

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, April 22, 2013 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of Richard Kerr

Hon. Mr. Kent: It's indeed an honour and a privilege for me to rise on behalf of all members of the House today to pay tribute to Richard Kerr.

Richard Neil Kerr was born on June 4, 1968, at Whitehorse General Hospital, to Bill and Martha Kerr. He attended Selkirk Elementary, Jeckell, and F.H. Collins, where he graduated in 1986. The Member for Pelly-Nisutlin and I were fortunate to be his classmates and his friends. In fact, many MLAs in this House have a connection to Richard in one way or another or his family. The Member for Kluane, as well as the Member for Whitehorse West, knew him as a friend, as did the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, and I found out just prior to coming in here that the Minister of Health and Social Services knew his parents very well and in fact played ball with Richard's dad.

After graduation, Richard found commerce at UBC just wasn't his thing, so he returned to Whitehorse and, following in his father's footsteps, began his career with Yukon Electrical. A long and distinguished career followed that saw Richard live not only in Whitehorse, but also Dawson City, with work in almost every Yukon community. In fact, in a conversation I had with the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin prior to coming in here, during his time in Old Crow, he would often remember Richard being dispatched to that community at 40 or 50 below, or even colder, to get the power back on. He had a tremendous career, as I mentioned, that spanned all corners of the Yukon. During that time he performed a number of duties, from painting lamp standards to working on the Whitehorse-Teslin transmission line, and more recently serving as the project manager on the Watson Lake LNG conversion.

Richard was a valued and respected member of the Yukon Electrical team. His 25-year long-service award was given to him on February 1, 2013.

During Richard's time in Dawson City in the mid-1990s, he met his lovely wife Dina Nagano. When Richard returned to Whitehorse in 1997, Dina and her son, Andrew, followed shortly afterward.

Richard and Dina were married in Whitehorse on July 5, 2003, in front of many friends and family. On March 13, 2006, they welcomed William Russell Susumu Kerr, who quickly became his dad's best buddy.

In May 2006, Richard was diagnosed with colon cancer at the age of 37. A battle with that terrible disease ensued that could only have been waged by a man of Richard's strength and courage. In February of this year, Richard and Dina were told that the cancer had spread to his liver, and he fought on for almost two months, surrounding himself with close friends and family, until March 27 when he passed away.

Hundreds of people helped celebrate Richard's life this past weekend, which reflected the admiration so many had for him. Richard's memory will live on, as he is the star of so many stories that so many of us have. These stories will be told and shared at campfires and get-togethers throughout the territory and will be accompanied by smiles and laughter, just as Richard would have wanted it.

Some were shared on Saturday, with one in particular that can't be shared here today, but will make Richard's celebration of life the most memorable any of us have ever attended, and a special thank you to Mark Kelly for that particular story he shared.

Richard embraced life in the Yukon and lived every day taking advantage of all this territory has to offer. I had the honour of calling Richard my friend since we met in elementary school. We shared fun times and a lot of laughter while getting into a scrape or two along the way, and I will miss him dearly. He always had a way of being the friend that everyone's mom liked the best. My mom has had his picture hanging on her wall since his passing, alongside pictures of her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. This shows what Richard has meant to our family and so many others. Richard will be sadly missed by Dina, William, Andrew, his parents Bill and Martha, sister Colleen and her family, his second family at Yukon Electrical, and all friends and family near and far.

I'd like to ask members of the House to join me in welcoming Dina and William and a number of Richard's friends, colleagues and family here to the gallery today.

I should also make special mention of my mom, Helen Kent, who has also joined us here today. I'd ask all members at this time to join me in welcoming them.

Applause

In recognition of Earth Day

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I rise today on behalf of the Government caucus as well as the Independent member to pay tribute to Earth Day, which is observed every year on April 22. Earth Day provides us with an opportunity to learn more about the simple initiatives that we can help incorporate into our daily routines to help keep our environment clean, healthy and safe. While Environment Yukon often takes the lead role on environmental issues, it is important to note that all departments of Government of Yukon have a role to play.

The Government of Yukon recognizes the importance of a healthy environment to us all and the environment is one of the four pillars that are the foundation of our mandate. Our vision for managing and protecting Yukon's environment and wildlife includes protecting the environment, implementing the climate change strategy, managing Yukon's air, land, water and wildlife resources, and promoting recycling and responsible waste management.

As Yukon's Environment minister, I hear from many Yukoners about their passion for protecting our environment. Staff in the Department of Environment is a great example of this passion. For Earth Day, the department's green action team has organized a potluck lunch with a photo collage illustrating their work as environmental stewards. There's a film as well — a documentary on our current relationship with our planet and what indeed is possible.

I know that many Yukon schools have organized activities to help students connect their actions to impacts on the earth as well. By its grassroots nature, it can be difficult to recognize all the activities taking place on Earth Day, but all should be commended.

The original Earth Day was in 1970. It was an American event that became a worldwide success because of the spontaneous grassroots response it generated. Some cite Earth Day events as the starting point for environmental concepts that are now part of our daily lives — recycling, clean energy, clean water and climate change.

According to the Earth Day Network, more than one billion people consistently participate in Earth Day activities each year, making it the largest civic observance in the world. Activities help to inform and energize populations so they will act to secure a healthy future for themselves and their children.

Last year in my tribute to Earth Day, I focused on many of the climate change-related activities the Government of Yukon was engaged in. For the latest on what is happening, I would encourage members to review the climate change action plan progress report. There is indeed a lot of activity going on.

This year, I'd like to focus on the work now underway to craft a Yukon water strategy that will guide the Government of Yukon's approach to water management in the future. The strategy will focus on how we use and protect water. A public review of the draft, which was crafted in collaboration with Yukon government and other water managers, is now underway. A water strategy will put in place a vision and key principles for the Yukon government, recognizing that there are numerous partners and organizations with a role in Yukon water decisions.

It will formalize the Yukon government's policy goals on complex water issues, such as recognizing the value of water in decision-making. A water strategy will prioritize the Yukon government's actions and water management programs, while ensuring overall progress is made toward a coordinated and sustainable use of water resources. Lastly, it will show how actions in Yukon by other governments and organizations could advance the vision and principles.

Yukon has an abundance of water, covering about 8,000 square kilometres in six major watersheds. We are unique compared to other jurisdictions in Canada, in that we have extensive groundwater resources in aquifers, as well as widespread frozen water sources, such as glaciers and permafrost. Most of our waters originate in the territory, so we don't experience the same downstream effects as other jurisdictions, and we do not have the high degree of industrial activity or contamination or water scarcity issues faced by others.

While it is premature to say exactly which policies or actions will arise from the Yukon water strategy, we do know that some key issues will be addressed. We know, for example, that we need to better understand groundwater. Almost all of our drinking water is drawn from groundwater, but we have limited knowledge of where it is or how much we have. We also know that climate change is affecting the water regime here. A report on climate change vulnerabilities contained recommendations that have been carried forward into the draft water strategy, such as adjusting our water monitoring networks to ensure adequate information is available for good decision-making.

The deadline for comments on the draft Yukon water strategy for public review is May 31. The discussion document is easy to read, yet comprehensive, and I'm confident we will obtain some excellent feedback from the public and water managers.

I'd like to conclude my remarks by noting that Earth Day is a great opportunity to reflect on and be proud of what we've accomplished and to think about how we can all continue to work to protect our environment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to Earth Day. Today, across the globe, individuals, communities, organizations and governments acknowledge this amazing planet we call home and pledge to take action to protect it. More than one billion people around the world will take part in the 43rd anniversary of Earth Day, from Beijing to Cairo, Melbourne to London, Rio to Johannesburg, New Delhi to New York and all points in-between.

Earth Day is an opportunity to educate, to discuss and to organize. It provides us a very unique chance to share with each other our appreciation for the Earth. We believe we must use this celebration to make an impact and it must be more than words.

The focus of this year's Earth Day is climate change. For many, climate change can often seem remote and hazy, like a sci-fi film on the big screen, a movie that ends in an environmental apocalypse that somehow a hardy few survive. They learn their lessons and start a new, more responsible world. For them, it's a vague and complex problem so far off in the distance that it hardly seems real. For them it rings of Hollywood.

Many of these people are still fortunate enough to be insulated from the direct and mounting consequences of climate change. The closer you live to the equator, for example, the less likely you are to feel the very real effects of climate change.

Climate change has very real effects on people, animals and the ecosystems and natural resources on which we all depend. The people of the world who live in the far north or the far south have been facing the reality of climate change for many years. The Yukon of my childhood memories is far different from the Yukon my nephews are growing up in. I remember towering snow banks at Halloween, weeks of brutally cold winter weather and summers without rain. My nephews will remember Halloweens without snow, short bursts of cold winter weather and summers plagued with rain.

Climate change has many faces. It's the man in East Timor who worries about relocating his family as sea levels continue

to rise. It's the cattle farmer in Alberta struggling to make ends meet as prolonged drought ravages the crops that feed his livestock. It's the First Nation fishermen on the Yukon River whose nets are coming in all too often empty of salmon. It's the family in the Philippines who lost their home to a super storm. It's the woman in Bangladesh who can't get fresh water due to more frequent flooding and cyclones. It's the Inuit hunter who faces changes in ice and snow conditions and weather predictability so that he can no longer rely on traditional knowledge to keep himself safe on the sea ice.

Mr. Speaker, we mustn't forget the faces of those who cannot speak: the polar bear struggling to survive in the melting Arctic; the Bengal tiger in India's threatened mangrove forests; the right whale in plankton-poor parts of the warming North Atlantic; the orangutan in Indonesian forests segmented by more frequent bush fires and droughts; and the animals everywhere that are facing increased pressures from human development and loss of habitat.

But we are not without hope, Mr. Speaker, for there are other faces of climate change that are also multiplying every day. The hopeful faces of climate change are the people who do their part to address and fix the problem: the entrepreneurs who see opportunity and value in creating a green economy; the engineers who design the clean technology of the future; the public servants who fight for climate change laws and for mitigation efforts; the activists who organize community action and awareness campaigns that encourage us to look toward conservation and renewable energy in the future; the ordinary people who commit to live sustainably; the families who make recycling part of their daily lives; and the educators who teach us that there can be a different, better way to live.

Mr. Speaker, we as the human race must stop confusing our ability to change the world around us as permission to do so. We need to slow down and consider the consequences of our actions.

We have reached a critical time in history when the governmental systems of checks and balances that we relied on for environmental protection have been eroded, where no one appears to be watching what we are doing, and no one is stopping us.

Now, more than ever before, governments have a responsibility for environmental stewardship and thinking of the world they wish to leave behind as their legacy. As leaders, we are called upon to act boldly together, to reinstate and create new laws that will leave the Earth a better place. We look to each other to be shining examples of the change we want to see, and we commit to doing better. Thank you.

Mr. Silver: I rise today on behalf of the Liberal caucus to tribute and mark the 43rd Earth Day, 2013. Originally launched on April 22, 1970, in the United States as an environmental awareness event, it is considered the birth of the environmental movement. Today, more than six million Canadians join together with more than one billion people in 170 countries to stage events and provide awareness to local environmental issues.

Earth Day is a chance to celebrate all that we have and provides us with occasions to learn more about the actions that we can take in our daily lives to ensure that we can all enjoy a clean and healthy environment for generations to come.

As Yukoners, we have a lot to celebrate in our environment. Whether we ski, canoe, skate, hike, camp, or merely take pictures, there is a lot to be thankful for. The Yukon government and Environment Yukon both provide opportunities for the community members to be engaged, such as Raven Recycling's recycling program and the Yukon Youth Conservation Corps. These programs provide employment and education that not only give our youth and community tools to keep their environment healthy today, but also generations to come.

Today we would like to acknowledge the City of Dawson's recreation department, which is offering an after-school program at the recreational centre to celebrate Earth Day. It is an opportunity for children and families to join the recreation staff and community garden coordinators to help plant some seeds and give back to the environment. Tonight they will be viewing the documentary, ... *And This Is My Garden*, an inspiring film about one Saskatchewan school's gardening project and the power we all have to break new ground and to change the way the world lives.

We are pleased to recognize Earth Day. Living in a healthy, beautiful territory is something that we are fortunate to enjoy and hope to pass on to future generations. By working together and getting involved in projects in our communities, this is something that we can accomplish both on Earth Day and every day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In recognition of National Victims of Crime Awareness Week

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I rise today to pay tribute to the National Victims of Crime Awareness Week taking place across Canada from April 21 to 27. Victims of Crime Awareness Week raises awareness of victims' issues and gives us an opportunity to share best practices, thank service providers, and to take the opportunity to listen to the stories of those who have been impacted by crime.

This year's theme, "We All Have a Role", highlights the role we all play in ensuring that victims receive the support, understanding and information they need during the difficult time that follows a crime.

It's important that we have a support system in place for victims that includes governments, First Nations, police, the justice and legal systems, health care providers, community organizations, volunteers, friends and family. Yukon is fortunate to have a community of individuals and organizations that are committed to ensuring that voices of victims are heard in the justice system and that victims are treated with understanding and compassion and receive the support they need.

In honour of this year's theme, I'd like to highlight a number of examples of collaborative approaches and coordinated delivery of services that are aimed at improving responses to victims of crime.

The creation of the *Victims of Crime Strategy* in 2009 and its implementation have been a collaborative process from the beginning. It has been guided by an implementation advisory

committee made up of representatives from government, communities, women's groups, First Nations and the RCMP.

Implementing the recommendations from *Sharing Common Ground* was another inherently collaborative process, where many different types of organizations have played a role in making changes that are beginning to have major impacts for victims of crime. The inter-agency domestic violence and sexual assault framework committee was created to provide a more consistent, effective, coordinated and informed response to victims of domestic and sexualized assault.

Another important collaborative initiative that is having an impact for victims of sexual assault is the Yukon sexual assault response committee. The Domestic Violence Treatment Option Court is a unique example of a partnership among Justice and social service providers to provide a coordinated response for offenders and victims of domestic violence. The multidisciplinary links project will implement national best practices for working with child victims and witnesses, including the development of child-friendly environments, developmentally and culturally appropriate forensic interviews, and medical examinations, testimonial aids, case tracking and research.

The final example I'd like to highlight is our recent partnership with the Canadian Centre for Child Protection. This partnership is aimed at educating parents and children about Internet safety to prevent children from becoming the victims of on-line abuse.

