to make sure that we do just that. We have legislation at the territorial level provided through devolution, which provides for the management of our natural resources, whether it be the *Forest Resources Act*, *Quartz Mining Act* or *Placer Mining Act* or any other pieces of legislation that resulted from devolution and the taking of control of our natural resources from Canada.

We have an environmental and socio-economic assessment process with guaranteed input from First Nations that provides recommendations to government about the development of projects in the territory and assesses them for their environmental and socio-economic impacts and weighs the recommendations and evidence that they have to make recommendations to government that they feel are in the best interest of Yukoners.

These are all things that weren't available to legislators in the 1980s when they came up with the environment and economy council. So I don't think it's something that we have a need for any more. It is still in the legislation, but so are a number of other things that are somewhat outdated.

As I've discussed with the Leader of the Official Opposition in past debates, the *Environment Act* is an act that predates all of those things I suggested and is one at some point we would be interested at looking to modernize.

Going back to the question, I believe that this is simply a fundamental disagreement of our parties on this particular issue. The NDP doesn't believe that it is possible to responsibly develop an economy. They think that economic development is inherently bad, that it's going to cause damage to the environment and that damage to the environment is irreparable or the reason why we should never have any concerted development in the territory. That's something we just disagree on and something we will probably continue to disagree on throughout this sitting and into the future. I've made my position very clear on this matter and I don't think we can be any clearer.

**Ms. White:** After a third party evaluation, the department committed to developing a workplan outlining the suggested steps for undergoing an official review and revision of the *Environment Act*. Where is the department in this process? When can we expect public consultation on revisions to the *Environment Act*? With this review of the *Environment Act*, will the minister be making amendments to remove the legal obligation to have the Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment within it?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** We have begun a process of looking at a number of things under the *Environment Act*, including the regulations that are pursuant to it. Currently, we have indicated to a number of stakeholders that we have an interest in reviewing the beverage container regulations and the designated material regulations, which are pursuant to the *Environment Act*. Those are things that we're doing pursuant to our commitments

around improving our ability to divert waste from landfills, improve the recycling rates in the territory and improve our overall management of solid waste in the territory.

Those are some things that we are undergoing currently. As well, to that end, we have really positive work being undertaken currently, primarily through the Department of Community Services, but certainly in conjunction with our Department of Environment. Those include working with an AYC working group, which was established following the OTOF — the "Our Towns, Our Future" report that has led to a number of different positive actions, which I will leave to the Minister of Community Services to describe.

In this particular case, we have a representative from the Department of Environment, along with representatives from the Department of Community Services and a number of representatives from municipalities themselves, who have come up with a report and recommendations for government relating to permitting, liabilities, funding — a number of things that are involved with solid waste in the territory. So we'll be taking that into consideration. I know that a number of recommendations in that report relate to some of the regulations that are pursuant to the *Environment Act*. We'll have to take those into consideration — some of them just for the sake of discussion. I know that they make recommendations around the timing of permits, around the cost of the permit applications and other things like that. Those are the things we will take into consideration. There are a number of other potential developments, as well, that could see some change to regulations that are pursuant to the *Environment Act*. As members know, in years past, the Council of the Federation mandated respective ministers to do some work around extended producer responsibility. That is something on which we have been diligently working. That is something that could precipitate either regulatory or legislative change and, if legislative change, it would probably be the *Environment Act* that would need to be changed. Additionally, we have made commitments around working with proponents in the contaminated sites issue.

We've talked to proponents of contaminated sites, and they have a few issues, of course, with the way that contaminated sites work currently, so there are any number of things that could precipitate change.

As the member noted regarding the Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment, that's something that is rather redundant in my opinion. There is a possibility it could be removed; it could be changed; it could be any number of things. I won't preclude what the Legislature decides with regard to how that legislation comes forward. I will say that it is something that I would have an interest in looking at — the *Environment Act*, that is — but I do know that pretty much every minister has their own series of legislation and regulations that they would like to work on, and I know that there are a number of priorities that we have as a government. So it's something I think we will certainly take into consideration, but I'm not prepared to make any commitments around timing or anything like that at this point.

**Ms. White:** With the ongoing work on Agay Mene, why haven't there been withdrawals of oil and gas, and subsur-

face rights? How can a park be developed and protected without subsurface withdrawals?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** The park planning for both Agay Mene and Kusawa is something that has been of interest over the past couple of years. We're fairly excited with some recent developments on that front, which should provide us with a route forward for planning for those particular parks. It's my hope that park planning for Kusawa will resume this spring now that we have reached an agreement with the affected First Nations on how to work together on ongoing park management after the management plan is approved. We also believe the terms of reference established for Kusawa park planning will be a suitable model for Agay Mene park and that planning can resume in the near future.

The reason why specific withdrawals were not included in park planning originally was as a result of negotiations during land claims. They weren't included for withdrawals as a result of those negotiations that occurred. I believe that particular land claim was settled in the 1990s. In the negotiations of that land claim, withdrawals weren't included for this park. If subsequent withdrawals were needed at a future date, that would be something we would consider, and I am sure that the management committee will be looking at that as they create a management plan for that park.

I would expect that recommendations on that topic would come from the management committee, and I do anticipate that that planning process will begin again this spring. The short answer is this: They weren't included in the land claims, but that doesn't preclude the management committee coming up with something in the future. At that point, we would take that into consideration.

**Ms. White:** The Southern Lakes woodland caribou numbers are on the rise, which is great news; however, many caribou continue to be killed on our highways and roads. What measures has the minister taken to decrease road kill and to reduce road deaths on the Southern Lakes highways?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** Madam Chair, this is indeed an issue we have discussed previously in the Legislature as well and I share the member opposite's concern. We notice a number of wildlife-vehicle conflicts and accidents occurring, particularly on the Alaska Highway, but certainly on other highways throughout the territory as well. It's something that is a safety concern for drivers and thus it's a concern for government. It is also a threat for the health of the wildlife populations, and so it is a concern for us on the environmental side with the department.

What we've done is form an internal working group between the Department of Environment and the Department of Highways and Public Works. The working group aims to reduce wildlife collisions over time. The purpose of that group and some of the work they've done is to chart out both short- and long-term goals for the group. There has been work done already, but that group will chart out how we move forward with both short- and long-term goals.

To date we've had a number of projects throughout the territory around education. Anybody who visits — I shouldn't plug one over the other — any of the local newspapers on-line

will contain advertisements alongside the sidebars that encourage Yukoners to be aware when they are driving and to watch out for wildlife. There are education measures like that that have been undertaken in the past.

One of the initiatives that has been considered is the possibility of replacing road salt with lithium chloride. That's something that would hopefully deter caribou and other animals from coming to the road or the highways to presumably lick the salt. Salt is an attractant for a number of animals and the road salt sometimes attracts animals to the highway and leads to collisions.

We were looking at doing a project in the southern Yukon in the Liard area and had some plans to move forward. Unfortunately the First Nation in Watson Lake, the Liard First Nation, had some concerns about that and decided not to support the project, so we put that aside for a bit.

