

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, May 8, 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 recognition of Speech and Hearing Awareness Month

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I rise in the House today to pay tribute to professionals working to improve the quality of life for those who live with speech and hearing challenges. May is Speech and Hearing Awareness Month. It is a month dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of speech and hearing and the communication challenges that one in 10 Canadians experience because of speech and hearing difficulties.

Many of us take our ability to communicate for granted, yet the ability to speak and hear is much more vital to our everyday lives than most of us realize. Quality of life can be severely impacted if a person cannot communicate easily. Here in Yukon we are fortunate to have access to professionals such as speech language pathologists and audiologists, who can help diagnose and then mitigate or resolve speech and hearing challenges. In most cases, the earlier the detection, the better.

Young children can especially benefit significantly from early detection and support and we continue to make great strides in detecting problems early. Every child born in Yukon receives a neonatal hearing screening. Last year alone, Hearing Services conducted more than 350 neonatal screenings and 550 child hearing assessments. The Child Development Centre also offers the Follow Along program where infants and toddlers are screened for major milestone developments in speech and hearing.

These programs help ensure any problems are detected as soon as possible.

I would also like to acknowledge a new and innovative project that the Yukon government introduced late last year. We are the first jurisdiction in Canada to directly employ an accredited American Sign Language interpreter to provide ongoing and wide-ranging interpretation services to deaf community members. This two-year pilot project focuses on health care, employment and daily living communication needs. It provides an opportunity for the Yukon deaf community to communicate with others and gives other Yukoners a chance to get to know members of this vibrant culture. As one member of the deaf community recently noted, "Because of this program, I am proud to be a Yukoner." We are very pleased to be supporting this project.

Please join me in acknowledging the dedication and hard work of our American Sign Language interpreter and our speech, language and hearing professionals. I hope this occasion is a reminder to all Yukoners to take action if they suspect a speech or hearing problem in themselves or a loved one.

I'd like to take the opportunity to welcome members of the deaf community who have joined us in the gallery today to take in today's legislative proceedings.

They are doing so with the assistance of the workplace diversity employment office's American Sign Language interpreter Amanda Smith. Joining us today are Elke and Gerard Tremblay, Susan Smith, Lisa Rawlings-Bird and Debra Thibodeau.

Applause

In recognition of Mental Health Week

Hon. Mr. Graham: I rise in the House today to acknowledge Mental Health Week, which is from May 6 to 12 this year. This year, an emphasis has been placed on youth mental health, and I would like to take the opportunity to encourage people to talk, reflect, and engage with others on all issues relating to mental health. Mental health is connected to an individual's overall health. Just as we have to nurture and look after our physical health, we also have to do the same for our mental health. It is important to know that mental wellness is more than simply not having mental illnesses — it's a state of well-being.

Research shows that creating more balance in our lives and taking the time for exercise, eating well and participating in social activities not only nurtures our physical selves, but greatly improves our mental health.

Mental wellness is when we flourish, Mr. Speaker, and in return, this positively impacts our lives in a number of ways. Flourishing is about experiencing more positive than negative emotions; it's about allowing yourself to become deeply absorbed in an activity you love to the point that time seems to almost stand still. It's about feeling more connected by engaging and capitalizing on positive relationships. It's about serving something greater than you and nurturing things that have great meaning to you. It's about that sense of well-being you feel when you have accomplished a goal that you've set for yourself.

Last year we launched the Pathways to Wellness project, which was an initiative to improve the health and well-being of all Yukoners by focusing specifically on children and families. Pathways looked at building a common understanding of the factors that influence health and what works when it comes to improving the health and well-being of individuals, families and whole communities.

I encourage Yukoners to visit the Pathways to Wellness website at <http://www.yukonwellness.ca> for up-to-date practical information on how to improve health and well-being. Sign up for e-tips on wellness and start conversations about wellness with friends and family.

I'd also like to acknowledge the work that is already being done by so many Yukoners to increase awareness of the impor-

tance of mental health and to find ways for all of us to improve our health and well-being, both physically and mentally.

I'd also like to take the opportunity to note a great example of what two young Yukoners, both in their early twenties, are doing this summer for this cause. Quinn and Keenan Dennehy of Whitehorse will be travelling across Canada to assist their uncle and aunt, Kerry and Ginny Dennehy of Whistler, B.C., who are riding their bikes across the country to raise money and promote awareness of mental health.

The Dennehys lost their son Kelty due to a suicide brought on by depression. Subsequently, they established the Kelty Patrick Dennehy Foundation, which is dedicated to preventing depression-related suicide in young people. They have raised more than \$5 million since 2001 and are entering a whole new phase of their fundraising with this cross-Canada ride. This project alone has already raised more than \$500,000 and it's just getting started.

I want to commend the Dennehys, including Kerry and Ginny of Whistler and Quinn and Keenan Dennehy of Whitehorse — and some of us may remember Keenan, who also served as a page in this Legislature — both of whom are from Whitehorse, for their dedication to this critically important cause.

I urge all Yukoners and all members of this House to take a few minutes this week to think about how we can add more balance to our lives. The state of our mental health cannot be ignored, and we must take the time to care for it, just as we take the time to care for our physical health.

Mr. Silver: I rise today on behalf of the Liberal caucus, the Official Opposition and the member of the Third Party to also recognize Mental Health Week.