The successes of these collaborative projects show that when we all play a role in investing in a common goal, we help to ensure that victims receive the support and services they require when they need it most.

To recognize National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, Victim Services will be hosting a victims forum on May 1. The forum will be an opportunity for victims to share their experiences and network with each other and service providers. This interactive day will highlight the accomplishments to date that have enhanced victim-centred approaches in service delivery. The forum will also be an opportunity for service providers to reflect on their role and learn first-hand about the experience of victims within the justice system.

To everyone who is involved in the challenging but rewarding work of supporting victims through their journey, I would like to thank you and encourage you to keep up that great work. When we all play a role, the impact on victims is immeasurable.

Ms. Moorcroft: I rise on behalf of the Opposition parties in tribute to National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. The goal of victims week is to raise awareness about issues facing victims of crime and the services, programs and laws in place to help victims and their families.

There has been a change over the years, in that National Victims of Crime Awareness Week draws our attention to supports for victims. It is still a concern when victims are shamed and blamed for other people's violence.

I would like to focus this tribute on women and violence. One in four women in Canada will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime. The violence is particularly severe in Yukon. Diane

Pétrin, women's advocate at the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, states, "You would be surprised at the amount of violence against women and girls in Whitehorse." She says the violence extends across all age groups and races. In fact, Yukon's rates of domestic violence are three times greater than the national average. Ms. Pétrin states that women who are victims of violence often turn to the women's shelters as last resorts. The women do not report the crime because they don't believe they will receive help through official channels. To raise awareness, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre is sponsoring a series of workshops and seminars this week to provide an introduction to the types of services available to women. There will be social workers and counsellors speaking, as well as members of the RCMP. The goal is to open the channels of communication and demystify the process of coming forth to report a crime.

Mr. Speaker, we live in a wonderful territory, but there is always room for improvement. Let us pay tribute to the National Victims of Crime Awareness Week by making everyone aware of the services in the community for all victims of crime and by doing everything we can to provide the supports people need: food and shelter; training and employment; and, of course, safety for all members of society. We do indeed all have a role. Thank you.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. White: I ask the House to help me in welcoming Ms. Colleen O'Brien's grade-4/5 all-girls fit class as well as educational assistants Judith Forrest and Gail Kabanak. Thank you for coming.

Applause

Speaker: Following Question Period, the class will be going over to the members' lounge, and I encourage any member who is available to come over and meet the kids.

Are there any other visitors?

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Graham: On April 16, in response to a question from the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes regarding artwork in the Dawson City health facility, I said that I would obtain additional information from the Yukon Hospital Corporation. I have done that and I would like to table the response at this time.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

PETITIONS

Petition No. 11

Ms. Moorcroft: I have for presentation a petition to the Yukon Legislative Assembly which shows that national aboriginal organizations' leaders from the Native Women's Association of Canada, the Assembly of First Nations of Canada, the Métis National Council, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and premiers and aboriginal affairs ministers at a federal-provincial-territorial meeting in Winnipeg in April, 2013, have called for a national public inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls. Therefore, the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Canada to hold a national public inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls and consult with the provinces, territories and national aboriginal organizations on the terms of reference of that national public inquiry.

There are at this time 23 signatures on the petition.

Speaker: Are there any other petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to build upon the Yukon Party's commitment to implement the *Victims of Crime Act* by:

(1) reviewing Canada's proposed victims' bill of rights and participating in the Government of Canada's consultation on the Canadian victims' bill of rights, and by

(2) continuing to partner with the Canadian Centre for Child Protection to bring awareness to resources available to assist victims of crime through the www.needhelpnow.ca website.

I further give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada to continue to implement an agreement that funds climate change adaptation projects in Yukon.

Mr. Hassard: I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue to fund climate change research taking place at Yukon College, as well as youth engagement on climate change.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to

(1) hold a national public inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls:

(i) as called for in the April 17, 2013, statement issued by premiers and aboriginal affairs ministers from nine of Canada's provinces, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, issued after they met in Winnipeg as the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group (AAWG); and

(ii) in solidarity with national aboriginal organizations' leaders from the Assembly of First Nations, the Métis National Council, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Native Women's Association of Canada and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples; and

(2) consult with the provinces, territories and national aboriginal organizations on the terms of reference of the national public inquiry.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to restore confidence and public trust in regional land use planning, as established under constitutionally protected Yukon First Nation final agreements by committing to work with Yukon First Nation governments and the Yukon Land Use Planning Council to establish a schedule for completion of land use plans in Yukon.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to endorse the Earth Day Network's Earth Day Proclamation, which calls for Yukon:

(1) to encourage its residents, businesses and institutions to use Earth Day to celebrate the Earth and commit to building a sustainable and green economy; and

(2) to support green economy initiatives in Yukon and to encourage others to undertake similar actions.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to invite as witnesses, in Committee of the Whole during the 2013 spring sitting, officials from the Yukon Hospital Corporation and officials from the Yukon Development Corporation.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to hold a national public inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls, as called for in an April 17, 2013, statement issued by nine provincial premiers, three of whom also hold aboriginal affairs portfolios; and

THAT this House urges the Yukon's Premier to publicly endorse and express support for the statement of April 17, 2013, and its recommendation for the Government of Canada to hold a national public inquiry; and

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to join and actively participate in the inquiry process and contribute resources as needed.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Land use planning

Ms. Hanson: Land use planning is a cornerstone of Yukon First Nation final agreements. The Yukon government committed to complete land use plans in good faith and with the aim of creating land use certainty and promoting sustainable development and cooperation with Yukon First Nation governments.

In a strongly worded letter to the parties of the Peel land use plan, the Yukon Land Use Planning Council said, and I quote: "...regional land use planning program is in trouble. A number of negative precedents may have been set that undermine the trust and public confidence required to sustain an effective land use planning program."

This is not news to this side of the House, to the public, nor to First Nation governments. What is the Premier doing to rebuild the trust and public confidence required to sustain an effective land use planning process?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: This Yukon Party is very loud and proud of the accomplishments that it has made going forward in terms of identifying protected land in the territory. In fact, 12.68 percent of Yukon land is protected, second only to the Province of British Columbia. We're not exactly sure where that will end up after the next regional land use plan, the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan*, is finished. Perhaps we'll even be in the number one position. We've identified six territorial parks, numerous habitat protected areas and special management areas. This government has done very well in terms of moving forward with land use plans. We have completed the north Yukon plan, we're almost through the Peel watershed plan now, and we have in fact started a third one in the Klondike area.

Both the Liberals and the NDP have been in power since the *Umbrella Final Agreement* came into place 20 years ago. The NDP and the Liberals accomplished no land use plans. This is the only party that accomplished land use plans. We're proud of that. We continue to move forward.

Ms. Hanson: If the Premier looks, he'll find that it wasn't he who created those special management areas. It was the final agreements. The Yukon Land Use Planning Council confirmed what many have already said. The Yukon Party government's unilateral introduction of eight new principles after the final Peel land use plan was recommended was not helpful and jeopardized the work already done by the commission, by Yukon First Nation governments, by government staff and Yukon citizens. The council also noted that requests for clarification from the Yukon government on the policy basis for these eleventh-hour principles have gone unanswered. This has caused uncertainty and concern and has had, for example, a negative spillover effect on the Dawson regional land use plan that recently started.

So will the Premier explain to this House how Yukon First Nation governments could have any confidence in the land use planning process in which the Yukon government changes the rules after the fact and undermines the planning process?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: First of all, I'd like to note with the letter we received from the former chair of the Yukon Land

Use Planning Council. That individual was at the end of his term and was not reappointed by the federal government to that position. He provided us with a letter reflecting his viewpoint. We'll certainly look through that and give it consideration for where there may be ideas that are of use. I do have to point out that there are some statements in that letter that are not factually correct and which the government cannot accept, including his characterization at the end of the first page of that letter that whether government follows the *Umbrella Final Agreement* or not is largely irrelevant. That is absolutely incorrect in government's viewpoint.

We have followed the *Umbrella Final Agreement* process. We will continue to do so. But really, the Leader of the Official Opposition, the NDP member, should give consideration to her own role and contribution to the public debate. The NDP's contributions have often not been factual and certainly lead to a polarization of debate, which really is not in the best interests of Yukon society. The member should look in the mirror and think long and hard about the NDP's role in this process.

Ms. Hanson: It is unfortunate this government continues to attack citizens who are appointed by governments to represent all of us. The letter from the Land Use Planning Council continues by noting that the introduction of modifications to the Peel land use plan prior to public consultation is, and I quote: "inconsistent with the spirit and intent of the land claim agreement". The council also said that this action by the Yukon Party government muddies the consultation process. The council then noted that this behaviour, and I quote: "undermines the government effort to demonstrate that the Yukon is a good place to invest."

These are serious allegations.

Mr. Speaker, this government is undermining final agreements; they are undermining confidence in land use planning, and they are creating economic uncertainty. When will the Premier show real leadership and get the Yukon's land use planning process back on track?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, again I have to point out to the member that, as the Premier noted in his response, the NDP and the Liberals both had time in office in the 20 some years since the *Umbrella Final Agreement* was signed. Neither ever did even a single regional land use plan. It is only the Yukon Party that has completed one process with our First Nation partners, has another almost completed and another underway.

This type of polarizing rhetoric we hear from the NDP does not contribute to a good public understanding of what the process is, what has occurred and what is required to occur. Really, the member needs to look only to her own rhetoric to understand that the NDP's contribution to the public debate, since the election of the Member for Whitehorse Centre as leader, has been entirely negative and rarely factual.

Mr. Speaker, this government will review the letter from the former chair of the Yukon Land Use Planning Council.

We will give it reflective consideration. He has provided his viewpoints on the process and his thoughts, and we'll give that consideration. If there are ideas in there that are useful to

government and our planning partners, of course we will incorporate those in future planning processes.

Question re: Education employees making public statements

Mr. Tredger: If an educational policy or plan is going to work effectively, it makes sense to listen to the people who spend 10 months a year in our schools with our children. Teachers and staff have a lot of knowledge and experience that needs to be at the forefront of decision-making in education. The Yukon Party government's mishandling of the F.H. Collins replacement project, the same-sex policy at Vanier and the school calendars have demonstrated the importance of hearing from teachers and other affected staff, but in the wake of controversies, instead of openness, the Yukon Party government plans to muzzle teachers through its chilling "making public statements" policy.

Why does the Yukon Party government think that the best way to handle controversy is to stifle voices and silence teachers?

Hon. Mr. Kent: We've often heard from members opposite the power of words. When that document was tabled last week by the Leader of the Official Opposition, she left out one very important word: "Draft". It's a draft document; those are draft guidelines.

Further changes are being made to them based on input that has been received from the Yukon Teachers Association and others. Really, the purpose of those guidelines is to provide Yukon Education employees with the direction and guidance they need when they make public statements about education-related issues.

Mr. Tredger: This new policy is more restrictive than previous policies, and the timing will muzzle and silence those with different perspectives than the government on a number of controversial issues. The policy states, "Yukon education employees must not provide information to the media on any education-related matter unless authorized to do so through Yukon Education's communication unit." It even goes as far as instructing staff to get direction from the department if they plan to attend an education-related function where he or she might be asked to provide information to the media at the event. With this new policy, my question is simple: Will teachers be allowed to speak at public meetings around the same-sex policy, write letters about school calendars, or make their views known about F.H. Collins Secondary School planning?

Hon. Mr. Kent: As I mentioned in my previous answer, these guidelines are in draft form. There are further changes being made to them based on input that has been received from the Yukon Teachers Association and others. The purpose of them is to provide Yukon Education employees with the direction and guidance they need when they make public statements about education-related issues. Those guidelines were shared in draft form with the Yukon Teachers Association about a week and a half ago, and there have been changes made based on the feedback that was received from the Yukon Teachers Association.

So again, we hear often, particularly from the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, about the power of words in this House,

so I think the most important word that has to be associated with this document is "draft".

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for his answer. Good decision-making requires open and accountable communication. There is cause for concern. This policy goes above and beyond previous policies, and the timing seems intended to muzzle and silence teachers who have built relationships in the community and have valuable perspectives on what works for our children. School staff members are important partners, and their viewpoints must be heard.

Muzzling public servants is not the reasonable course of action, but it is par for the course from a government that has become the most secretive in Canada with regard to access to information and shows it is not interested in protecting whistleblowers.

Will this government show some respect for Education employees, drop this insulting draft policy and promise that they will not bring in across-the-board gag orders for the larger public service?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the member opposite, I do listen to the questions; I would encourage him to listen to my answers as well.

I have said that these guidelines are in draft form. There has been consultation with the Yukon Teachers Association. Further changes are being contemplated based on those discussions with the Yukon Teachers Association and others. We're looking to provide guidance to Yukon Education employees with what they need when they make public statements about education-related issues. That's why we've taken these draft guidelines out to the Yukon Teachers Association and others. Of course the Yukon Teachers Association is representative of all of our teachers.

Question re: Internet service reliability

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, one issue that was highlighted in last year's budget speech was the reliability or unreliability of our Internet service. At the time, the Premier said, and I quote: "...broadband capacity could be improved and there is no redundancy."

This is an issue that the Liberal caucus has highlighted as well.

Despite the Premier's lofty budget pronouncements, there was no funding to actually improve broadband capacity.

Last fall, I asked the Minister of Economic Development what his government was going to do to address this issue. At that time, he said it was a private sector problem and really had nothing to do with the government. Earlier this year, the minister changed his opinion. At a luncheon, he announced the government would be funding a bankable feasibility study to examine an alternate fibre optic link to Juneau through Skagway.

How much money has been set aside, and when will this feasibility study be completed?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I thank the member opposite for the question. It's a valuable one and certainly one that has been brought to my attention by a number in the business community, as well as a number of industry organizations like the Yukon Chamber of Commerce and the Yukon Information Technology and Industry Society. In this budget the member

will see — as I'm sure we will get into when we debate the budget in Committee of the Whole — a number of funding mechanisms that have been made available to that particular industry and to that particular project.

With regard to the announcements I made at the chamber lunch, we committed to a series of actions that are going to help us move forward with telecommunications development in the territory. We have undertaken a number of those actions already, like providing annual core funding to YITIS, the Yukon Information Technology and Industry Society, as well as working with them to implement the recommendations in their sector study. We're working collaboratively with the private sector. We're engaged in a number of processes with Northwestel through the CRTC, and we remain engaged with a number of other private sector components to advance telecommunications infrastructure and programming services in the territory.