The First Nation, and I believe some of the elders in the community, felt that lithium chloride sounded like a nasty chemical and it was possibly a detriment to the health of the wildlife in that area so they didn't want to support the project for fear that the lithium chloride could either poison or make the animals sick and that wasn't something they would be in favour of. Although our biologists didn't agree with that assessment, they respected the First Nation's wishes in that case and have decided not to move forward with that particular project.

I would note that at some point we may look at that project again — perhaps another area or perhaps another section of highway or possibly with the First Nation again and just provide some better information around the scientific data of the effects and impacts of lithium chloride on wildlife. That's one thing that could transpire again in the future.

To date the group has identified and initiated a number of short-term goals to mitigate wildlife collisions. They include developing a workplan. Potential tasks to be included in that workplan included the following: re-evaluate the location of signage in the Watson Lake area in the Southern Lakes region; install a digital motion sensor camera at Sheep Mountain to record sheep movement and occurrence on the highway and the right-of-way; improve the effectiveness of wildlife signage in the Carcross and Little Rancheria caribou herd ranges; develop and implement a public education communication program to increase driver awareness about wildlife on highways — this could include partnering with the winter driving awareness campaign that is already run by the Department of Highways and Public Works — review and improve upon reporting protocols and procedures for wildlife on roads and wildlife killed or injured on highways, which includes a review of existing databases; and review existing procedures to deter bison from the highway corridor in order to meet Goal 3, Objective 1, of the management plan for the Aishihik wood bison herd in southwestern Yukon.

As well, they were considering hiring a contractor to develop a comprehensive background report that summarizes hot spots of collisions across the Yukon, compares these to separate accident databases from Highways and Public Works, the RCMP. Then the Department of Environment, conducts a lit-

erature review of innovative mitigations, and highlights most promising mitigations specific to the Yukon context.

Additionally, there are some longer term goals that the group is considering. While there is a need for short-term objectives to address immediate concerns, there is also a need for a focus on longer term objectives that can contribute to and help develop a sustainable, ongoing program that will continue to reduce collisions with wildlife on the highway.

Those longer term goals include, but are not limited to, maintaining collaboration with other wildlife collision working groups — for example, the group has initiated communication with the Wildlife Collision Working Group in northern British Columbia — improving familiarity and knowledge base with respect to current and ongoing mitigation research — for example, on-line resources such as [www.wildlifeaccidents.ca](http://www.wildlifeaccidents.ca) and [www.deercrash.org](http://www.deercrash.org) — as well as reviewing a number of different academic and scientific journal articles and developing a more comprehensive communication and public awareness campaign.

Potential ideas include public reporting or web-based descriptions of current problem areas involving wildlife on highways; considering the creation of a longer term plan — perhaps three to five years — which identifies where and when mitigations will be implemented across the Yukon using innovative and adaptive management approaches. The plan should indicate the responsibility of each department in implementing the mitigations and should be reviewed regularly to address new concerns.

As well, I know that we have met with the Carcross Tagish First Nation Chief to discuss how to move ahead specifically in that First Nation's area. The working group recognizes the importance of involving the broader public and gathering local and traditional knowledge. Forms to receive wide input into priority areas and species concerns will evolve over time.

Examples of other groups that may be important for the working group to interact with in the future include the RCMP, emergency services, insurance companies, commercial shipping and trucking companies and other wildlife collision working groups.

As you see, the work done to date is fairly significant. It's a problem that has been identified, and solutions and actions have been identified already that we can begin to work on. We have identified that we need to work with not only other government departments, but other levels of government, other institutions like the RCMP and other governments, like First Nation governments and perhaps even the federal government.

I hope the work that is done by that group will continue into the future. I know the group still exists and the work between my department and the Department of Highways and Public Works is supported by us as ministers. I look forward to hearing what that particular working group has in store for the future and what they are able to come up with by way of a plan forward.

I hope that provides a sufficient level of detail for the member opposite. As more information comes to light on this, I'd be happy to provide subsequent information, specifically with regard to that lithium chloride issue that was one that her

colleague had asked about previously and is one that we have put on hold for now. I do think that it could be possible to look at that again. My understanding from our biologists in the department is that it is scientifically sound, and it is safe for the animals, but perhaps we need to do a better job of communicating that to First Nations — in a way that they understand and will appreciate. I think I've covered all the bases there.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for the answers about the road-kill minimization the department is undergoing.

I have just a couple of questions about Atlin Lake and the new campground. Being that Atlin Lake has predominantly southern winds, what technical analysis or expert opinions have been solicited on the feasibility of a boat launch or dock? When will consultation with the affected First Nations on the new Atlin Lake campground begin? When do you expect the project to be ready for public discussion in YESAB if the campground is to be established in 2015?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** As I have said before, this is a project I'm particularly excited about. It is one that we committed to in the election: identifying sites for potential new campgrounds in the territory. I certainly heard from a number of my constituents that they would like to see an increased level of development of infrastructure for campgrounds in the territory.

As I mentioned previously, we feel that the Atlin Lake site is an ideal location for a campground. It is one that was negotiated in the Carcross-Tagish First Nation final agreement, and it was negotiated to be left as a public reserve for recreation.

Throughout the past couple of decades there have been a few different groups taking a look at the site and wondering about its future. I know Camp Yukon had an interest in it at some point, and I know that perhaps departments in the government have considered other uses for it, but ultimately we felt that a campground was the right course forward for a number of reasons. One of them is that the Agay Mene park, which includes the Snafu and Tarfu lakes and the campgrounds therein, has been experiencing a fair amount of activity over the last several years and although it is very popular and receives a lot of visitation, it's not probably the best suited campground for such high volume — or they're both not ideally suited for such high volumes of traffic. The lakes are smaller; the fishing resources or the angling resources are limited. I believe that in either this year or next year we'll probably have to take some management action on Snafu and Tarfu lakes to limit angling and some of the catchment of the fish in those lakes because of the significant level of harvest on those species.

We're experiencing a lot of pressure on the fish populations at those lakes as well as pressure on some of the physical infrastructure at those campgrounds. To relieve some of that, we hoped that the development of the Atlin Lake campground would provide some of that relief. Not only that, but over the last two budget cycles we have made fairly significant investments in the Atlin Road and have raised the quality of that road substantially over the last couple of years. It's an area that is easier to access than other parts of the territory.

The discussions that have occurred to date have been very preliminary at best. We will be working with affected stakeholders in consultations soon. I don't know the exact dates of

when we would have a submission into YESAB, but our plan was to begin construction this summer. I would expect that we would get in to YESAB in the next couple of months, or late spring/early summer, in order to have construction undertaken this summer.

With regard to the studies on the wind on the lake, I have to say I don't know that we've done any particular wind studies, so when we plan for where a boat dock or a boat launch goes, those are the kinds of things that we'll have to take into consideration. My personal opinion is that we can conduct some high-tech scientific study that costs us a bunch of money and tells us which way the wind blows or we could just talk to the people who know the area. That's one way that I would like to see us go forward is to have those conversations with folks who know the lake and know the area and can give us some good advice about where and how to position the boat launches and boat docks.