The key point here I'd like to make is that we understand that telecommunications are important to northerners, and to Yukoners specifically, and we're working hard to advance that infrastructure.

Mr. Silver: I appreciate the minister's answers, and I also appreciate his enthusiasm about this project. I wish there was more enthusiasm. Improvements to our broadband capacity are essential in improving our small business competitiveness. This was one of the main findings of a study conducted last year by Yukon College. The minister painted a pretty dismal picture of the current situation at the luncheon that I spoke of earlier in February — high prices for services, low speed, disruptions in service, et cetera. After 10 years in office, the Yukon Party is finally addressing an issue that is slowing down the progress of our IT industry — better late than never.

We know the cost of fixing the redundancy issue is upward of \$15 million. It won't happen without significant contributions from this government and from the private sector. Is the government prepared to make that investment?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I would point out to the member opposite that I was elected in the fall of 2011, the same year as he was. He also notes and characterized my speaking notes from the lunch event. I found it a bit humorous because of course he wasn't there, so he obviously didn't find it enough of a priority to join the Yukon chamber in discussing these important issues. It's nice to hear him bring it up in the House and to debate it now.

Now, I have clearly made this a priority for the Department of Economic Development. We have created a specific directorate within the Department of Economic Development, particularly for the advancement of technology and telecommunications infrastructure.

As well, as he has noted, we've indicated that we'd like to conduct a feasibility study of the possibility of a redundant fibre optic line to the south through Juneau and Alaska. Of course, we're exploring a number of models for that presently. There are a number of different ways that could happen. As I've said, and as the member opposite noted, none of this would be possible without some significant role for the private sector so, of course, we're going to stay engaged with private

sector proponents, like Northwestel and like other industry representatives from YITIS, to advance telecommunications infrastructure in the north.

Mr. Silver: I'd like to point out to the member opposite that there is only one of me. I can't be everywhere. I'm going to keep it to the topic here.

It's too bad that the government had to bail out the Hospital Corporation to the tune of \$27 million. Some of that money could have come to support the continuing growth of the IT sector — the private sector. It could have been used to address the redundancy issues that the government itself identified as a concern a year ago. It could have been used to improve broadband services.

At this point, the government has at least committed to spending \$200,000 for a feasibility study, and that is a positive development. Again, this project is never going to happen without a significant investment from the Yukon government. The minister has dropped his opposition to participating in this project, and that's a good thing. It will take a contribution from the government and the private sector to make a second connection happen. Will the minister put on the record today a commitment to help this second connection?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: You know, technology changes as we move along and, as the member opposite was referring to, 10 years — I remember the first computer that I bought had a hard drive that had 40 megabytes, and I never thought that I would ever fill that up, so things certainly do change as we move along.

I think the reality is that what we're talking about is a strong economy and that's because of the 10 years that this government has been in place. There is the opportunity to diversify the economy and to have identified such things as a knowledge network, which the Minister of Economic Development has done an incredible job on in leading us forward. Yes, we still have challenges. We talk about capacity and speed and the costs as well for telecommunications and redundancy. This goes along with the challenges and the opportunities we have on the infrastructure side of it, as well as in transportation, and we also continue to focus on issues like education and health. Why? Because we have a growing economy and we have a growing population because this government continues to deliver with strong financial results, and we're moving this territory forward for all Yukoners.

Question re: Dawson City hospital

Ms. Stick: Last fall, the Minister of Health and Social Services told Yukoners that his department had reached a decision with Yukon Hospital Corporation regarding the model of care for Dawson. The minister said, "... it will be an acute care hospital". At the time, the minister refused to pay attention to the Official Opposition's repeated proposal that he consider team-based collaborative care for Dawson, saying — and I quote: "That is not a decision we will change." The expanded scope of nurses now working at the Dawson health centre would have no place in an acute care model directed by this minister. Nurses have been left facing uncertain futures and some are making plans to leave. But things change. The Pre-

mier is now referring to hospitals or health centres in Watson Lake and Dawson City.

Can the minister tell this House if the Yukon Party government has reversed its decision about Dawson being an acute care hospital and describe what model of care will be implemented?

Hon. Mr. Graham: First of all, the member opposite seems to believe that if you have a hospital in a community — an acute care hospital in a community — it's therefore impossible to have a collaborative care clinic, and that's simply not the way it is.

In the City of Whitehorse we have an acute care hospital. We intend to keep that acute care hospital, but we are also in the process of working together with the physicians and the Yukon Registered Nurses Association to establish a collaborative care clinic — at least one immediately and as many as we possibly can in the future.

The idea that an acute care facility cannot coexist with collaborative clinics is incorrect in the first instance.

Ms. Stick: The government was adamant last fall that it would not change its decision. Now it seems it may be contemplating collaborative care clinics also in these communities. The characteristic of decision-making on these hospitals all along has been this repeated flip-flop. The final tally the public will pay has yet to be calculated. Yukoners only know that costs are going up and up. Open, transparent planning based on real needs and capacities of Yukon patients and their providers would have prevented many of these overruns and delays the public will be paying for, for a long time.

Will the minister provide an update for this House on some important items: an opening date of the Dawson hospital and a progress report on staffing? Will the minister commit to the inclusion of nurse practitioners in the new hospitals?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Once again, I have to wonder if the member opposite listened to what I had to say. Collaborative care clinics have been a priority of this government, but they're not mutually exclusive. The fact that we have an acute care facility in a community does not negate the fact that we can also have a collaborative care clinic.

The reason the Premier and I have called both the Dawson City facility as well as the Watson Lake facility "health care facilities" is to clarify in not only the Opposition's mind, but the minds of people in these communities that these aren't only acute care facilities. They are facilities that will offer a huge range of health practitioners and services to those communities. That's what they were intended to do and that's what they will continue to do, or they will do once they are opened.

Question re: Energy supply and demand

Ms. White: "Transition" means shift, change, evolution, conversion. It implies a destination, a target, a long-term goal that is different from fossil fuels. When Yukon Energy Corporation released its *LNG Transition Option — Background Paper*, many Yukoners were actively participating in energy charettes. The assumption was that Yukon was looking at options to move away from fossil fuel dependency, that the government was interested in Yukoners' expertise and input into their energy future.

Yukoners have now learned that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has a very different view when he told this House, and I quote, "Transition fuel is the Yukon Energy Corporation phrasing. I think a better choice of words would be to refer to it as a replacement for the role that diesel has played in the system."

Will the minister confirm that his vision of Yukon's energy future will be a planned ongoing reliance on a greenhouse gas-emitting fossil fuel?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I know the Member for Takhini-Kopper King is very fixated on wind, as we've heard on a number of occasions in this House. I will remind the member and all Yukoners of the commitments that government made and the statements we made in the 2011 election campaign where we expressed our commitment to the long-term development of hydro resources. Those do take a significant amount of time though, as the member does not appear to realize. For large scale hydro, the engineering process and the permitting process is years in the making. Again, what I said in the House that the member has taken out of context is the fact that I think a better characterization of the role of liquefied natural gas would be replacement for diesel's role in the system.

There has for quite some time — for decades — been diesel generation as part of the system, but based on the information — not only our view of information but what is happening in other Canadian and U.S. jurisdictions — liquefied natural gas is being used as an alternative for new energy generations because, according to the U.S. energy information administration, new natural gas-fired plants are also much cheaper to build than new renewable or nuclear plants.

Ms. White: Replacement means "substitute", or "to take the place of". Contrary to many of the goals of the energy strategy that he signed off on, this minister is substituting one fossil fuel for another. In saying liquefied natural gas burns cleaner, the minister conveniently ignores its full cycle life costs. The minister refuses to factor in the environmental costs of the extraction and transportation of liquefied natural gas: impacts on water and impacts on the air through a variety of emissions. These are costs that the minister externalizes: "Someone else will pay and some other generation will pay."

Today is Earth Day, and we believe that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources should explain how liquefied natural gas is better than renewable energies on an environmental basis. Will the minister reconsider his commitment to LNG and honour the energy strategy he signed by making Watson Lake the community where he can, "support and demonstrate renewable energy projects in communities off the electrical grid to reduce diesel use"?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, I'll give the Member for Takhini-Kopper King credit that, unlike her leader, she's not engaging in this in such an aggressive manner in her language or using such polarizing terms. The fact that she has her facts wrong in coming to this House is not helpful.

The community of Watson Lake — the project there — is not a Yukon government corporation project. Yukon Energy Corporation is, of course, owned by a government Crown corporation, YDC. The Yukon Electrical Company is the service

provider in Watson Lake. They are a private utility that is regulated by the Yukon Utilities Board. They are choosing right now — and they're going forward in front of YESAB right now with an application — to mix liquefied natural gas in with diesel fuel in one of their existing generation units as an alternative that they believe, as well, will be both cheaper and create less carbon emissions.

It's not this government or I saying liquefied natural gas is a choice worth looking at as a replacement for diesel. It really reflects what is going on in Canada and in the United States. That includes the fact that natural gas-fired plants account for 60 percent of capacity additions between 2010 and 2035, according to the EIA annual energy outlooks predictions.

Speaker: The member's time has elapsed.

Ms. White: What I'm looking for here is political will, direction and leadership. There are environmental impacts the minister is ignoring in supporting liquefied natural gas.

There are issues on the economic side too. The minister has yet to demonstrate that he is making fiscally responsible energy decisions. In directing that the fossil fuel LNG replace diesel, the minister has not spoken to the harmful impact volatile commodity prices can have on our economy. Further, the minister has stood up in this House and demonstrated that he does not have the latest information about the actual economic feasibility of renewable energies. He cannot make the case of liquefied natural gas based on a comparative cost-benefit analysis with other options because he is not looking at other options.

Will the minister admit that he never seriously considered any renewable options to replace the reliance on diesel for Watson Lake, and will he agree to present the full cost-benefit analysis he used to make this decision?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: What we just saw is the Member for Takhini-Kopper King be presented with the facts and yet asking her final questions without reflecting on those facts. It is not the Yukon government that is proceeding with the project currently in front of YESAB in Watson Lake; it is a privately owned utility, Yukon Electrical Company Limited.

Perhaps the member will hear it this time. They are proposing to take their existing generation facility, mix in the use of liquefied natural gas with diesel as a bi-fuel option in one of their existing generation units. They believe it is a cheaper alternative. It is not just the Yukon government that believes liquefied natural gas is a cost-effective energy choice. I've given the member some examples from other Canadian jurisdictions and U.S. reports.

I would point out that for the Casino project — that company also believes liquefied natural gas is a cheaper source and there are other mines, both operating and in the process of bringing forward their mine project in the development stage, that are looking at liquefied natural gas instead of diesel because they believe it is a cheaper, more cost-effective option and because they believe that it is cheaper than renewable energies like the member's preferred option of wind, which, quite frankly, is not the best option in some cases. But it is something that we will continue to look at.

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

The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will proceed with Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 10, *First Appropriation Act, 2013-14*.

Would members like to take a break?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: Order. 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 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 10, *First Appropriation Act, 2013-14*.

Department of Community Services

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to thank our officials from the Department of Community Services for joining us here this afternoon in today's debate, and I would like to thank the members of the Legislature for the opportunity to speak to our department's budget for 2013-14.

I also want to extend a large thank you to each and every official within the Department of Community Services for their hard work and commitment on behalf of Yukon citizens toward healthy, sustainable communities — vibrant, healthy, sustainable communities in the territory. I have held this portfolio for just over a year — a year and some — and it never ceases to amaze me all that is encompassed in this very department, which is very important and touches upon the lives of each and every citizen of this territory.

That said, the department's main estimates include just over \$93 million in capital expenditures and just shy of \$76 million in operation and maintenance expenditures.

As I mentioned, the Department of Community Services continues to play a very important role in helping the Yukon government achieve our vision of moving forward together by

investing in programs and services that lead to our vibrant, healthy and sustainable communities. The department's 2013-14 budget includes a number of strategies to address key challenges and priorities important to Yukoners as we strive to bring about long-term benefits for the territory.

Within this budget is some very positive news for Yukon people and our communities as we continue to work to achieve a better quality of life and grow the economy, protect the environment and promote good government. The 2013-14 main estimates for Community Services include a number of highlights that promote a better quality of life for Yukoners. These include \$750,000 for flood mitigation and riverbank stabilization in a number of communities, which includes Mayo and Upper Liard.

In Mayo, we remain committed to working toward a permanent engineered solution for winter flood control and we're working to do just that with our partners that include Yukon Energy, Village of Mayo, and the Na Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation. The Community Services main estimates also include just over \$700,000 for a mobile live fire training facility that will go toward improving firefighter training for municipal as well as volunteer fire departments across the territory. As you will recall, this is part of our overall capital enhancements in structural fire protection that we announced earlier — just shy of a year ago — which includes just under \$2 million in additional capital improvements within the Yukon Fire Marshal's Office. It's part of our commitment to increase public safety across the territory and includes funding to increase the number of deputy fire marshals by adding two new positions, increasing training for volunteer firefighters, and continuing with public awareness about fire prevention and the importance of early warning devices such as smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors. This budget includes an increase of approximately \$780,000.

We have also allocated \$165,000 to donate another building lot in phase 2 of the Whistle Bend subdivision for Habitat for Humanity Yukon, whose work helps Yukon families realize the dream of home ownership.

We have also included within this year's budget \$3.6 million for the construction of a new fire hall in the community of Beaver Creek that will better meet the needs of the local fire department, also inclusive of emergency medical services as well as search and rescue teams. We have allocated \$6 million for the construction of the Ross River recreation centre. We look forward to turning ground on the project this spring and know that it will be a very important facility for the entire community.

Our commitment to supporting Team Yukon and Yukon's youth and seniors at major games continues this year. We have allocated \$50,000 in new funding for the Canada Summer Games, bringing our total commitment to \$100,000. Also included in the budget is \$90,000 for Team Yukon's preparations for the 2014 North American Indigenous Games. We continue to recognize the importance of major games for the development of our athletes, officials, coaches and many others.

To increase participation and access to sport in the territory, we're continuing our sport bilateral agreement with the Government of Canada — again in support of the efforts of

local sport organizations and communities. The new bilateral agreement is an extension of the sport funding program that has been in place since 2003. Throughout each of these agreements, approximately \$4 million in shared funding has helped to improve the athlete, coach and official development and is helping to increase participation by rural, aboriginal, youth, female and other under-represented populations throughout our sport system.

The renewed agreement includes three years of funding in support of those goals, with a total commitment that includes \$933,825 from Yukon and just over \$755,000 from Sport Canada. The funding will directly benefit key organizations like the kids recreation fund, sport governing bodies and community sport and physical activity leaders, all of which provide programs and support participants, coaches, officials and our young, rural and aboriginal athletes.

Also in this year's budget is \$285,000 for the renewed active living strategy. Of course I was very pleased to have the Minister of Health and Social Services join me over at Whitehorse Elementary School. We kicked off this very great announcement in support of the renewed active living strategy. It's in support of boosting physical activity levels among Yukoners of all ages and addressing kids in the early ages and the whole spectrum. It will specifically improve after-school programs that will benefit kids and youth in all communities and really target that key active after-school time from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

The 2013-14 main estimates for the department also contain highlights that promote the economy. The department continues to work to bring new residential lots to the market, and we strive to keep costs as low as possible. We are committed to making land available to Yukon communities, contractors and homeowners and anticipate that our efforts in 2012-13 and now in this fiscal year will deliver an adequate supply of lots to the market to meet the demand for years ahead.

Sustained efforts in the future are helping to meet our collective challenges with respect to making land available. An increasing supply will result in more housing options down the road as contractors and individuals build and develop growing subdivisions.

Some \$30 million plus in this year's budget includes just over \$25 million for the completion of stages 1 and 2 in Whistle Bend and planning for stages 3, 4 and 5. \$5 million is identified for developing lots in a number of other communities, inclusive of Carmacks, as well as subdivision development planning work for new residential lots in other communities around the territory.

Community Services continues to play a significant role when it comes to improving and modernizing community-based infrastructure in the territory. In all, more than \$40 million in Building Canada funding has been identified in this year's budget. Providing infrastructure that improves the quality of life for Yukoners and supports our economic growth will definitely help ensure that we are able to meet community needs as our territory continues to grow.

Our ongoing work with Canada, municipalities and First Nation governments is helping us to work toward improving vibrant, healthy and sustainable communities.

This year's infrastructure investments will also result in the completion of the Whitehorse and the Carcross waterfront projects that have brought about the revitalization of the community downtown core along the water. Centrepieces of the waterfront project include the new wharf, which will be landscaped this summer and is sure to be a great place for outdoor performances in support of tourism and cultural activity. Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre and Whitehorse Public Library are key features of the new Whitehorse waterfront and they are also proving to be a tremendous addition to the community.

While Building Canada remains a focus, we're also looking to the future, where Yukon will play a key role in the nation-wide effort to develop a new long-term infrastructure plan for Canada. We have experienced significant economic prosperity over the last several years and it is essential that we continue to build that momentum into the future.

Predictable and sustainable long-term infrastructure support is essential for Yukon and in particular Canada's northern territories. We have very much benefited from our joint funding agreements with Canada and we're very much looking forward to building upon the success on a go-forward basis.

Main estimates for Community Services also contain highlights which promote good governance. We have increased municipal grant funding for this fiscal year based on a new five-year comprehensive municipal grant, and this year just over \$18 million is earmarked as transfers that go directly to each of Yukon's eight municipal governments. The new *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* that was approved by the Legislative Assembly in the fall of 2012 also provides a very clear legal framework that works for tenants and landlords to promote a healthy private rental market that's in line with best practices from across the country.

\$323,000 is dedicated to establishing the residential tenancy office in Whitehorse and a follow-through on our commitment to strengthening governance around landlords and tenancy. I am pleased to report that the new director of the office began work at the end of March and will aim to have the new office in place by the end of the year. In summer, we will be seeking public comment on the regulations to accompany the legislation already in place. We look forward to gaining input from Yukoners on a number of important issues such as minimum rental standards.

Also, this summer, Yukon will be hosting the 2013 ministers of local governance meetings here in Whitehorse, with the key focus of discussing details of the new federal infrastructure funding programs for gas tax and the Building Canada program. We were very pleased to hear that Canada has committed to a 10-year extension and look forward to working with the Government of Canada and, of course, our partners here in the territory and elsewhere about the details for all jurisdictions and ensuring that momentum continues.

With the increase in home ownership in Yukon, we have budgeted an increase in homeowner grants. An additional \$270,000 in 2013-14 has been added, bringing the total rebates

provided to Yukoners to \$3.5 million. We're anticipating 8,300 homeowner grant applications this year — up from 7,850 in 2011-12, at an average of about \$420 per household.

Community Services continues to invest in communities and people. The department's budget reinforces our commitment through the many projects that we have underway, which represent significant contributions toward ongoing improvements in infrastructure, such as drinking water, waste water, solid waste, and sport and recreation.

It's a budget that ensures public safety programs and services and maintains our government's commitment to emergency response and protecting life and property. Community Services fosters strong local governance, protects consumers, regulates corporate services, provides for building safety and access to public libraries and contributes to healthy, active communities.

Guided by four pillars — achieving a better quality of life, environment, the economy and good government — our government is definitely making a difference in the lives of many Yukoners.

Madam Chair, Community Services supports communities in a variety of ways, from infrastructure development, as I touched upon earlier, to our commitment to public safety, emergency response through the delivery of Emergency Medical Services, Wildland Fire Management, Emergency Measures, and structural fire protection under the Fire Marshal's Office.

With the 2013 forest fire season upon us, I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and to thank our Wildland Fire Management team, who are starting to prepare for the season ahead. To support their work, we have allocated just over \$14.6 million in operation and maintenance for training, fire suppression activities and other operations to manage this important public safety program in the Yukon.

Wildland Fire Management's capital budget includes \$815,000 for equipment replacement, upgrades of fuel and retardant systems to accommodate newer aircraft, replace equipment, construction of fire camp staging areas, upgrading communication technology and replacing weather stations.

To better protect Yukoners and Yukon communities this year, Wildland Fire Management will contract two full-turbine air tanker groups this fire season, with the intent of improving response times, carrying heavy payloads and meeting current North American standards for air tankers. In total, just over \$3.1 million is allocated in this year's budget to provide this service.

We are also pleased to provide \$955,000 in support of FireSmart. It's a valuable program that continues to help reduce the risk of wildfire around communities. It's an effective way for not-for-profit organizations, associations and municipal and First Nation governments to access funding, as well as Wildland Fire Management expertise and support, in safeguarding our communities.

In this year's budget there are allocations, as I referenced, dollars for a new Beaver Creek fire hall, but also \$610,000 for a replacement fire truck, upgrades to older fire trucks and pumps, turnout gear, and breathing apparatus fill stations. An-

other almost \$400,000 is allocated for other upgrades for volunteer fire department equipment.

In total, it's just shy of \$1.8 million identified under the fire marshal's capital budget for the new mobile training facility, trucks, fleet repair, turnout gear equipment and so forth.

When it comes to the Emergency Measures Organization, we have dollars allocated for this important body to manage its operations, including allocations for personnel training, communications equipment, contributions for marine radio distress systems search and rescue support.

I see my time is growing short, and it's truly unfortunate because there is a lot more to talk about when it comes to EMS and, of course, when it comes to community development, sport and recreation, and the list goes on. Perhaps I will just conclude my remarks by again saying thank you to the Department of Community Services and to each and every one of the officials with whom I have had the opportunity and the privilege of working with over the past year.

I continue to learn about the very many important programs and services provided by the department and continue to work with stakeholders to advance those very initiatives and others of utmost importance.

Ms. Stick: Madam Chair, I don't intend to make a lengthy response, but would prefer to get into questions about the department since there are so many areas and programs that this particular branch of the government covers. I would like to thank the officials for being here today and for the briefing that they gave to members. It was much appreciated.

I want to start off by kind of leaping ahead to something that was very recently in the news and certainly was a concern, which was the boil water advisory in Watson Lake. I'm wondering if the minister can give us an update on the boil water advisory that was in Watson Lake that we heard about through the media on Friday, and along with that, perhaps describe the monitoring regime — how often water is tested and if we anticipate any further problems in Watson Lake.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I would like to thank the member opposite. I don't have the specific details right in front of me, but as I understand, the boil water advisory is still in effect in the Town of Watson Lake, but that is coming to an end. I believe it's quite imminent.

As I understand, it's really attributed to one of the community wells being infiltrated with gravel and other fill, and as a result of the shortage of water, it effectively was shut down. Fortunately, due to the investments of Building Canada and joint investments by Canada and Yukon, we did a significant amount of work last summer and in years previous to that on upgrading sewer and water in the Town of Watson Lake, one of which was to replace one of those community wells. In fact, we do have a new well in place. What has transpired is really the ability to hook up to the new well.

As I understand, it was tied in last November and it was part of our \$7.5-million investment in the upgrades — again, the lion's share of that work that transpired last summer. The water within Well No. 4 is being treated and, in fact, we're just awaiting the results of the second set of tests. The first set, as I understand, are great — they meet the litmus test — but we are

awaiting the results of the second set of tests. Because the permitting was not particularly in place and the well was being commissioned earlier, Environmental Health Services issued a boil water advisory just for the sake of being cautious while we await results of that testing. As I mentioned, we are hoping that those results will be received any time now, but the first set meets the tests, so to speak.

Ms. Stick: I was curious about something when looking through the department. Under "Corporate Financial Summary," we actually saw the amount of revenues dropping from last year when we look at the total.

Part of that seems to be a considerably less amount of money coming from Canada. I wonder if the minister could comment and explain why the \$10-million drop.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: As I mentioned in my opening remarks, this is due, in large part, to funding coming to an end from the current iteration of the Building Canada funding program. Yukon has greatly benefited over the last several years, as has every other jurisdiction in the country, because of joint funding investments, thanks to Canada. As I mentioned, the Building Canada funding program comes to an end next year — 2014. We have been working with Canada the last couple of years, particularly with our colleagues across the country. We've been working in collaboration with the Association of Yukon Communities and our two northern territories in coming up with a new program that not only meets the ongoing needs of our municipalities and each of our communities, but really meets the unique needs of the north.

When we talk about Watson Lake, that is but one example of the many needs of each of our communities in upgrading water and sewer or upgrading waste-water treatment in response to new regulations, whether it's drinking water or treatment of waste water. These are costly expenses, but they are important upgrades that need to be adhered to. We continue to work closely with each of our community partners on a replacement program.

As I mentioned earlier, we're encouraged by Canada's recent announcement of a new infrastructure funding program, and the federal Minister of Finance, Jim Flaherty, announced a 10-year Building Canada plan — a funding commitment to provinces and territories — that would start next fiscal year through a number of different funds.

Of course, we're very pleased with that announcement, because I know even the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and certainly each of the provinces and territories were looking for that longer term commitment. Really, I do have to give accolades to the federal government for coming through with this program, because we've been able to pay great attention to a lot of our infrastructure priorities in each of our communities over the last several years, thanks to this funding program, as well as gas tax funding made available to unincorporated communities, municipalities and First Nation governments. Of course, there is a commitment from Canada that that will be continued and, in fact, will be indexed from here on out, and there are also other funding improvements that were announced within the federal government's budget as of recently.

So we look forward to working with the federal government on a go-forward basis, but what this year's fiscal budget really reflects is a reduction in funding, because it is coming to an end. As I have stated on a number of occasions, we have been able to benefit because of the stimulus funding that has been made available through Canada and we have been able to leverage other funding mechanisms over the years.

So it has enabled the Yukon government and our officials to really extend the life of a Building Canada project into years out. Money is still flowing; it's just not as much as there was before. But we continue to invest in areas, such as Watson Lake upgrades to sewer and water. When you look at it, we have pretty much invested in every single community in the territory. That's not the case when you talk to other jurisdictions in the country. I had a meeting with the president of FCM not long ago about this very issue. She was very pleased to see progress being made in the Yukon. In other provinces, that isn't the case. There have been communities that have not been touched, and it comes down to sheer volume of finances being made available. Here in the Yukon, I think that because of our good working relationship with Association of Yukon Communities and each of the municipalities and unincorporated communities and First Nation governments, we've been able to advance a lot of projects.

An infrastructure plan was put into place back in 2009, identifying the most pressing of the issues. I can say that we have been able to get at a lot of those. All told, I think the joint infrastructure funding we have benefited from over the last several years has been over \$265 million. Infrastructure development continues to be a priority for our government. It not only provides a better quality of life for individuals and citizens, but it also helps provide that catalyst for economic growth in the territories. It's helping to build capacity in the contracting community; it builds jobs; and it's helping us to comply with all these new regulations when it comes to different applications of water treatment.

In total in this year's budget we have just over \$41 million for new and ongoing Building Canada projects. Some of those projects include the following: Beaver Creek road upgrades — I know the Member for Kluane will be pleased to hear that; Burwash Landing road upgrades as well; completion of Burwash wellhead protection; the completion of the Carcross water treatment facility system upgrade; completion of the Rock Creek water supply upgrades; Faro water and sewer pipe replacements and pumphouse; Haines Junction water reservoir pump system upgrades; Mayo water, sewer and road upgrades; completion of the Mayo community well and water treatment system upgrades; completion of Pelly Crossing road upgrades — something that they have certainly advocated for many years; completion of the Ross River drinking water system upgrades; completion of the Ross River public works facility — and the list goes on.

I could go on at great length about all of these initiatives, but we're very pleased to be able to take advantage of this project funding. I just want to congratulate our municipal governments and the Association of Yukon Communities for working hand-in-hand with us to be able to advocate for a new funding

program and thank all Members of the Legislative Assembly for giving unanimous consent to a motion in support of another iteration of Building Canada.

Ms. Stick: I'm glad to hear that we will see the gas tax and Building Canada moving on in the indexing, which should increase the amount somewhat. I'm wondering if the minister's anticipating any other increases on top of the indexing after the meetings this summer that she alluded to.

I know every municipality has a list of the projects that are important to them and to their community to maintain, if not improve, on existing infrastructure. Whether it's Carcross, Whitehorse or any other incorporated or unincorporated community, I know everyone has a list. The minister mentioned that there was a plan in 2009 that laid out those projects and how they were to proceed. That was four years ago. I'm wondering, knowing that we have 10 years of funding coming, if there is a new plan in place that will begin to look at the list of projects still left on the table that haven't been addressed.