I have had discussions with one cabin owner in the area and the pastor of the church that runs the Bible camp — Camp Yukon. Pastor Joel had some really excellent comments about the boat launch, and I indicated to him that I would have the department officials who were doing the planning meet with him to talk about how best to develop the campground without disrupting too much the activities of Camp Yukon. He also had some very good input about that very issue. He indicated to me on a fairly crude map where he thought the boat launch would be ideally suited. So that's something that I've asked department officials to take into consideration.

As I said, we could have some meteorological survey or study done that costs us a bunch of money and tells us which way the wind blows or we could talk to the folks who know that information already.

That will all come into the planning process that will be undertaken. As well, we'll need to have discussions with the Carcross-Tagish First Nation. Before the press release announcing the creation of the campground, I gave a call to the chief and discussed it with him briefly. We'll have more formal discussions at a later time. That was just an informal call. He indicated he would be happy to participate in the consultation and his First Nation would be providing us with some comments.

With regard to the timing, I think I've covered that. I think I've covered who we'll be talking to and what we'll be talking about as well. I think I may have covered the bases for the member opposite, but if she has further questions, I'd be happy to entertain them.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Ms. White:** I'm going to apologize before I do this introduction. We have a past page in the audience, Liam Finnegan. I apologize for how I try to get this last name out — we also have Sruthee Govindaraj in the gallery. We can welcome them from a different perspective. Thanks for being here. It must look quite a bit different from up there than it does from down here.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for those answers. We were speaking about invasive species, and we know that they are a threat to indigenous species both flora and fauna. It's one of the top three threats to habitat biodiversity, the other two being loss of habitat and climate change. We know that invasive species can damage agriculture production and subsistence lifestyles like hunting and gathering. We know that with increased spreading of invasive species, the Highways budget goes up by clearing roadsides of these invasive species.

Knowing that it has probably affected both the departments of Environment and Highways and Public Works, which department takes the lead on invasive species? If it's under the Department of Environment, where is that work listed in the budget?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** With regard to the lead, when it comes to some of the work around habitat and biodiversity and impacts of anything on those topics, including evasive species, the Department of Environment would be the lead. For instance, under the Fish and Wildlife branch, in this particular budget, we have some work planned for this year specifically aimed at aquatic invasive species.

As we know, people hauling boats from down south up to the Yukon could have — for lack of a better word — barnacles or other things on the bottom of the boats or on the props of the boats that could find their way into northern lakes, which can be sensitive. We're doing some work around aquatic invasive species. The introduction and colonization of aquatic invasive species pose potentially serious threats to Yukon waterways so the project planned for this fiscal year will help to mitigate the risks by raising awareness and understanding among the public, whose activities are most likely to result in an accidental introduction of aquatic invasive species.

As I said, if this were to happen it would most likely be an accidental thing, someone just simply not knowing that they need to thoroughly spray down their boat after putting it in the ocean down in the south or in a lake somewhere in Saskatchewan, for instance. They need to really wash their boat down before they bring it up and put it in a northern lake.

The project promotes public awareness in prevention of the unintentional introduction or spread of aquatic invasive species. We will focus on developing and delivering communications material to support greater understanding of the issues of a greater suite of aquatic invasive species and how to prevent their introduction.

We will focus on identified high-risk behaviours surrounding fishing or boating practices, which will be delivered in locations specific to these activities. These materials will also promote public engagement through reporting of suspected aquatic invasive species detections. Introduction of aquatic invasive species could pose a significant threat to Yukon's economy and aquatic environments. This project will help to mitigate the risk by raising awareness and understanding of the activities that are most likely to result in an accidental introduction of AIS — aquatic invasive species — and what steps can be taken to avoid aquatic invasive species introduction spread. This project flows from the 2010-11 Yukon aquatic invasive species threats assessment project and will support a future

Environment Yukon aquatic invasive species strategy. We will continue planning in support of a departmental strategy for aquatic invasive species and will continue to work with other groups and governments to determine what the best ways are to move forward on that.

With regard to the invasive species that have already been introduced, it's a difficult one to address, especially for those ones along the highway, which the member opposite mentioned.

When it comes to who is in charge of dealing with invasive species, it depends how you consider it. Highways is, of course, in charge of chopping them down along the roadways but, in terms of the analysis of them and the work done around understanding how they travel and how they arrive in the territory and what impacts they have, I would assume that the biologists and scientists in the Department of Environment would certainly have a role.

I know there have been questions previously about issues of invasive species in agriculture, so that's something that the Agriculture branch of Energy, Mines and Resources would be the lead on.

There is a private or non-governmental organization in the territory currently as well. I believe they're called the Yukon Invasive Species Council. I stand to be corrected on the title, though. They have done some work as well. With my other portfolio in mind, I know they have been provided with community development fund funding previously to undertake an education campaign around improving Yukoners' understanding of invasive species and how they travel and how they are spread. Another possible way they are spread is through the use of ATVs, actually. That's something that comes up in some of the education material around proper and safe ATV-ing — ensuring that if you take your ATV through the hills of some jurisdiction in the south, whether it be the United States or southern Canada, that you thoroughly wash it before you take it into the far north because of the fact that there could be things on the wheels or in the wheel wells that can spread to the territory.

There are a few different ongoing activities. One of the things we're trying to do is to better fold in the work of those NGOs with the work the Yukon government is doing. As you've heard me explain, we are undertaking some education campaigns and we know that the NGO is also undertaking some campaigns, so it would be best if we were to synchronize those and bring them together. I think that would not only be the best use of resources but it would also ensure consistent messaging and would ensure that Yukoners are getting a clear message about invasive species in the territory.

I think I've answered the member opposite's questions about what we're doing and who is responsible. It's difficult to prevent invasive species without the public really understanding what the issue is.

Obviously, the Yukon government can't hold a car wash at the Yukon border and hope to eliminate the spread that way. Well, perhaps we could. It's really something that's in the hands of the public and something that we need to really address through education and understanding of how invasive species spread and how damaging they can be.

As well, it's not only individuals of the public or people that can bring them north. As the member opposite mentioned, climate change is of course a reality and something that is changing what species can grow where. We're certainly seeing a number of things, whether they be species like, for instance, the pine beetle coming north because of changes in our climate. Some plants like the sweet clover that grows on the highways have come up as well. These are all some things that we can prevent through education. Other things are very difficult to prevent, so we'll have to be as proactive as we can and be as intelligent as we can in delivering services and making people aware. The reality is some invasive species are very difficult to stop.

We need to try our best, obviously, but I think it'll be very difficult for Yukon government to prevent all invasive species from coming to the Yukon.

I think that answers the member's questions.