As part of that, it's always in partnerships — part of that which has been difficult for municipalities is them paying their portion of a project. I'm wondering if the minister could speak to that, please.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I can say that earlier this year I had the opportunity to visit a significant number of communities and got to have another opportunity to sit down with each of the mayors and councils to talk first-hand, to see first-hand, the many joint investments that our government, coupled with Canada, has made over the last number of years. I have to say how very pleased I was with the progress being made. Municipalities are also very pleased with much of the progress that has been made. As the member opposite has stated, there is a lot more work to be done. Yukon is not immune to the infrastructure deficit that the rest of the country sees itself in, but we've been able to address a lot of the different needs and priorities of communities over the years. Road upgrades, as I mentioned before, waste-water treatment, drinking water upgrades, solid-waste improvements — all of these are very, very important to each of our communities.

These are perhaps things some of our citizens may take for granted until things don't work any more. Then it really exacerbates the situation in which we find ourselves.

As I mentioned earlier, we are encouraged by the news. Based on what was within the budget, we know there was just over \$32 billion announced for a community improvement fund, which includes the indexed gas tax funding as well as GST rebates for municipalities. As I understand it, that is also being made an eligible project category, expanded to include sport and recreation, which is something communities and municipalities across the territory have continued to advocate for — making funding available for sport and recreation.

We haven't received any detailed information on each of these funds. There is a new \$14-billion Building Canada fund and also just over a \$1-billion for the P3 Canada fund. Here in the north, given our size and our sheer lack of volume, that is not as pertinent to us as perhaps the Building Canada fund and the gas tax funding.

They are early days, in terms of the details of those funds. It is an earmark of dollars that have been announced, and we look forward to collaborating with our provincial and territorial colleagues and working with the Government of Canada in the months to come — discussing the implications and also looking forward to some one-on-one discussions with Canada to learn of those added details in the coming months.

As I stated, we are pleased, as we have advocated all along for quite some time that there in fact be a long-term, predictable, stable and — in terms of the north — a base-plus funding application formula. So that's really vital for Yukon, especially, and it's encouraging to see those principles we've advocated for being reflected in the federal budget.

As I also mentioned earlier, at the onset of my remarks, later on this summer, as the chair of the ministers of local government, we will be hosting this year's meeting in Whitehorse. When I was in Ottawa back in February, I believe it was, I had the opportunity to meet with the federal Minister of State Fletcher, who is also responsible for infrastructure. I also met with a number of other ministers to talk about the future of infrastructure. It was at that time that we extended the invitation to the federal minister to attend this year's FPT meeting in Whitehorse. He has committed to take part in those meetings, and we look forward to what I am sure is going to be a very interesting dialogue. In the meantime, we will continue to work with each of our community stakeholders and partners to ensure that all of our communities receive maximum benefit from federal infrastructure spending, as we have in the past.

This is but one example of how we are working together.

When we look to the *Our Towns, Our Future* initiatives, we've been able to garner so much success over the years — success in coming forward with a new five-year comprehensive municipal grant program, working on the *Municipal Act* review, which is coming along, working on sustainability indicators, working on a new asset management initiative for our municipalities and First Nation governments, working on solid-waste management improvements in our communities and land projects.

We will continue to work closely with municipalities and our communities and, of course, we will ensure that municipal interests are represented at the national table as well as the local table.

Ms. Stick: I want to go back to some of the opening remarks from the minister. I'm going to start with the Beaver Creek fire hall. She mentioned a few other programs that would be involved with that, including search and rescue. I'm wondering if the minister can tell us whether this tender has gone out for construction and when the end date will be for the project to be completed.

Does the other piece of that in that amount of \$3.668 million include the fit-out of the new facility also?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: In speaking to the Beaver Creek fire hall, again we are very pleased that we are proceeding with the replacement of this facility. As I mentioned, we are not only proceeding with the replacement of the fire hall, but it's a new structure that will effectively be able to house fire and emergency medical services apparatus as well as search and

rescue. The planning, the design phase is underway. It's scheduled for completion later on this year with construction expected to start following the implementation phase approval.

I understand it will be let early summer and will include a number of bays, as I mentioned, that will accommodate fire apparatus, one for EMS and a bay for a search and rescue four-by-four. It is definitely a model that we would like to continue to use as we continue to upgrade fire halls across the territory and it's a means of coordinating and really integrating emergency response services across the territory.

We're really excited about this project coming on-line and we're hoping for completion, I believe, at the end of the year with an occupation date probably in 2014. Again, it will help address a number of the concerns that have been identified over the years in terms of lack of space for fire trucks and also for room between the vehicles for firefighters to operate in a safe manner.

It is under the management of Property Management, which is housed under Highways and Public Works. This just augments the many improvements that we have been able to make in terms of upgrading and improving responses when it comes to fire management in the territory.

As I mentioned, we were very pleased to respond to municipal requests for additional assistance when it comes to addressing structural fire in municipalities. The comprehensive municipal grant, which is included in this year's budget — the new formula — also includes a contribution of \$2 million over five years in support of municipal fire departments.

Likewise, it also adds on to upgrades that we have been able to make as a result of the new funding — almost \$2 million in increased funding that was announced last year in support of the Fire Marshal's Office. This is very important; not only will it assist all of our unincorporated communities and their volunteer fire departments, but it will really assist many of our municipalities as they go forward as well.

Accessing assistance through training, providing those life safety inspections, providing those audits of all of our respective fire departments and working hand in hand with each of the fire departments — again, during our community visits earlier this year in January and February, I had the opportunity to meet with many of our volunteer fire departments and I was very impressed with the level of collaboration that we do have between the Fire Marshal's Office and our communities. They're very appreciative of the investments in those government programs and services, which are really helping many of our departments one-on-one.

When it comes to volunteer firefighters — and I know this week marks National Volunteer Week across the country — we have over 225 active volunteer firefighters, overseen by 16 district fire chiefs in unincorporated Yukon. That doesn't include the fire chiefs within municipalities and other communities. They provide invaluable work and services on behalf of Yukon citizens.

So again, we are very pleased to work toward providing that necessary training and equipment to respond safely and effectively. I just want to say thank you and congratulations to our Fire Marshal's Office and to the many men and women of

the fire service who give it their all every day in each of our communities. I know many of them have been recognized with Diamond Jubilee medals and many other commemorations over the past year. They are all deserved, and we're very pleased to continue our work alongside those departments.

Ms. Stick: The minister was speaking of Wildland Fire Management and mentioned that \$14.6 million was set aside for this year. I have two questions around that. What did we spend last year on Wildland Fire Management? With regard to the air tankers, how many air tankers do we anticipate will be here this summer?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: We're just looking up those details. I can say that part of the funding for Wildland Fire Management includes direct contributions into the revolving fund. In terms of the actual breakdown, we're just looking that up right now, as we speak.

In terms of the number of air tanker crews, I do not have that information. As I understand — I'm just looking at the information before me — we have two turbine-equipped air tanker groups and of course one that was tendered, I believe, last year, and then the other was tendered the year before. I think they are for five-year contracts.

As I mentioned earlier, this is all designed to enhance response times and to really meet the fire export requirements of other fire management agencies that you'll find in the rest of the country, as well as North America.

In addition to those aircraft, Wildland Fire Management was also able to install, as part of those additional dollars, new jet-A fuel systems in Dawson City, Mayo and Watson Lake air tanker bases at a cost of just over \$1 million. It is significant. I think it's an investment for the future and this year, as I understand, will be the first year that both of those air tanker groups will be actually going in full fledged, unlike last year when we only had the one contract underway.

So there are a couple, as I understand it.

Ms. Stick: The Yukon is indeed fortunate to have such a great group of dedicated people — mostly volunteers — who are ready to be there for emergency medical services or other emergencies throughout the Yukon.

There is an MOU between the Yukon government, EMS, and the Volunteer Ambulance Society that outlines the responsibilities and commitments made by volunteers. There were issues around protective clothing, which I understand have been resolved, but there still remain some concerns around the training that's being delivered and received by these volunteers.

What I would like to hear from the minister, please, is the Yukon government's contribution for volunteer ambulance training in this past year and the same for the upcoming 2013-14, and whether the minister can confirm for us whether all of the EMS volunteers have been trained in those core requirements and are able to do the whole scope of their job. What were the contributions of the government? The core requirements — do all EMS volunteers have that?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Deputy Chair, as the member opposite articulated, we very much value the hard work and the commitment of all of our Emergency Medical Services volun-

teers throughout the territory. I have had the opportunity to meet many of them one-on-one. I certainly appreciate their willingness to do the service that they provide. It's vital and it's very much appreciated by the Government of Yukon. It can be said that without the 150-plus volunteers across Yukon, this task would not be possible.

It's not a task that each and every one of us can do. It is very difficult work and much appreciated and valued by every single citizen of this territory. Community Services is working with the Volunteer Ambulance Society on a new agreement that focuses on three primary areas of volunteer recognition, community outreach operations and education, which is inclusive of training.

We have been working closely with VAS, which is the acronym, to really determine what suite of training best addresses EMS-volunteer needs and under what time frame they can be delivered, given operational considerations. As I understand it, EMS provides core course training to EMS volunteers on an annual basis and remains committed to continuing that practice.

Those discussions are underway. I also wanted to make reference to the new primary care paramedic program at Yukon College, which was announced last year. Thanks to a contribution from the community development fund, we were able to partner up with Yukon College and deliver this training here at home.

It really enables students to carry out this new primary care paramedic program in the territory while obtaining this level of training for Yukon EMS. As I understand, there are six primary care paramedics who are expected to graduate this spring and I think it's a great example of what is being done closer to home without having to leave the territory and adding to the expenses.

Mr. Deputy Chair, we continue to work with VAS and carry on with the COR training with EMS operators and continue to elaborate on what can be provided here at home, which is what I just alluded to through Yukon College. To be sure, we very much value their contributions and commend them for the level of service that is being delivered on behalf of the Yukon.

Ms. Stick: Moving on, I was looking at some of the statistics under the Fire Marshal's Office and I had a few questions there. One is fairly simple — it had to do with storage tank inspections. I just want clarification on what kinds of storage tanks those were. I was also curious about what life safety inspections are.

In particular around the storage tank inspections, we see quite a drop from 2012 to 2013. I wondered if there was a reason that we saw it go from 75 to 30. What triggers those life safety inspections or the storage tank inspections?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Recognizing I'm not a firefighter myself, forgive me on behalf of the Fire Marshal's Office if I'm not able to articulate this correctly. Inspections for storage tanks, as I understand it, refers to residential fuel storage tanks. The Fire Marshal's Office has what I would coin as a very diverse portfolio that ranges from the administration and enforcement of legislation to fire ground operations and investigations across the territory. It includes the administration of the *Fire Prevention Act*, the national fire code, the *Gasoline Han-*

ding Act and administration of permits and inspections for above- and below-ground storage tanks for petroleum products, essentially, pursuant to the storage tank regulations.

I know we went through this ourselves as homeowners, so when the removal of your storage tank is required, one needs a permit.

That permit can be pulled from the Fire Marshal's Office and then, of course, that triggers an inspection to ensure that it is completed in a proper manner. That is effectively an example. When it comes to life safety inspections, as I mentioned, the Fire Marshal's Office operates some 16 fire departments across the territory, primarily in unincorporated communities. In order to ensure firefighter safety at all of those fire departments we oversee, the Fire Marshal's Office manages all of that firefighter training. It includes development and implementation of fire department policy, administrative oversight, and also undertakes operation and maintenance for fire halls, fire-fighting vehicles and equipment.

It also provides life safety inspections of various buildings throughout the territory, fire cause investigations and, as I mentioned before, firefighter training to all of the municipalities and provides select services provided to Dawson and Whitehorse upon request from the respective fire departments.

We continue to work very closely through different agreements with Wildland Fire Management, EMS and Search and Rescue to provide that coordinated, effective and efficient emergency response throughout the territory.

Just looking at some statistics, in the Yukon we have been able to provide a number of fire and life safety inspections of buildings completed; a number of investigations of fires that have taken place completed; residential underground storage tank removal and inspections, as I alluded to before, and commercial tank permits also issued. Those are just some of the services provided by the Fire Marshal's Office. I would be remiss if I didn't add that is, in fact, why the government has invested in the Fire Marshal's Office, which has really expanded with the hiring of two new deputy fire marshals. So, effectively, we have doubled our capacity to provide those life safety inspections of buildings to provide that training, and to provide that oversight and building capacity with each of our fire departments. It was long overdue, but it is helping to make a significant difference.

Ms. Stick: I understand the minister to say that the storage tank inspections refer to residential properties and those are new tanks being installed and old ones that are underground being removed.

When we look around the territory, we also see tank farms, where there are very large quantities of petroleum products — whether it's aviation fuel, diesel fuel, automobile or heating oils — those types of things — being stored in communities, often close to residential areas. In light of the horrific events last week in Texas, I'm wondering if the Fire Marshal's Office here or another branch of the Department of Community Services inspects and ensures the safety of those fuel storage tanks. Certainly, every community has one. I'd be curious about that.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I don't have those specific details, so I'm a little bit loath to provide that information for fear of providing the wrong information and then being corrected at a later time, so I'll certainly look into that. We do have a set of regulations — forgive me, I don't have that set of regulations right in front of me — that oversees this activity, but we'll certainly look into finding that information.

Ms. Stick: I don't expect every answer to be perfect, but I would appreciate if the minister would undertake to find that information and make it available, please.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I believe I just committed to that.

Ms. Stick: I have some questions about the ambulance station in Whitehorse that is going up at the corner of the Alaska Highway and Robert Service Way and I'm wondering if the minister could please give us an update on that. In particular I'm looking for opening dates.

Will it be on time? Is it on budget at this point? I'm also looking to the minister for a description of what will be available at that ambulance station. Is it just for the ambulance crews and their vehicles or will there be other services available in that building also?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Madam Chair, this is something that is near and dear to me. It's certainly something that we have advocated for some time and it is well overdue. In this case, it will become the primary emergency response centre for the City of Whitehorse and the surrounding area. It will complement the Riverdale station and it will certainly reduce response times to growing neighbourhoods, particularly along Hamilton Boulevard, part of which I happen to represent.

It will also help respond in a more efficient manner to communities along the Alaska Highway and also to the Porter Creek area, which includes Whistle Bend. As one goes by that facility at the Protective Services area, one will see tremendous progress being made. The contract was let and was awarded about a year ago. It certainly is taking shape. As I understand — I always hate to put a specific timeline and I don't have a specific timeline, but we are looking at it coming to fruition this summer. But right now, as one will see when one takes a look at it, you have siding is going up. We have been able to close in the building. The windows, the trusses, roofing — all of that is well underway. So the interior work is really the emphasis of the work right now in the building and will continue through the spring.

Of course, landscaping will occur in the summer. It's a facility that will include, as I understand, a three-bay, drive-through ambulance station to accommodate six vehicles — three in ready position and three in prep position. Also, it will have office space and clinical training space for personnel. It's designed to meet LEED base standards, as well as post-disaster requirements to support continuous operations, obviously, during a wide variety of large-scale emergencies or disasters.

It's a facility that will be well-received by the community. In the meantime, there are services that have been made available over the last number of months, as I understand, which have helped provide that interim service until this building becomes fully operational. We're very pleased with the progress

being made, and we look forward to being able to report progress later this year.

Ms. Stick: I thank the minister for those responses. The one question I had was whether it is going to meet its budget target. I am also curious, since we are going to be maintaining two ambulance stations — one at the hospital and then this one as a primary one — are we looking at more physical ambulances and more personnel?

The other piece of that is this: Do we see an end date for the ambulance station at the hospital, or will that just continue to be maintained as it is?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: The project is being managed by Property Management under the Department of Highways and Public Works. In terms of the other station in Riverdale, I'm not entirely sure about the end date. What I do know though is that it was always the intent — and continues to be the intent — that this primary response centre would be operated in conjunction with the Riverdale station. Again, it will add to the capacity being made available by EMS and in response to the growing population here in the City of Whitehorse and the surrounding area. Again, we look forward to the building coming on-line this summer and to seeing it fully operational.

Ms. Stick: I'm sure the communities above the highway and along the highway will be happy to hear of that also since the current location pretty much puts it at the centre of Whitehorse geographically and will make for much more effective emergency response. It is kind of silly to have an ambulance leave a hospital to go to Emergency, where if it is centralized it can reduce the wait times, which I think is what we're striving for.

I was looking at the statistics that came along with Protective Services and Emergency Medical Services and I just was looking for some clarification. When we see the number of medical emergencies, medevacs — those number pretty much continue to rise.

I'm wondering if the department has looked at those numbers and broken them down in any way, shape or form, whether it's motor vehicle accidents, alcohol related or just emergency health needs — someone is having a heart attack or an asthma attack, or that type of thing, and requires an ambulance — and whether those numbers are looked at and broken out to see if there's a way of doing it differently.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I thank the member opposite for her question. It is very true that the number of calls are on the rise. That's why this government continues to enhance the level of resources available to EMS each and every year.

In fact in these particular main estimates, 2013-14, we do have an additional just over \$1 million that reflects the level of calls and the demand on our staff and what that means across the territory, not just here in Whitehorse.

We continue to work toward enhancing a coordinated response for all of our emergency response agencies, and EMS plays a lead role in that regard. Since 2011 we have been able to work toward putting in place an appropriate governance structure in support of EMS operations. We continue to develop, continue to review and reflect upon successes and where we need to fill in the gaps, and to develop a detailed business

plan — working on our governance structure, looking at the risk management, all those strategies that the member opposite referred to — in terms of health and safety, human resource management and being fiscally accountable, as well as accountable to those we serve.

We continue to work toward looking at different models, looking to strengthen interdepartmental coordination and other synergies with other providers throughout the territory; continue to optimize those dollars that we have allocated, and continue to work very closely with the Department of Health and Social Services to identify the root causes that help drive the increase in calls.

We are very proud of the work that is being done by Yukon EMS. It's responsible for air and ground transportation of patients to their respective health care facilities — to be able to provide the care that patients need in our communities. It's an essential partner in the provision of health care delivery throughout the territory. In this year's budget that we're talking about it is just over \$9 million when one includes capital as well as O&M, so it is an increase in the expenditure again.

As I mentioned before, we have been working toward improving EMS. Since 2007 — since the transfer, I believe, took place from Health and Social Services to Community Services — we've been able to increase ground coverage. We have dedicated communication staff. We've been able to enhance medevac coverage. We have full-time staff in Watson Lake and Dawson City. We are coordinating our response to remote locations. In addition to a fleet and facility management system, we've also been able to adopt sanctioned clinical guidelines.

Of course, that's in addition to all of the improvements we were talking about on the ground, in terms of capital initiatives here in Whitehorse and beyond. Again, I believe we have added just over 17 FTEs since 2007. So, as I just alluded to, that has enabled us to enhance access on the ground and in the air. Of course, infrastructure upgrades are continuing to be made in our community, as well as in a number of communities, as I mentioned.

So we continue to work with our partners, as I mentioned before — VAS and our communities — providing assistance, in terms of providing that honoraria, training, certification, working with volunteers to enhance their needs and ensure they have the necessary training to do their jobs well.

We have also been able to upgrade our fleet of ambulances across the territory. We have just 23 units in service right now. We have continued to add ambulances. I believe in this year's budget we have room for two new ambulances — so continuing to modernize our fleet, just like we are with fire trucks, pumper trucks and so forth.

As I mentioned, we are working on the emergency response centre in Whitehorse and continuing to work on augmenting our volunteer program by providing that added training opportunity for volunteers to deliver their services that are so important to what they require to do their jobs. I could go on at greater length, but we are working on carrying on our good work. I thank the many men and women who dedicate their time on our behalf.

Ms. Stick: My last question is around the emergency medical services and ambulance services. The minister spoke earlier of partnership with Yukon College in offering a paramedic program and that there would be a number of graduates coming out this spring, and I think that's great. In our budget it says that there are two full-time primary care paramedics in Dawson City and Watson Lake and I just wanted to clarify if that was two for each community — which would give presumably 24/7 coverage — or is it two split between Watson Lake and Dawson?

Will these new graduates who have been trained to a higher level be able to enhance those workers in Dawson and Watson Lake? Are we looking at possibly having primary care paramedics versus the volunteers in any other community as well?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I don't know the breakdown of who is receiving that specific training and from what community. I don't have that breakdown, but what I can say is that through the community development fund, I believe the Yukon government was able to provide just under \$300,000 in support of our partnership with the Yukon College to deliver this training. It is critical and kudos to Yukon College for negotiating an agreement with the Justice Institute of British Columbia to offer the primary care paramedic certificate program. It certainly has been augmented by the community development fund and the assistance of our department in support of having individuals trained through this program. We do know that there is a lot of interest from EMS responders to take this training throughout the territory.

We are very pleased it is transpiring and is very successful, as I understand. As I mentioned earlier, there are six graduates. I don't believe the actual program got off the ground until last fall, so the first round of graduates will be coming around in the spring — very shortly.

It focuses on skills required to strengthen decision-making and treatment options when caring for critically ill or injured individuals within that pre-hospital setting. It's the first time that we've been able to deliver it on an as-needed basis here in Whitehorse and in the communities without having to leave the territory, which will save our territory money over the long term and help raise the number of qualified local applicants when those positions are advertised.

It is key. As I understand, it's the only program in B.C. that has been accredited by the Medical Association of Canada. It's a very high standard of program certification. We feel very fortunate. I don't even think it's being delivered in the other two northern territories, so we are the first — if I'm not mistaken — to deliver this kind of training.

It's the first round of training. We will certainly assess and see how well we've done and look forward to the continuation of it transpiring.

Ms. Stick: I am going to ask another question on this area and it has to do with the program. It is great to see programs like that being offered locally for individuals so they don't have to go so far to get that required training. I'm just curious — do we know for sure that this program will be offered again in the fall? Have we made arrangements for the

graduates coming out of that program to find work in our communities or in Whitehorse, because that would be an important part of offering this kind of program? It's not just to offer the program and give the person the skills, but there also has to be a job opportunity at the end of that.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: What I can say is that we have been working with the Volunteer Ambulance Society and really bringing this to fruition with the college, so obviously there is keen interest in making this program succeed.

In terms of Yukon College's future plans, I don't have that at my fingertips either, but what I can say is that we did provide funding. I believe it was just over \$276,000 to create this program, the first of its kind. I know that this four-month training program has been highly lauded by Yukon College. It is my understanding that best efforts are being made to carry on this level of training at the college. Of course one would assume that after this first four-month training period, probably we'll review it to see what worked and perhaps what didn't work, but again, I can't speak on behalf of the college.

Ms. Stick: I'm going to move on to community development, and I would like to start with a bit about property assessments. According to the main estimates, Yukon property assessors will be assessing 22,750 properties. I'm aware that they alternate the years between going to the communities and doing Whitehorse for property assessments. So I'm assuming this will be Whitehorse.

According to the internal directory, there are currently three property assessors, a vacant position and a senior. I'm just wondering if that's going to be adequate to get the job done. That's a lot of houses and properties to assess. It's not a matter of, as would be in the neighbourhood where I live in, just walking down the street and going from house to house. They can be quite spread out in country residential.

So I'm curious as to whether those staffing numbers have been reviewed. Is this workload comparable to other jurisdictions across Canada? Are there any new hires planned for the future to at least fill the vacant position?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I thank the member opposite for her question. Certainly I am very cognizant of the significant growth in properties over the years. I do know that when you look at properties assessed, the information is somewhat comparable, but rest assured it is a growing number of properties that continue to be assessed, and very well in keeping with what we have been experiencing with economic growth here. Over the past year, I believe over 8,000 rural Yukon properties were reassessed as part of the reassessment program.

That's in addition to a number of other projects completed under the guise of assessment taxation in the territory. We appreciate the work that is conducted by this area. We recognize there are pressures, and we recognize the need to review the complement of resources allocated to this. As one can appreciate, there are many pressures throughout the Government of Yukon, but we trust the department to manage its program. They're always focused on delivering its mandate in an effective and efficient manner. Our government is committed to the program. I think they've done very well with this program, and we trust the department will manage appropriately as well.

Ms. Stick: Another important area mentioned here under Community Development is animal protection and control. I just know that every year this becomes a concern in at least one community in the Yukon. I just wondered if the minister can tell us whether there are permanent animal control officers in the communities, or are we still going on an as-needed basis and contracting it out?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: It wasn't long ago that we actually implemented the animal welfare program, which really focuses on education, establishes strong relationships with Yukon communities. It was really a direct result of the modernization of the *Animal Protection Act* a number of years ago, which really provides increased penalties for animal abuse, as well as stronger seizure and enforcement provisions. Of course, the government, of which I was part of at that time, did come through with this new program.

It seeks to prevent abuse and encourages humane treatment of animals throughout the territory, the focus being on education and awareness prevention, to help people gain a better understanding of our statutes and what it means to be a responsible pet owner. The act itself is very specific about the standards of care expected of owners — whether providing shelter, food, water, veterinary care and, of course, to not enable abuse of any sort. As I mentioned, under the act itself, we did heighten actual penalties under the act. Offenders can be fined up to \$10,000 or receive up to two years in prison. Again, animals can be taken away from the owners — prohibiting people from owning or caring for animals for a certain period of time. So those are some very good initiatives and mechanisms to convey the message that this is serious — as a form of prevention.

We also work primarily with our community partners. When it comes to municipalities, of course, many of the municipalities have their own bylaws that oversee animal control.

We work with those First Nation and municipal governments in providing spay/neuter programs. We have developed education pamphlets to help people understand their obligations and we use a number of local venues to promote and conduct *Animal Protection Act* education. The branch itself manages the steady flow of complaints associated with these statutes, all of which are investigated and followed up on. They are resulting in compliance with the legislation. We remain committed to working with other agencies, whether it be RCMP, municipalities or First Nation governments and we frequently liaise with those areas. We also work very well with the Agriculture branch and Energy, Mines and Resources and Environmental Health and work hand in hand with the Department of Environment and their animal program.

We do provide some assistance to the Humane Society to continue with their efforts on behalf of Yukon citizens. We're very pleased with work being undertaken in our communities. The main emphasis of this particular program is education, having those strong relationships with our community partners, keeping the lines of communication open and being able to respond to calls from the public and/or inquiries or complaints, all of which are followed up on by the appropriate authorities.

Ms. Stick: Since we're talking about animal protection and control, Humane Society, et cetera, I just wondered —

it doesn't quite fit under here, but if the minister could update us on the Mae Bachur Animal Shelter run by volunteers. We know it has been out of compliance with the *Corporate Governance Act* under that department for awhile. They've been working hard and struggling, I think, to take care of the animals that they have in their care, to keep the doors open, and trying to get the paperwork back in order so that they may receive some funding from the government.

They recently had a fundraising "spay-ghetti" dinner and have been working hard to keep those doors open. Have they come back into compliance and is it anticipated that they will be receiving some funding from this government in the very near future?

Chair: Would members like to have a break?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. We're going to resume general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: When we left off before the break, I think we were talking about Humane Society Yukon and, of course, we are working and continue to work with the board to get the society back into good standing. I understand that their AGM has been set for the end of April — I think it is April 29 — at which time we're hoping that they will be able to fully resume their good standing and they'll be able to continue with their operations.

We have had a pretty good working relationship with the Humane Society over the years, and I know that the staff from Community Services has been working pretty diligently with the board on bringing them to sufficient standing soon, so they can continue with their fundraising work and continue to support their ongoing operation.

Ms. Stick: I thank the minister for her response on that. I know lots of people, not just in Whitehorse, but in the communities, also want to see this service carry on and are trying to find ways to support it.

Under Community Services and Community Development, there was one area that I remember a former NDP member, Steve Cardiff, used to come and speak to me in particular about when I was in a previous elected job I had. It had to do with a domestic well program. It's good to see that there is an increase this year in that program. Because I'm not clear on this, my question is whether the department was ever able to negotiate with municipalities so that persons living within a municipality such as Whitehorse, out at Wolf Creek or one of the new country residential subdivisions, would be able to apply for the domestic well program grant. As it used to stand, you couldn't; you had to be outside the municipality. So I'm curious if that ever changed so that people within municipalities could apply to be able to drill for a well on their residential property.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. Like all Yukoners, we very much appreciate the domestic well program, as the member opposite just said. It's well subscribed and continues to receive heightened attention, obviously, with the growth in population. So with respect to the member opposite's question with respect to municipalities, as I understand, nothing has changed as of yet, even though there has been interest expressed from time to time. There have been no changes to the program, so to speak.