**Chair:** Would the members care for a break?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

**Chair:** Committee of the Whole will come to order and resume general debate on Vote 52.

**Ms. White:** This will conclude my questions — this one here. In true style, I am going to go back to species at risk. It's one of my favourite questions.

It has been 15 years since we signed the national *Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk*, and every year we see report cards from Outside organizations that give the Yukon a near failing grade, in the D range. Clearly, Yukon is falling short of its national commitments. We have a hodge-podge of legislation, of programs, and of staff from various departments that are attempting to deal with species at risk. One of the main obligations of the national accord is to have stand-alone, comprehensive species at risk legislation. I asked this during the briefing, and I was told that it was a political decision and there has been no mandate given to the department to develop species at risk legislation.

So when can we expect the Yukon to live up to its national obligation and develop a species at risk act?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** This is obviously one we have discussed at length previously. I would say that — as a preamble to my comments, I guess — my response hasn't changed dramatically since we last discussed this in the fall last year — about six months ago or so.

We currently believe that the government has the tools at its disposal to adequately identify and protect species that are at risk in the territory. We do that through a number of ways. We manage and monitor species of wildlife at risk and track all species of conservation concern. We contribute to federal species at risk assessment and recovery planning as part of our commitment under the national *Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk*. We are actively engaged in the national as-

assessment process, led by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada for species that occur in Yukon.

Recovery plans that are currently being developed that affect Yukon species are the wood bison recovery strategy, the western toad management plan and the bowhead whale management plan. Bats were listed as species at risk in 2011, in November, because they are at risk of extinction by an introduced disease, white-nose syndrome, and we are monitoring for this disease, which has not yet been found in Yukon bats. We are reviewing the Yukon government's roles and responsibilities around doing this, and we're confident that we're able to adequately protect and manage Yukon species at risk in the territory. Recovery planning for three of the *Species at Risk Act* listed Yukon species has been completed — 13 additional Yukon species are wait-listed, and the *Species at Risk Act* compels Environment Canada to produce plans with certain time frames once a species is listed.

We participate at each level of that planning procedure — we participate in the identification; we participate in the creation of management plans; and we participate by implementing Yukon's responsibilities under those management plans.

The issue I would revert back to is that I'm not aware of any species in the Yukon that isn't adequately being protected currently. I think that we have done a great job with the tools we have to identify and protect species. I think we've been able to do it in a collaborative way and a way that works for Yukon. We often involve First Nations in the discussions around species at risk. In the case of the wood bison, that's a great example of a very collaborative process for the development of a management plan, which allows for use and harvest of a species in the territory but is also the management plan for a species that is at risk in the country.

That's a case where, while nationally the particular species is identified as being at risk or of special concern, it isn't locally. We don't have a problem with bison locally being — in fact, if we have any problem in the Yukon with bison, it's that we have too many. I believe the management plan calls for a herd size of about 1,000, and currently in the territory, I believe there are more than 13,000 or 14,000 bison.

That's a case where we have responded locally to the needs of the community and in a way that respects the roles of First Nations and the established boards and committees under the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, including the Fish and Wildlife Management Board.

When a recovery plan is being developed for a species at risk act — a list of species that occurs in Yukon — the Yukon government representatives join federal planning initiatives to represent Yukon considerations. The federal government is currently engaged in the consultation process for the pending listing of the Yukon draba, assessed as "endangered", and other species found in Yukon assessed as "special concern", including the grizzly bear, the collared pika, the buff-breasted sandpiper and others.

Should the grizzly bear or other species be listed in the federal *Species at Risk Act*, a federal management planning process will be initiated. Plans are already in place for Baikal sedge and Northern Mountain caribou. As I mentioned before,

the federal wood bison recovery strategy is a particular issue for us and tends to be somewhat challenging because the planning process there has to be synchronized with our own in that we have certain considerations to take in such as First Nations and the Fish and Wildlife Management Board.

As well, we have a project that is currently identified in this year's budget for Fish and Wildlife branch, which is to deliver species at risk programs that meet Yukon government's objectives and requirements and national, provincial and territorial agreements, such as the national *Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk*, COSEWIC, RENEW and CITES. I hope the *Hansard* ladies are able to capture those three acronyms.

Emphasis is on species particularly important to Yukoners, such as grizzly bears, polar bears, caribou and bison. These activities involve the coordination and delivery of species at risk investigations and reporting.

It also supports Yukon's representation on national and international forums and committees for species at risk concerns, coordinates management and investigations with regional and species program staff and addresses topics of public and political concern as they arise. This program supports Yukon's ability to adaptively manage for harvested species at risk, list and rank species in Yukon and inform planning activities of the diversity and status of species affected by both human activity and climate change.

We participate in national species at risk forums, such as COSEWIC, RENEW general status and CITES. We coordinate management planning for Yukon species by providing technical representation on national species at risk teams for key species such as bison and polar bears. We develop territorial general status ranks for vertebrate species, which include freshwater fish, resident birds and raptors, in a workshop setting that includes resident Yukon experts for these species groups. We provide technical input from Yukon international species status assessments and prepare reports on investigations of species at risk as deemed priority.

That's just some of the work we're doing in this particular budget this year.

As you see, Madam Chair, we participate in all levels of management of species at risk and we continue to engage in a number of different ways to identify species at risk, create management plans for them and implement those management plans to protect those species.

If it were determined at some point that the protections we currently provide are inadequate — which I don't think they are; I think they are adequate and I think we have done an excellent job protecting species at risk so far in the territory, but if one day we decided through the course of our deliberations that we were in need of different tools or new tools outside of what we have, I think we would be in a position to change that. At this point I am confident that the tools we have available to us are sufficient to identify, manage and protect species at risk in Yukon.

**Mr. Silver:** I thank the minister for his time today answering questions from the Official Opposition. I'd also like to thank the department staff member for his time as well.

Most questions have been answered but I have about five left here that weren't addressed by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

I'd like to start with a quote from the 2012 fall report of the federal Commission of the Environment and Sustainable Development: "Federal officials told us that they consider hydraulic fracturing to be an emerging issue that they are now starting to investigate. They are currently gathering information on the substances used for hydraulic fracturing in Canada. According to the government, until it has a better understanding of hydraulic fracturing, it cannot determine whether risk assessments and control measures are warranted."

So there is clearly a concern at the federal level about fracking. I know that everybody who has been paying attention to the news knows that there's a select committee this summer, which the Minister of Environment is on. Other than the committee itself moving forward, is the department currently doing any analysis on the potential impact of fracking in the Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** I agree with the member's assessment of the situation, that being that the process of hydraulic fracturing has raised some concerns in some jurisdictions and at the national level.

I know the report he is quoting from — I believe it was from the former Environment Commissioner, Scott Vaughan. I'm not positive, but I believe that's the report he issued. There has also been other work done subsequent to that with the Auditor General's Office around hydraulic fracturing in the territory.

Those are all things I think the select committee will have to take into consideration and to review in their deliberations. With regard to what the department has done, up until the last couple of weeks, we've been engaged in discussions with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and other jurisdictions such as B.C. and Alberta to discuss best practices and gain some information and understanding within the department.