Ms. Stick: It's disappointing to hear that, because when you see country residential lots being subdivided within town or new lots created, I think most people would prefer to have a well rather than water delivery and they would appreciate being able to access this fund. I hope that somehow that can be worked out, because it has been awhile since that has not been addressed.

Under "Water Treatment and Solid-Waste Facilities," in December 2012, my colleague, the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, raised the issue of the government's non-compliance with the water licence in Ross River — MN02-044.

I am wondering if the minister can tell us what has happened since then and will there be a new septic pit built this year in Ross River.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: With respect to the member opposite's question earlier about the domestic well program, I just want to reiterate that it would be up to the respective municipality to adopt those changes to make that happen. I know that there has been some interest expressed from time to time by many of the different municipalities, but it would be ultimately up to the respective municipality to make that change.

Moving on to Ross River, again we are continuing to work with the community itself. In fact, I had the opportunity to meet with the Ross River Dena Council Chief and Council earlier this year. This was one of the issues that we discussed — about its future.

We are currently working with the Government of Canada, as well as RDC, and we're committed to working on a broad range of options with respect to addressing waste water in the community. At the same time, we're working with the appropriate regulatory agencies to ensure we do so in a responsible manner.

It is ongoing; there are dollars allotted within this year's budget that we're currently debating. Depending on what options may come up — again, this is the best option that would be suitable for the community — and based on the assessment provided by the engineering firm, we'll be able to determine the actual cost to move forward in that regard.

We are working closely with a number of different agencies and with Canada on this particular important initiative. This matter is of great importance to us and we are taking the necessary steps to address the waste water.

In the meantime, I should also add that we are proceeding, as I alluded to before in the Assembly, on a new water treatment plant for drinking water. The MLA for Pelly-Nisutlin and I and the MLA for Kluane, I believe, also had the opportunity to take a tour of the new facility, which also houses its public works building — houses a new fire truck as well. It is an

amazing facility, and we're getting ready to be able to commission that facility very shortly.

Ms. Stick: Public libraries are a gathering place in communities. It's a place where people go to meet, it's a place for programs to be provided, in terms of literacy, and it's a public space for Yukoners of all ages — and not just Yukoners, but tourists often find their ways to our libraries looking for information or computer access or e-books and those types of things. I'm wondering if the minister could tell us, please, if all the community libraries have the same access that we're fortunate to have here in Whitehorse — access to e-books, Internet access and computers people can work from — because that's often the only place people can go if they don't have their own computer or their own resources to be able to do that.

It becomes important for people wanting to apply for work and for people wanting the Internet to be able to maintain contact with family members elsewhere in Canada or around the world. I was wondering if I could have just an update on what the status is of the community libraries and not so much the Whitehorse one.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I want to express gratitude for those who work within each of our community libraries too. They are focal points — they are community gathering spaces that are accessible for many citizens. They're a very common, popular place for meeting and for encouraging reading and being able to gather.

It wasn't that long ago that Government of Yukon was able to move the new Whitehorse Public Library into the Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre. We're seeing some really great, excellent collaboration between the Kwanlin Dun First Nation and the Yukon government. I think it's a win-win situation. It's a beautiful, stunning building in a very significant place along the legendary Yukon River. It has really encouraged a number of cooperative activities, such as National Aboriginal Day programming and so forth.

Of course, in addition to Whitehorse, as the member opposite made reference, we have a number of libraries throughout the territory. We have 15 community libraries, including Whitehorse, situated throughout the territory. As I mentioned, they are not just facilities, but they are more of an access point for information.

As I mentioned, we have a number of community libraries throughout the territory, providing a great service. Libraries have really evolved since I first went to the library many years ago, now looking at e-books and other different technologies. We have been able to make excellent use of them by our library branch staff. It's a credit to their excellent work and creative ways of making these technologies work. It has actually led to an increased use of our community libraries. That's not a trend we see in other parts of the country, so it's again to the great credit and work of our community librarians and the staff in providing new ways of engaging with each of our communities.

I do know the e-library is very successful and can be accessed by citizens across the territory. I understand that we have over 1,000 e-books and audio books in use now and of course more continue to be added each and every year. As I understand it, more than 600 users have borrowed items 5,500

times. We have Wi-fi access; it's now available in several of our communities, as well as Whitehorse, with three new locations being planned for the coming year, so that will be an added benefit and will certainly encourage enhanced participation of patrons to go to the libraries. It expands upon the land-line public access Internet that is in every library and is used by people without other means of access and that is really critical.

On-line access to the library catalogue continues to be available in French and English and libraries provide a wide range of materials in French, in particular, especially here in Whitehorse. As I mentioned before, we have also available on-line audio books and DVDs, often with a lot of different multi-language capacity. There are special literacy focus books. We have on-line resources, searchable data bases and a lot of options when it comes to e-books and large-print books for those with visual impairments, soon to be expanded to include downloadable resources.

Even with this increase in electronic services, I know our in-person visits to each of our libraries have increased over the years. Our staff continues to provide really successful programs, such as the Yukon Writers Festival, which is coming up and the Yukon Writers Roundtable. As we just heard recently, the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, in partnership with the Literacy Coalition, is providing those free books to kids from birth to age 5 across the territory — a really good initiative indeed. We have summer reading programs for kids and teens. We have preschool programs — many of which I have subscribed to over the years. We have author readings and story telling sessions in the communities.

We have author readings and storytelling sessions in the communities, as well as in Whitehorse. In Watson Lake, for example, they have had a toy lending program as well. I have to say, credit has to be given to the folks in Watson Lake. In my son's earlier years, we used to subscribe to that program. Going to Watson Lake to visit family on a routine basis, it's pretty tough to load up the car with all the toys and all the great things, so we would often subscribe to the toy lending services provided at the Watson Lake library. It's just another example of how creative and innovative our staff can be — not just in Watson Lake, but in every community library. So rest assured — libraries continue to evolve significantly. But I think that with electronic use of e-books and audio books — and there will be many other technologies made available in years to come. Through those sources of innovation, we've been able to continue to attract patrons to the libraries. That's a great thing as well — and continuing to invest in infrastructure, such as what we have in Whitehorse, is a great example of a partnership.

Ms. Stick: A couple of questions, just to follow up with what the minister spoke to, and I thank her for her answers.

It's good to hear that three more libraries will be able to provide that Wi-fi. I just wondered when we can expect all libraries to have that level of service.

The second part of that: Do all community libraries have workstations, where people can actually use the computers there?

The last question — I'm just looking for clarification on the number of users. I'm assuming she means the number of people who have library cards. I just wondered if I could get that number again because it seemed like a small number to me. I was surprised by it. I'm sure there are lots of people who use our libraries who don't borrow books or e-books or DVDs or whatever, but go in and read the papers or the magazines or find a book and read it there. I was just surprised by that number and wondered if she could repeat it because I wasn't sure I heard it properly.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: With respect to Wi-fi, as I mentioned, it's available in seven communities with three new locations in the coming year. That will leave about four, and I would assume those will be coming thereafter. I think we're making great progress on this front. Even though I have not been in every library in every community, I do endeavour to get to most of the libraries in most of the communities I get to. I understand there's Internet available; it's what we call "land-line public access Internet". It's available and can be accessed by computers in each of our libraries. I think the statistic I quoted earlier was with respect to the e-books. When it comes to e-books, we have just over 600 users, which is something completely different.

In terms of those items that have been borrowed from public libraries from across the territory — for example, since April 1, 2012; a year ago — there were 165,000 items. That's a record number that have been borrowed and that includes books and audiovisual materials for all ages, as I referenced earlier.

Some 12,000 new items were added to the collection, so no small feat. More than 800 downloadable e-books and audio books are available in the Yukon e-library. Those are pretty significant increases. Again, we haven't been tracking the number of people who go through the door, but as I mentioned, adding all these new technologies and adding to our complement of resources available in all of our libraries, we're obviously becoming more attractive as a destination and we are seeing increased use of the various materials, which are reflected in our statistics.

Ms. Stick: I was pretty sure I had missed something there. It didn't seem that there were only 600 people borrowing items from our libraries, so thank you for that clarification. That makes much more sense to me.

Under Community Development, we're given some supplementary information with regard to sport and recreation, and specifically the contributions from the government to summer pool recreation facility operations programs and recreation directors. Looking at the numbers, I noticed that there was no change whatsoever in the numbers from last year to this year. I understand these monies are just part of those costs for pools and staffing, et cetera. I was surprised — with wages going up and the consumer price index — that those didn't change at all.

I wonder if the minister could speak to that. I guess the other piece of that is how we come up with those numbers, community to community. There seems to be quite a range in money that's provided to the different communities and

whether that is based on something that municipalities have requested and, no doubt, also on their rec facilities.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Madam Chair, I am proud of this government's continued investments in the delivery of sport and recreation across the territory. There have been a number of programs that have been augmented over the years and new programs as well. For example, I referenced the Yukon renewed active living strategy — \$250,000 in annual funding that will be distributed across the territory in support of organizations that are delivering a lot of different programs from Special Olympics Yukon to the ElderActive Recreation Association and many others.

There have been other programs that have come about over the years in support of our sports governing bodies and individual athletes and so forth. I think what the member opposite was referring to was the community recreation facilities, the operation and maintenance. I am very cognizant of the desire to enhance the level of funding when it comes to support of community recreation facilities in unincorporated communities. It is something that we are looking at. It is defined through Yukon recreation regulations. As I understand, it uses a population formula to determine the amount of O&M funding for those respective unincorporated communities. As the member opposite pointed out, there are concerns associated with costs associated with inflation and the rise and increase in the cost of doing business.

We are very cognizant of that and we have committed to doing a review of this allocation and of the regulations to see what we can do within the allocation provided of just under \$400,000 per year — and also seeing what we can do to assist our unincorporated communities to address some of these ongoing issues.

In terms of our municipal governments, we are assisting them through the comprehensive municipal grant — the new five-year agreement that was just struck in collaboration with AYC. It does provide added dollars. I believe there is about a \$1.4-million increase to this year's CMG allocation to each of our communities. So it's really up to the discretion of each of our municipalities as to how to apportion each of those expenditures.

When it comes to recreation, we are working on a number of different projects — as I mentioned, in terms of Team Yukon participation, in terms of really providing those added opportunities from what has been coined "from the playground right through to the podium and everything in-between". Sport and recreation investments are very key and I believe in this year's budget we have several millions of dollars in support of recreation in both capital and operation and maintenance.

To that tune, I just want to acknowledge the importance of all of our volunteers and our many community leaders throughout the territory who provide opportunities for our kids and our youth and our adults and our seniors, for doing the good work that they are doing.

We certainly recognize the importance of infrastructure and we are working on advocating —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Ms. Taylor: — just heard some comments from the members opposite and am very cognizant of all the several requests for recreation improvements throughout the territory. It is but one area that we have been advocating for the federal government to pay credence to federal infrastructure funding. As I alluded to before, the federal government has made a reference to gas tax funding as sport and recreation being possibly one of the added eligible criteria for those programs, so that's a good step in the right direction.

As we go forward with a new iteration of Building Canada funding, you know, those discussions will help inform where we go from here.

I can't say enough about sport and recreation and our team and working in collaboration with many different organizations across the territory. I wanted to inform members opposite as well — following up on the FPT meeting of ministers responsible for sport and recreation last summer in Inuvik, there was a full endorsement of the new Canadian sport policy. At that time, we also agreed to develop our own Yukon action plan, in terms of guiding where we go from here — not just sport, but also recreation and healthy active living. The summit was held in Whitehorse back in February. There was a great turnout — over 100 people gathered from all across the territory. It was really a great opportunity to talk about priorities, not only for national initiatives, but territories as well. As a result of our adoption of the Canadian sport policy, we were also able to sign on to a further bilateral for sport funding.

As I alluded to before, it is a significant sum of dollars that will continue from here on out for the next three years. I was really pleased to be able to sign on to that with the Canadian Minister of Sport.

We are very pleased to provide funding to Sport and Recreation; in fact, we have allocated just under \$2.7 million for direct funding to our sport and recreation programs, which includes direct contributions to Volunteer Yukon, Special Olympics Yukon, Sport Yukon, Recreation and Parks Association of Yukon, which also will be doing work on our behalf to administer the renewed Yukon active living strategy. It also goes toward sport governing bodies and special recreational organizations. We are also funding sport and recreation through many other groups. I won't go through all of them, but it is definitely paying off. We are seeing heightened activities in many of our communities in many different sport and recreation activities, and even through RPAY — the Nordic poles, for example.

My family and I had the opportunity to use the Millennium Trail on Saturday. It was such a beautiful day. We came across some of my constituents who are seniors. They couldn't say enough about this Nordic walking program administered through the ElderActive Recreation Association. It's an example of our funding that's going in direct benefit of individuals of all ages.

So whether it's in infrastructure, whether it's in programs at the schools or whether it's in support of sports organizations, it is paying off. I don't have to talk about all the net benefits of investments in the Arctic Winter Games, the Dene Games and all of the Canadian games, but we are very much committed to expanding upon these investments in sport and recreation and

working with our partners to do just that through the Yukon action plan, which will help guide and refocus our priorities on a go-forward basis.

It has provided us an opportunity to review how far we've come over the last decade and where we want to be in the next decade. Of course, we continue to provide that funding and recreation assistance grants, as we were talking about earlier, in support of the Dawson recreation centre — or, I should say the Art and Margaret Fry Recreation Centre; work that is ongoing with the Ross River recreation centre replacement. Again, we will continue to work with our communities, so I'm very proud of the investments being made.

Ms. Stick: I agree, and the NDP agrees that wellness is important in all of our communities. Physical activity is important to help keep down our health care costs, and it is sports programs and recreation and access to facilities that citizens can use that is important, and we want to encourage that. We want to encourage people to be active, to get out and to walk the Millennium Trail and to use our facilities to improve their own wellness, regardless of their age.

But going back to this supplementary information that was provided to us, I looked closely at it, and there were three communities added from the 2011-12 actuals, which is great. So Burwash Landing, Destruction Bay and Upper Liard all received new funding toward recreational facilities, summer pools, programs and directors.