That being said, now that we have decided in this House to undertake the select committee model for reviewing these issues — I don't want to preclude a decision that would be made by the select committee — I would expect the select committee would be interested in hearing from the Department of Environment officials about what their impression is of the current understanding and information and data that is available and whether or not it is sufficient to adequately assess and regulate and allow the particular activity in the Yukon.

That's something that I think that the select committee should consider and that we will, I hope, undertake to hear from Yukon government officials. One of the things that I would likely assume would be — again, I don't want to preclude the work of the select committee here, but I would expect that something along the line of — certainly in other jurisdictions the similar either committees or reports have suggested that department officials increase their level of collaboration with other jurisdictions to gain information, to gain understanding of a regulation about what baseline data other jurisdictions use or need. That's something that I would expect to come out of this select committee, but again, I think that probably the

most important next step in the hydraulic fracturing discussion in the territory will be the work of the select committee and will be what they deliberate on, what they consider, and what the recommendations are that they make for Yukon government and going forward.

I said before in my discussions with the Member for Takhini-Kopper King that one issue where we are somewhat weak is our monitoring and collection of data for groundwater. That's something we have identified in the draft Yukon water strategy and it's something we're consulting with Yukoners on. I anticipate that we will in the future step up or create some new programming around groundwater monitoring. That is important not only for oil and gas, but for a number of other things.

Specifically in the context of the Member for Klondike's question, I would say that's another area where we know that we could have more information and we would probably be better served by more and better information. I expect that's something that will come out in the water strategy. I expect that the select committee will make some recommendations around what levels of necessary baseline data we will need in the territory to make those kinds of decisions about whether or not to allow hydraulic fracturing or how to allow it or how to regulate it. I hope that answers the member's question on what work we've done so far.

**Mr. Silver:** I do agree that we don't want to preclude the committee itself and the good work that it's going to do. The minister touched on the fact that at some point the committee will be having these discussions with his ministry and I just want to know if there are conversations that are currently being held with other jurisdictions or what particularly the ministry is doing in anticipation of these meetings that absolutely should and I hope will happen with the select committee on hydraulic fracturing.

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** Yes, there has. The Department of Environment is certainly not blind or deaf to what's going on out there with hydraulic fracturing. We look around the world and see it happening with a certain degree of prevalence throughout North America and the world.

We've taken into consideration the particular procedure may be proposed here at some point in the Yukon, and more recently we've heard more definitive proposals from proponents who may be interested in that particular practice. All of that is something they take into consideration.

I guess, to answer his question, up until our decision to create a select committee, the department staff was preparing for receiving at some point an application for this particular process and activity. In light of that they of course have had discussions with other jurisdictions such as British Columbia and Alberta and had discussions with our partner departments in this, such as the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, but I don't think there has been a whole lot more done in terms of preparation, in terms of the actual capacity within the department to discuss it. I mean, I'm certainly aware that discussions have happened, but I'm not aware of too much more than that going on.



**Mr. Silver:** I appreciate the minister's answer on this question.

I'm going to move to the future of the Marwell tar pit and a question about financing money. Can the minister speak to his department's long-term plans here to get this job done and is there enough money in the current budget, or is this going to clearly be a long-range process?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** With regard to the Marwell tar pit, our long-term plan is defined by the agreement we have in place with Canada. The Government of Canada and Yukon government have agreed to jointly fund the project through a 70/30 split. The site assessment and remediation unit, which was tasked with identifying, assessing and remediating Yukon government contaminated sites, has been tasked with implementing and managing the project. Investigations have obviously gone throughout history on this but, more recently, we've identified the types and areas impacted by contamination. We've identified and quantified the impacts to the environment. We need to identify and evaluate cleanup options and identify risks and impacts of the project.

One thing I would note is that it's the biggest contaminated site, but it should go through a very similar process to most of our other contaminated sites, which includes identifying the contamination, understanding its structure, its shape, its potential for movement — that kind of thing — and then ultimately come up with a plan of restoration for it.

I think we're at the stage now where we're about to develop the plan of restoration. This is the third full year of work on the site, and we expect to complete the in-depth site assessment, develop remedial options and identify a plan of restoration. Cleanup activities will start once this remediation plan has been approved and permits are in place. This is phase 2 of the project, which is expected to start by 2016. The Marwell tar pit site will be remediated to the standards for industrial land use set out in Yukon's contaminated sites regulation. The Yukon government is ensuring that affected First Nations, individuals and businesses are briefed regularly about the project. I know that the collaboration between the Department of Environment and the First Nations in the area — particularly the Ta'an Kwäch'än First Nation — have been very positive and have offered a number of opportunities for First Nation students to participate with the SARU staff — the site assessment and remediation unit staff — to go on the site and learn about how that staff do their work and how they assess a site like that and how they clean it up eventually.

So it's certainly an educational opportunity for youth. It's also an opportunity for them to really visit and attend an actual contaminated site, which sounds kind of dangerous in a sense, but it's not. It's very controlled. It's very well kept as a site.

In June 2010, the governments of Canada and Yukon reached an agreement for the assessment and remediation of the Marwell tar pit site. The Yukon government is responsible for implementing the agreement and undertaking the work. The \$6.8-million project will take up to 12 years, with three distinct phases. Phase 1, the preliminary activities, include those ones I listed earlier, which would take about four years, starting in the fiscal year of 2010-11. So we're now in year 3 — from my

math on that, at least. Phase 2 is the remedial activities, and that's planned to take three years, which would start next fiscal year, in 2014-15. Phase 3 is the post-remedial activities, which is planned to be four years, ending in fiscal year 2020-21.

On June 1, 2011, Yukon government hired a project manager to oversee the Marwell tar pit remediation. Preliminary site work took place in 2011-12.

The three-hectare Marwell tar pit site is located on vacant Commissioner's land in the Marwell industrial area of Whitehorse. The site contains 27,000 cubic metres of heavily hydrocarbon-contaminated soil, with pockets of semi-liquid oil resembling tar. The site has also had some impact on the water in the area. The Marwell tar pit was created around 1947 — I don't need to go into the history, but I think the important part is that the member can look at the agreement with Canada to understand how we're going to chart out our future on this.

We believe it's adequately funded at this point, and it's something that we certainly share responsibility for with Canada. The present arrangement is 70/30. If in 2020 or 2019 — further along down the road — it were determined that we didn't have enough resources or weren't well-enough financed to adequately deal with it, I'm sure that we would have to go back to Canada and discuss it again, but that's something that would have to occur something like along the timeline of 2018 or 2019 — somewhere in the fairly — well, not distant future, but in the future.

At this point, we believe it's an adequate amount of resources, and we will undertake the plans for the remediation of that site, as the agreement with Canada stipulates. If the member would like more information about the specific agreement, perhaps I could provide it at a later date. I don't have a copy of the agreement here with us in the Legislature, but that agreement really is the defining document for us as to how we're going to move forward. So that's essentially the plan.

**Mr. Silver:** I'd like to move on to updates on the *Environment Act*. I believe there is work being done on updating the *Environment Act*. When would we be seeing that legislation before this House? If the minister could kind of roll me through this, will there be public consultation? Why is it mainly being amended?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** I had this discussion earlier with the Member for Takhini-Kopper King. Essentially, there are a number of provisions in the *Environment Act* that are fairly outdated. It's an act that preceeds devolution, the land claims, First Nation self-governments and YESAB. A lot has changed since the *Environment Act* was brought in and there are some aspects in the *Environment Act* that can be challenging, at times, for staff to deal with.

We've been able to do so effectively over the years. We've been able to fulfill our duty to Yukoners to protect the environment. There are always aspects that could be improved upon, that could be modernized or could be changed.

As I mentioned before, we have begun work on a number of changes to some of the regulatory instruments pursuant to the *Environment Act*, such as the beverage container regulation and the designated materials regulation. As well, we're perhaps considering some changes to some of the permitting aspects of

the regulations pursuant to the *Environment Act*, which come from recommendations from the working group between Environment Yukon, Community Services and the AYC representatives, which came up with a number of recommendations for improving the permitting, liabilities and funding structures of municipal solid-waste facilities.

So there are a number of things that are ongoing currently on the regulatory side. With respect to when we would change the *Environment Act*, as I said earlier, we haven't set a date for that. There are, as I said before, a number of ministers who all have various suites of legislation for which they are responsible.

I think there are probably 250 to 300 pieces of legislation in the territory. Some of them happen to be very old, much older than the *Environment Act*. Of course we'll have to determine the level of necessity in making changes and plan accordingly. As I've said, we've been able to make do so far; we've been able to get by; we've been able to perform the duties the department needs to with the current legislation, but there are certain aspects that would be easier and would facilitate improved programming with an amended piece of legislation. That's something we'll have to decide in the sittings to come and throughout the course of our mandate as to whether or not and when and, if so, when to amend the *Environment Act*.

**Mr. Silver:** I apologize if I'm asking a question that has already been asked by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King. I may have been mesmerized by a certain member's tie during Education Week, which is absolutely spectacular, by the way.

I would like to move on to a question that I've been getting from some of the placer miners up in Dawson. As you may or may not know, the local landfill, Quigley landfill, is not accepting waste oil right now and I know that a lot of placer miners are doing different things that they believe are in the best interest as far as how they deal with waste oil.

I've been hearing lots of different things as far as either trying to burn off oil in pumps for the water pumps or just stockpiling it, and I just wanted to give the minister an opportunity to maybe state, for the record, what his department feels is the best plan of action currently and also provide an update on whether or not we can see Quigley accepting that waste oil again any time in the near future or whatever the solution is there.

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** Discussions of course have been underway with the Klondike Placer Miners Association and my department for some time now. We have discussed a number of issues with them ranging from liability insurance necessary for their operations, to the handling of waste oil and other contaminated waste.

I guess one of the things I would provide an update on is that a lot has been resolved through discussion. There were a lot of things ongoing that the placer miners thought was the rule and that the Department of Environment thought was what they were doing and really when we brought them all together — the placer miners and the department officials — we were able to resolve a lot of the problems and issues through discussion and through information sharing and being collaborative

and forthcoming with information. A good example of that is the waste oil.

One of the things that can be prohibitive in the use or reuse of used oil is the handling practices of that product. If you handle used oil properly, there's a function for it, but if you start mixing it in with old brake fluid and old antifreeze and other things like that, it becomes contaminated and is virtually useless.

One of the things the placer miners have acknowledged that they need to do as an industry is to get out to their membership and explain proper practices for handling of used oil. There can be uses for it if it's handled properly. They need to understand and synchronize and be consistent about how they handle those substances.

With regard to the Quigley site, I don't know. That's a decision that the municipality would have to make. It's a site that they run themselves or in collaboration with Community Services so I don't know what substances they accept and don't accept.

I do know we have a special waste program for collecting special waste throughout the territory and the placer miners often subscribe to that particular program. That's a program where, on an annual basis, we go throughout the territory and collect special waste, usually from households but sometimes from small businesses like placer miners who accumulate such things as sometimes Yukoners do in their backyards or on their sites or wherever it is. Our goal with this program is to make sure that special wastes are dealt with appropriately. A lot of people think that you can just throw special waste into the dumpster and close your eyes and it goes away somewhere, but that mentality and practice is rather dangerous and you can end up with some pretty significant contamination, especially in solid-waste facilities.

So we go out to the communities and collect special waste once a year. We travel throughout the communities, we try to prearrange with placer miners when we're coming, when it's good for them, so if they can collaborate and get together, maybe if all the mines on one road can all have it together, that makes our job a lot easier.

Then what happens is we pay for the transportation. We transport it down south, typically to Alberta, where it is supplied to a soil remediation firm where it is turned over and remediated — not soil remediation, sorry, solid-waste disposal facility for disposal of special waste — and then what happens is Environment Yukon pays for the cost of the transportation and the proponent — whether it's a placer miner or whomever — pays for the actual cost of the processing at the plant in Alberta.

It's something that has been fairly successful over the years where we are able to gather special waste once a year and ensure that it is dealt with properly and in a manner that is befitting to the level of danger that is associated with some of these special wastes. Those discussions have been ongoing with the Klondike Placer Miners Association around handling practices, a whole other suite of issues like insurance and other issues, and we also provide them with the special waste collec-

tion program. I think that covers the bases for the member opposite.

**Mr. Silver:** I have one, if not two questions, left for the member opposite, depending upon an answer to a question that I sent over there. I'm not going to ask one question —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Mr. Silver:** I wasn't going to ask unless there was some progress there.

All right, I'll ask that question. I'm just wondering about the future of the reciprocal fishing licences in Alaska. Are Alaskans making changes? There was some news a couple of weeks ago. Also, what effort has the Government of Yukon made to keep this licence in place?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** When we were informally corresponding there, I thought he was talking about B.C. for some reason, so I don't have a whole lot new to report. I would say that the news article that he has seen, that I have seen and shared with him, was the only information that I have at this point. If we do, for lack of a better phrase, catch wind of the idea that the viewpoint is that Alaska should move away from reciprocal licences, we would take action, I presume. I would probably pursue a political course initially and write letters to our counterparts in the Government of Alaska, the state government.

I was going to say, though, just on a different note with regard to the reciprocal licence with B.C. on Atlin Lake, I have written a letter to my counterpart in British Columbia asking to open that discussion.

Sorry about the confusion with the member on that — no new information on Alaska, and I've sent a letter to the B.C. government on the Atlin Lake reciprocal licences.

**Mr. Silver:** I applaud the minister's actions in both of these cases — both in B.C. and in Alaska. I await further discussions on the Alaskan side of things.

I just have a question about the submissions to the Peel plan. Two thousand Yukoners made submissions on that new Peel plan, and I'm just wondering why the government won't release specific questions to the Peel commission's plan for and against. One would assume that these statistics would be pivotal in an argument that the government is doing the will of the people if they decide to reject, in fact, the Peel commission's plan.