Not everyone, but the funding in just about every other community has gone down since 2011-12. So it went down in 2012-13 and is maintaining that for 2013-14. Though the final number is a bit higher, if we look, most of those communities are actually receiving less than they used to. For many of these communities, some of these facilities are becoming more difficult to maintain; they are requiring more O&M; their pools are getting old. We've heard of communities that are having to consider raising their fees — so whether it's to be able to go for a swim in the summer — they're looking at having to increase those fees which can, for some people, put those facilities out of reach.

It's good to hear the minister talk about all the different sports bodies that are out there that money is going to, but not every individual — especially our youth — has access to those kinds of programs such as team sports. There is the kids recreation fund under a different department that encourages that and makes some of that available, but for many of these communities, this is the summer program. Having that pool open every day is where these kids go and participate in recreation. I'm just curious as to why those numbers are going down when we want to continue to support wellness in our communities regardless of age. I'll just leave it at that.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I was going to provide a response, but until I am absolutely sure, I'll just reserve those comments until I have better information before me. With respect to recreation, I concur. Recreation, particularly for other centres that may charge dollars, may not be as affordable to everyone. What I can say is there are funds through the kids recreation fund and we have been able to enhance that over recent years. We made a huge investment in the kids recreation fund six

years ago, if I'm not mistaken, and since then, added investments have been made — sport bilateral, which I referenced earlier, continues to augment dollars being made available to the kids recreation fund, which reaches out to families who could use those resources in support of participating in hockey and equipment, for example, and being able to have equal access to sport.

I certainly understand that, but beyond community centres, there are trail networks and there are parks within our communities that are also available, and they are free. That's where programs such as the renewed active living strategy, are so important in providing after-school programs and utilizing our school facilities and recreation centres and other areas and public spaces for engaging people of all ages, from preschool right through to people of any age, and making those programs readily available. When I was in Ross River earlier this year, one of the EMS volunteers had actually just come back from Ross River, and we were in Faro. She had just finished sponsoring a Pilates class, and it just shows how small areas, or small pockets of resources, will go a long way, in terms of expanding the net benefit for community citizens.

It's very much appreciated in communities like Ross River and Faro. They're provided by the community leaders, in collaboration with RPAY, who have tremendous networks throughout all the communities and who are able to leverage funds through many other organizations, orders and levels of government. So we're very appreciative of their work and their leadership, recognizing that there is always more work to be done. We are very blessed in the territory to have what we have available, in terms of supporting sport and recreation.

Ms. Stick: Again, no argument — sports and recreation and encouraging people to be active is important, because it encourages wellness in our communities. It's unfortunate that we're not able to measure the wellness that people get from participating in all these activities.

Again, still in the sports and recreation and supplementary information — we see that the numbers are actually going down.

I'll just say it's on page 6-15 where in 2011-12, it was \$2.5 million and then it has gone down to \$1.64 million. Anticipated for this coming budget year is \$1.635 million. I know that some of this funding comes from Yukon Lottery Commission and I don't think their revenues have gone down, but they've increased. That's just about \$1 million — not quite; it's underneath \$1 million, but it's a big drop from 2011-12. I'm wondering if there is an explanation for that.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: For fear of sounding repetitive, I will reiterate for the member opposite that we'll look into this. I do know, however, that the Yukon Lottery Commission did make some changes that came into effect January 1, 2012, in terms of their funding criteria, which have, as I understand, affected some of the unincorporated communities and the local authorities for recreation.

Beyond that, I do not have any other information readily available, but that is what I can provide and that is probably what is leading to some of the member opposite's questions.

Ms. Stick: I'm not sure if the minister and I were talking on the same page there. What I was looking under was sports governing bodies and the decrease in funding for those, such as Sport Yukon, North American Indigenous Games, Canada Senior Games. I know a lot of money goes into supporting those, but when I look at the numbers on this page, I see the numbers going down, not up. On page 6-15, right in the middle, we see from 2011-12 it was \$2.524 million, to this year where we see it's \$1.635 million.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I think we're getting confused here. I thought we were talking about the community recreation grant, so my apologies. I'll go back to the drawing board here.

When we talk about actual dollars provided in support of sport governing bodies and so forth, the dramatic difference the member opposite is referring to is in reference to the Arctic Winter Games investment. We don't host another Arctic Winter Games for some time, so that is what has led to the significant drop in terms of support.

Ms. Stick: I appreciate that answer. I'm glad we got back on the same page.

The minister spoke earlier about the *Municipal Act*. She gave a little bit of information, but what I'm curious about is how far along we are in the *Municipal Act* review. In the past they've had public meetings in the communities where people were able to come up and it was mediated in terms of proposed changes at that time, but I'm wondering if there's a community consultation, not just with the governments, but with citizens also, as to what people are looking for.

Is this a full municipal review or just pieces of it that are being reviewed instead?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: The *Municipal Act* review, of course, is part of the *Our Towns, Our Future* initiative, about which we have spoken at great length in the Assembly. It's one of the key priorities of the Association of Yukon Communities on behalf of municipalities, the public and also other interested stakeholders.

The Municipal Act Review Committee, which was formed back in the winter of 2011-12, I believe, has actually been meeting on a regular basis. As the member opposite made reference to, there was a whole series of public meetings that were held in the communities about a year ago, if I'm not mistaken.

Even though there were not a lot of individuals who showed up during some of the meetings, not all, we are proceeding with next steps. When we first announced that this review was going to be taking place less than a year ago, we did mention that it was going to be over the course of a couple of years. We're continuing to work with the review committee itself, and we will continue to engage with the communities. Since the first review in the communities was undertaken, we had a whole other set of mayors and councils and elected individuals on the local level, so we recognize that and there is very much a need to engage with the new set of councillors and mayors across the territory and in each of the LACs. Public participation is very important as we move forward.

Again, we certainly look forward to carrying on with the review: that will include additional consultation and will include the public as being a primary stakeholder in that review.

Ms. Stick: I just want to go back to some of the minister's opening statements and follow up on some questions that came up for me before I lose my papers. One of the things discussed was the infrastructure of the waterfront in Whitehorse and in Carcross. I haven't seen the Carcross one, but it's good to see the one in Whitehorse coming to completion — the wharf down on First Avenue. The minister mentioned that there would be some landscaping that has to be done there and that this would become a performance space.

I was curious as to who will be doing the planning for performances on the wharf. Also, is there any thought or is there planning happening with regard to small stands for individuals with souvenirs or local artists who might utilize that space during the day in the summertime? Who are we looking at as doing that organizing and set-up and planning? Hopefully, it won't be something that will be in competition with something like Arts in the Park.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I'd like to thank the member opposite for her questions on the waterfront improvements. We are very proud of the number of investments made along the Whitehorse waterfront and in Carcross as well. There has been a complete transformation, and it has all been part and parcel of shared joint investments between Canada, Yukon First Nations, the City of Whitehorse and the Yukon government. It has really transformed into a beautiful, welcoming, attractive cultural space that has generated new life, and that was the whole intent — to revitalize the Whitehorse waterfront.

Likewise, the Carcross waterfront was really to attract added visitor attention, and there have been some fantastic improvements.

When it comes to the Whitehorse waterfront — the Whitehorse wharf — I do recall that this has been a highly lauded initiative articulated to us over the years by the arts community. Likewise, when one takes a look at the Old Fire Hall, that's a great partnership that was struck a number of years ago between the Department of Tourism and Culture, Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce and the Yukon Arts Centre. It has really provided that programming and space in that particular cultural venue. I don't think there's a day or evening that goes by that that facility isn't used. It is fantastic to see life being brought to that. Likewise, the Whitehorse wharf — there too we're working with the Department of Tourism and Culture. I know there have been some discussions with the Yukon Arts Centre, as well, and perhaps collaborating on a similar partnership to bring life to the Whitehorse wharf.

We are into the final components of the Whitehorse waterfront as we speak because, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, landscaping will be complete and we'll continue to work with our respective stakeholders in programming for the wharf and coordinating that use in collaboration with Tourism and Culture, because they are the ones who work very closely with many of the arts organizations throughout the City of Whitehorse in providing programming — Arts in the Park, the member opposite made reference to — and working with the City of Whitehorse on doing just that. There are many opportunities available for the wharf as an additional gathering place,

bringing vitality to a cultural space that I believe will be readily used by many different stakeholders in the years to come.

Likewise, we have made many different investments along the waterfront, such as the expansion of the MacBride Museum in collaboration with Canada. We have relocated the roundhouse and refurbished that and it now houses the Miles Canyon Historical Railway Society. We extended the trolley and have made significant improvements on trail expansion and networks and most important, we have showcased the Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre along the Whitehorse waterfront. What a strategic partnership that has been. It is a very important place that tells the story of the Kwanlin Dun First Nation over the many years and is really becoming a community gathering place for many different stakeholders.

We couldn't be more proud of the millions and millions of dollars of investment and being able to leverage those investments with many other governments and stakeholders. Likewise, Carcross waterfront — everything from the boat launch, the dock, the Carcross carving facility, the pedestrian bridge, the viewing deck, making restroom facilities available, the *SS Tutshi* memorial, the gateway pavilion, providing additional restrooms for visitors coming through, landscaping improvements — there are many investments made in the Southern Lakes region.

It is making a difference for visitors and residents alike and it has also helped revitalize the waterfront while improving infrastructure available for local visitors. So all told, over \$7 million has been invested in infrastructure improvements in Carcross. That was made available under another federal infrastructure fund, Canada's strategic infrastructure fund — that and the MRIF, both of which have come to an end. I'm very pleased that we were able to take advantage of that and we look forward to celebrating with the community of Carcross some of the developments that they have added to the downtown core through Carcross-Tagish First Nation and also look forward to the grand opening of the wharf later on this summer.

Ms. Stick: With regard to the wharf — and to the whole Whitehorse waterfront — I think the improvements over the last number of years have been remarkable, from starting at Rotary Peace Park with the kids park, new washroom facilities and right down to Shipyards Park, where there are public performance areas, gathering places, fire pits and a sliding hill in the winter.

I think those improvements have been remarkable. Having it in the summer tied together with the trolley is a great thing also.

My worry with the opening of the wharf this summer though — or my hope — would be that there are scheduled activities there — some in the evening, some in the day. I don't think anybody who has lived in Whitehorse doesn't wonder or have concerns for the tourists who are wandering our Main Street and looking for something to do in the evenings. So often, many of our businesses are closed. People want to be able to get out and walk if they have been on a bus or a plane all day, but they also want to feel safe. Unless we bring activities and people to these areas — people don't feel safe if it's just empty and there is no one around. People will not feel comfort-

able walking along those areas and I've heard that from tourists who stick to Main Street and Second Avenue because they feel there are more people around and they feel safer.

I think it's very important that, if there is going to be programming, that it be ready to go for this summer. I think the improvements along the waterfront have been great, but unless we actually attract people to these areas, why did we do it? For me, that's important. You mentioned the Arts Centre possibly and the Department of Tourism and Culture — I hope those discussions are successful because the Arts Centre has done wonderful things with the Old Fire Hall. It's good to see so many activities, but it would also be good to see local artisans with little stands or more permanent types of displays that would be able to go down there. We've seen that — when I was at a FCM conference in Montreal, I remember being down on their waterfront and they use sea-cans and had created these wonderful bike rentals, t-shirt shops, et cetera, with these cargo boxes that you see on trains and on trucks.

They were perfect. They had designed them or modified them to be open to the public, and they brought them in during the spring and plugged them in and set them up, and at the end of the tourist season they picked them up and put them away in storage until next summer. I think there are lots of creative ideas out there — ways to bring those kinds of activities to the waterfront — and I think we have to keep looking at those and there are gaps. So if we want to be able to attract people, there has to be things along the way to do that.

I apologize if I'm jumping around a bit, but I did want to go back to something I missed earlier, and that was with FireSmart. Many of the communities are involved in FireSmart and use those monies to hire local people and make their communities safer. A number of years ago, when I was on city council here in Whitehorse, we were presented with a report about the fire dangers around Whitehorse itself, and some of the community residential associations have tapped into the FireSmart programs. I know Riverdale — we're kind of on our last leg of what we have to do to FireSmart Riverdale.

In that presentation that was given to Whitehorse City Council, there was a lot of concern about the prevailing south winds coming up and really doing some severe damage to Whitehorse. There were areas that are not covered by community associations and are not covered — even outside of the city boundaries. Whitehorse would have a lot to lose if a big fire came through here, as would any community. I'm just wondering if the government is in any kind of discussion with the city about other areas within municipalities that might not be attended to by a community association that would be looking at implementing FireSmart?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Going back to the wharf, I would point out that it was actually our government that did go to work with the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce and the Yukon Arts Centre in bringing vitality to the Old Fire Hall. It was really a recommendation of bringing life to some of our heritage buildings.

I believe we're investing some \$150,000 a year in support of those activities. We have made a great investment and I think it is paying off. That is why I had thought of having a

discussion with the Yukon Arts Centre and the Department of Tourism and Culture in engaging those who are in the know and know how to do a great job. So we are engaging with them. Some of the features of the wharf are actually built-in tent tie-downs. You can have a built-in tent if you want. There's the availability of power and lighting, so all of the mechanisms are there. Of course the potential and the intent is to have a vibrant gathering space for the tourism, the cultural and the business sectors, all in support of a revitalized waterfront.

We continue to make the best use of the potential and to bring activities to the waterfront, so when one looks at Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre, Shipyards Park and Rotary Peace Park, there is quite a network and quite a flurry of activity going on and there are great future opportunities.

With respect to the member opposite's questions regarding FireSmart, I just wanted to say that this is a great program that has been doing some really good work in collaboration with communities over the years. We have seen added resources being dedicated to this particular program over the years and it has really made a difference. Just recently I got to see first-hand some of the recent work done by the Copper Ridge Community Association and great work indeed. I thank the Copper Ridge Neighbourhood Association — in particular Damien Burns who is doing a great job as the FireSmart coordinator for the association.

A significant amount of work in terms of fire abatement over the years has been done in all corners of the territory. It has also led to additional jobs and has added capacity within many First Nation and municipal governments. It continues to be heavily subscribed.

Madam Chair, seeing the time, I move that the Chair report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. Taylor 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 a 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 5:27 p.m.

The following document was filed April 22, 2013:

33-1-48

Dawson City Community Hospital and Health Services Facility, Artwork at: letter (dated April 18, 2013) to Minister Graham, Minister of Health and Social Services from Jason Bilsky, CA, Chief Executive Officer, Yukon Hospital Corporation (Graham)