We have heard from the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that nobody in his party is particularly interested in hearing the opinions from folks from Toronto or Düsseldorf, but I know the Yukoners I have spoken to feel it's very important to have that stat from Yukoners.

I've looked at many of the submissions, and I believe it would take a lot of time, but a stat could be provided as to what percentage of Yukoners' submissions supported the original plan. I find it a bit difficult to believe the argument that it's hard to say what side of the issue many of the respondents were on, so I just wanted to give the minister an opportunity to address this issue here today.

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** We did release all the comments that were received, so they're all available now. As the member

indicated he did, anybody can go through them and review what was said.

One of the important aspects of the consultation process is that it was intended to be a qualitative process and not a quantitative process. We asked Yukoners to provide thoughtful, constructive input into the process, and many Yukoners did. They provided comments that didn't say, "I'm for this and against this." They said, "These are the things you should consider."

Those are the kinds of comments that wouldn't lend themselves to a strict enumeration of a yes or no. This wasn't a yes-or-no question; it was a qualitative question. It was, "What are your thoughts on this stuff? How do you react to certain things? What is your opinion on this and that?"

It wasn't a yes-or-no thing. If it were a yes-or-no issue, it would be very simple to say, "Look, there are this many yes answers and this many no answers." But that wasn't the case here. This wasn't a referendum; that's something we've said before.

This wasn't a referendum. It wasn't intended to be a yes-or-no vote, in favour or against. It was a qualitative process that enabled us to be provided with feedback, not only through those public comments, but through the numerous meetings we had with stakeholder groups and with individuals. We got a lot of good input on that stuff. The input from some of the stakeholder groups was very useful. We understood where various groups were coming from. It wasn't always easy, because you can imagine if you go from meeting with one group that says there's way too much restriction here, to another group that's saying there's not enough restriction — we really faced the full gamut of input. To meet with a mining association and then meet with the Conservation Society in the same morning was an experience for me, for sure. That was just a coincidence that we happened to meet with them on the same morning; that was the way the scheduling worked. Meeting with the outfitters or with the Tourism Industry Association or any of the groups we met with, they netted really useful comments, comments that aren't easily classifiable — if that's a proper word — into yes or no. but even if they were, like I said, this wasn't a quantitative exercise; it was a qualitative exercise. It wasn't a referendum. It wasn't a yes or no. We wanted thoughtful, constructive input and we got a lot of it in there. There is some that wasn't as thoughtful and constructive. I don't have any quotes in front of me, but I remember some were along the lines of how the whole thing should be open for mining, and others said that the whole thing — I said 80-percent protection here, but I really meant 100. We received the full breadth of opinions.

Obviously a lot said they wanted the Peel commission's final recommended plan. Some people said that; of course they did. We tried to get that out in the *What We Heard* document as clearly as we could. The *What We Heard* document didn't include this sort of enumeration of every single comment, but tried to elaborate and elucidate certain themes that emerged and those themes were identified in the *What We Heard* document. As you can tell from those themes, you can get a general sense of at least four particular topics that were popular in the consultation process.

We will of course take all the comments we receive into consideration, regardless of where they're from in the globe. As my colleagues have noted before, we are obviously most interested in what Yukoners have to say. We feel that we have a duty to represent Yukoners. That doesn't mean we're not going to consider the input of folks from outside of our borders. Of course we will take those comments into consideration, but we are focused on the interests and views of Yukoners. I don't think that's a problem. I think that's fine for us as a government to do, to represent our own citizens. We'll take them all into consideration; we'll try our best to weigh those competing values and competing comments and competing interests and ultimately end up with a land use plan that we feel is fair and balanced. I think that covers — I mean we may still disagree on this particular issue with a number of members in the House, but at the end of the day, that's where we are going to go with that.

**Mr. Silver:** I just have one last question based upon that answer. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Department of Environment for their time here today. After reading all the submissions, and I'm sure I haven't read half as much as — I don't have as much information as the government does on this, but after reading all the submissions, I'm wondering if a person is going to spend the time in their day to put that submission in. I've read quite a few of these and it's pretty obvious to know where they sit on something. After all is said and done — and I know I'm probably not going to get an answer to this question but I'm just going to throw it out there.

If we had a referendum today, based upon what he saw in the submissions, would the minister believe Yukoners are pro-Peel commission plan or against it?

Once again, I don't imagine I'm necessarily going to get an answer on that, but I do want to thank the minister and his department today for their time.

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** Unsurprisingly, I'm not going to comment on a hypothetical situation where we have some sort of referendum on the particular issue, but I would say that this is a far more nuanced issue than a simple yes or no. The Peel recommended land use plan is probably two inches thick. It's not a plan that lends itself to the simplicity with which some of the messaging has been derived.

This is not something that should be issued or decided based on how many bumper stickers there are out there. It's a nuanced land use plan. It's something that is far more complex than a simple yes or no, thumbs up or thumbs down, or a flip of a coin or however some people decide referendums.

I'm trying my best to answer this question without criticizing the question itself too much, but if for instance Yukoners had a decision between three parties, and two parties indicate very strongly that they are in favour of a particular plan and another party is not so clear, and that party wins the majority, then perhaps we can take something from that. That's just how the Westminster system works. I know it's not a referendum, but that's the system within which we operate.

Anyway, I should sit down before I get too critical, I guess, but thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**Ms. White:** Just to follow up in the quality as opposed to quantity, knowing that the Peel consultation website had five options, including the final recommended plan — as it was written, it had A, B, C and D — if someone was to write in that they appreciated B the most — and they just said “I like plan B” — is that considered quantitative or is that consider qualitative? Then if people wrote in and said “I want the final recommended plan as it was written”, is that considered quantitative or qualitative?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** The concepts presented on the website and in the public consultation were never meant to be land use plan options; they were meant to be illustrative of the various ways that the tools that were being presented could be employed in a land use plan. We presented the final recommended land use plan as presented by the commission and we presented a number of possible modifications to that plan and some of the ways in which those modifications could be employed and used in a land use plan. Those were the concepts that the member opposite mentioned: the A, B, C and D.

We wanted to hear from Yukoners: What do you think about these tools that we're providing? What do you think about these tools that could form the basis of a modified land use plan? Here are some ways that they could be employed and please provide us with your thoughts on those.

We would take the comments — if someone said, “I like B,” we look at B and say, “What tools were in play in B and those are the kinds of tools that this person seems to like.” If they said, “We want the final recommended land use plan as presented by the Peel commission”, then we would say, “Okay, that's what they're after.”

We can get into sort of nitpicking around this, but the bottom line is that it wasn't intended to be a referendum; it wasn't intended to be an exercise of who could get the most names on a petition or who could scream the loudest or get the most people in the gallery for a protest; it was about thoughtful, constructive input from Yukoners and that is exactly what we hoped we would get and we did get from a number of Yukoners.

**Chair:** Is there any further general debate? We'll move on, line by line.

**Ms. White:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 52, Department of Environment, cleared or carried, as required.

#### **Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 52, Department of Environment, cleared or carried**

**Chair:** Ms. White has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 52, Department of Environment, cleared or carried, as required. Are you agreed?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Chair:** Unanimous consent has been granted.

*On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures  
Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$31,098,000 agreed to*

*On Capital Expenditures*

**Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$3,430,000 agreed to**

**Department of Environment agreed to**

**Chair:** We are going to move on to the Department of Justice, Vote 8.

Would members like to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

**Chair:** Committee of the Whole will now come to order. We're beginning general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice.

**Department of Justice**

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I rise today to speak to the Department of Justice main operation and maintenance and capital budget for the year 2013-14. This budget represents a few key milestones for the department and its programs.

We've been engaged in bringing about monumental changes in the justice system over the three mandates of our government that have resulted in a vastly improved correctional system, better protection and services for victims, and improvements in the delivery of policing services for Yukoners. To these ends, this budget sees resources set aside for key initiatives to continue our strong record of improving services to Yukoners through the justice system.

It should not come as a surprise to members of this House that we continue to support the RCMP through ongoing funding and support of initiatives such as implementing the *Sharing Common Ground* report. In this budget there is an increase of \$1,355,500 in the 2013-14 budget for the territorial police service and its 2013-14 operation and maintenance budget to support changes to the new territorial police service agreement and RCMP funding pressures and resource requests.

The Government of Yukon signed a new 20-year territorial police service agreement with the Government of Canada in March 2012 for the provision of police services in the territory. Under the terms of the agreement, the cost-share ratio remains 70 percent Yukon and 30 percent Canada.

The RCMP is experiencing increased costs associated with the accommodations program, changes to the cost-based force growth funding pressures, and the requirement of additional resources in order to respond to the changing nature of policing within the territory. A number of the cost increases are due to the cost-sharing initiatives that are a result of the new agreement.

The accommodations program under the new territorial police services agreement has been changed to cost-sharing the actual costs of maintaining the RCMP policing infrastructure in Yukon, including minor capital — so buildings and minor capital living quarters. The cost increase for accommodations is \$140,500.

The cost base of the new territorial police service agreement includes changes to several cost items, including legal

advisory services, enhanced reporting and accountability, payment in lieu of taxes, rent credit and shared services. This is an \$186,100 increase to the cost base of the new agreement.

A number of force growth items that have been identified by the RCMP include patrol carbines, the CIDS upgrade, aircraft maintenance and compensation package. This is a total increase to the budget of \$530,300, which includes force growth of one time of \$323,700, and force growth ongoing of \$206,600.

The department has requested additional ongoing funding beginning in 2013-14 for five RCMP positions at a cost of \$498,600. The positions include two public service employees for operational records management system, two civilian members for telecom operator dispatcher and one corporal First Nation community policing officer.

The *Sharing Common Ground* report recommended that the public should have input into policing priorities and that the government should take those recommendations into account in their annual policing priorities letter to the RCMP.

As minister, I have recently announced that the government has accepted the recommendations of the Yukon Police Council that we established in 2011. It was with great pride that this was the first time the public played a more active part in setting the priorities of policing for this territory.

Another area that this House will be interested in is the planning for the arrest processing unit at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. The arrest processing unit was one of the recommendations of the *Sharing Common Ground* report which said that a replacement of the Whitehorse detachment's cells with a facility that would have access to medical care and specially trained staff would be desirable, especially in light of the death of a detainee in the facility in late 2008.

In this budget, there is budgeted for the arrest processing unit \$3,086,000 for the 2013-14 fiscal year. The arrest processing unit at the new Whitehorse Correctional Centre will replace police cells at the RCMP detachment. The APU will accommodate 46 persons in police custody. The facility, as I previously stated, will be annexed to the new Whitehorse Correctional Centre, allowing the existing RCMP cell space to be reallocated for other policing programs.

\$1,293,000 of the cost for the APU is recoverable from the RCMP in the 2013-14 budget. We expect to break ground in the near future with work continuing into the fall and winter of this fiscal year. Highways and Public Works is managing the project on behalf of the department and I understand that the tendering documents will go out this spring.

The department continues to work on other initiatives within the budgetary framework, including the replacement of our aging court registry information system with the new justice enterprise information network, otherwise known as "JEIN." I'm pleased to be able to report to this House that two of the modules for this system are now operational — one at Victim Services and one at the Sheriff's Office.

These modules are working well and make a great improvement in the case management over our previous systems. Capital expenditures on this project over the past few fiscal years have been as follows: in 2010-11, \$429,993; in 2011-12,

\$506,880; in 2012-13, the budget is \$604,000 and \$350,000 of that is spent to date.

Capital costs in 2013-14 for JEIN are expected to be \$612,000, which includes \$375,000 in project costs and \$237,000 for salaries. The next two modules within the criminal case management system to go live for the JEIN system are the court registry and correctional services. These are very large modules and it's taking some time to migrate the data and write lines adapting the code from the Nova Scotia context, where this system originated, to Yukon.

Once these modules are complete, hopefully in the next year or so, the department will begin work on the civil justice components that will complete this project.

There is a small line in the budget for the purchase of \$8,000 worth of new equipment for the SCAN office, but I wanted to talk briefly about the continued good work of the office in my remarks here today. The SCAN office had tremendous success last year in shutting down a notorious illegal alcohol dealer near my riding in Porter Creek. This house was reported to be a constant source of irritation for neighbours and residents of Porter Creek who saw a great deal of traffic go to and from this residence. The SCAN office used the powers under their act to secure a court-ordered eviction for the first time in their history. This eviction was widely applauded by the residents and neighbours because it afforded them the ability to enjoy peace and safety in their homes for the first time in a long time. SCAN has been a great success because it focuses on neighbourhoods and allows citizens an avenue for civil complaint about things going on in their neighbourhoods that are unacceptable. SCAN has shut down drug houses in many Yukon neighbourhoods and communities and has empowered citizens to act in ways they could not act before.

Another SCAN success has been in working with Kwanlin Dun to shut down a notorious drug house in McIntyre subdivision.

In that case, it was a landlord-assisted eviction after the SCAN unit gathered evidence and worked with Kwanlin Dun to remove the resident from their housing unit.

At this time, I would like to congratulate the SCAN officers and employees on their dedicated work at ensuring that residents' concerns are given voice and that action is taken when activities are disrupting peaceful neighbourhoods and reducing the quality of life for our citizens in the very place that they should be able to enjoy their lives — in their own homes.

Seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

**Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Nixon 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 Mr. Cathers 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 the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole?

#### **Chair's report**

**Ms. McLeod:** Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 10, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2013-14*, and directed me to report progress.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

**Hon. 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 now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 5:25 p.m.*

#### **The following document was filed April 15, 2013:**

33-1-45

Yukon College 2013 Report to the Community (Kent)