Mental health is not selective. It affects people of all ages, education and income levels, religion and cultures. It is affected by many factors, including how we live, our environment, genetics, our income and education level, our relationships with family and our relationships with friends.

This year the Canadian Mental Health Association is focusing on the topic of youth and mental health, promoting the theme of "Mental health for all".

Mental illness is increasingly threatening our lives and the lives of our children and our youth. It is estimated that between 10 and 20 percent of Canadian youth are affected by mental illness or disorder. Today, approximately five percent of male youth and 12 percent of female youth aged 12 to 19 have experienced a major depressive episode, and Canada's youth suicide rates are the third highest in the industrialized world. Mental illness in our youth is real, and it is widespread. With the recent focus on bullying, especially among our youth, we absolutely cannot ignore the mental health issues that are often at the root of the problem for both bullies and the victims.

Talking about mental health should be just as much a part of parenting as talking about sex, drugs or drinking. The earlier we get into the conversation and get it going, the better. It is also important that we try to reach them before a problem arises. Mental Health Week is a perfect time to get that conversation going. We need to increase awareness of youth mental

health and mental illness by providing information, resources and practical strategies and advice required by young people, their parents, caregivers and teachers. In doing so, we can address youth mental health issues. Mental health means feeling good about who you are, having balance in your life and your thinking, and being able to respond constructively to life's highs and life's lows.

Having healthy relationships with family, friends and co-workers is vital to having good mental health. Not only can loved ones be there to lean on and help people get through the hard times, but they can also build self-confidence and give a sense of well-being. Maintaining good mental health in today's hectic and stressful society is a challenge. We know that our thinking affects us. It is tied to how we feel emotionally and physically. It also affects how we decide to deal with things. Practising more balanced thinking can not only help people respond to life's events and relationships better, but it can also improve our confidence and our self-esteem. We are all touched in some way by mental health issues, directly or indirectly through a family member, a friend or a colleague.

Mental Health Week is an opportunity to raise awareness, to challenge preconceived notions of mental illness and to reduce the stigma and discrimination surrounding labels of mental health. We believe that people are more than their illnesses. Hope is the catalyst to the recovering process, providing the essential and motivational messages of a better future.

Crucial in achieving recovery is self-acceptance and regaining belief in oneself, moving beyond labels and focusing on individual strengths to build on through our journey toward wellness.

Mr. Speaker, we would like to recognize and thank the many caregivers, health care professionals, counsellors and front-line workers for the care, dedication, support and hope they offer to the people and the families dealing with mental health issues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In recognition of Hunger Awareness Week

Ms. Stick: I rise today on behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly to recognize Hunger Awareness Week, May 6 to 10, and to pay tribute to those who work and volunteer in our community food banks. The purpose of this week is to raise public awareness about the solvable issue of hunger in Canada. Hunger hits much closer to home than many Canadians realize. More than one-quarter of Canadians have reported being worried about how they will afford to buy food for themselves and/or their families at some point during the last year. This is a shocking statistic. In communities nationwide, complex factors such as health, education and employment are directly impacting Canadians' ability to feed themselves and their families. Hunger could very much be a hidden issue, and the number of people forced to live with it is often underestimated. Again, the reality becomes strikingly clear, when more than 40 percent of Canadians report knowing someone who has had to use a food bank.

In Whitehorse, and now increasingly in the communities, food banks are becoming a reality for more and more individuals and families. Every month, the Whitehorse Food Bank

serves more than 1,300 people. That is more than three times the number they had planned for when they started.

We can make a positive impact during Hunger Awareness Week. We can donate food or money. We can volunteer our time at a food bank. We can spread the word about Hunger Awareness Week through Facebook or Twitter. We can also show our support by going on a fast on May 8, Hunger Awareness Day, which is today. I realize that it is too late probably to do that, but maybe we could pause and think. What have we already eaten today and what will we go home to tonight? Then we need to think about those going without or those relying on a food bank to fill the gaps in accessibility to food. Thank you.

In recognition of the 20th anniversary of Blood Ties Four Directions Centre

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the Legislative Assembly to pay tribute to the 20th anniversary of the Blood Ties Four Directions centre, a non-profit organization that provides support and education regarding HIV and AIDS and hepatitis C. Blood Ties has been an integral part of the health community and a cornerstone in our understanding of HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C in Whitehorse for 20 years.

In 1993, Blood Ties was established by the Yukon government as part of the family life education program and dealt solely with HIV/AIDS. Eight years later, in recognizing the need, the centre's mission expanded to include serving people living with hepatitis C. Blood Ties offers support and counselling for those living with these illnesses as well as harm-reduction services, education and information workshops for the community at large.

The centre has grown from a staff of two to six full-time and four part-time staff members. There are many accomplishments to highlight.

Blood Ties has been a major player in the operation of the Outreach van since the beginning. Today, in partnership with Many Rivers, the Kwanlin Dun health centre and FASSY, the Outreach van plays a vital role in the health of at-risk citizens. They offer harm reduction, counselling, nursing care and a warm meal. Last year, through their harm-reduction program, the centre distributed 46,000 condoms and exchanged 26,000 needles. Blood Ties, in partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations, has done considerable outreach in rural and aboriginal communities, educating people and dispelling the myths about HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C.

Last July, Blood Ties completed their first housing project, the Steve Cardiff House. This tiny, one-person home was designed to offer supportive, transitional housing for their clientele. It's a hand-up solution as their clients are supported in looking for longer term accommodation. Their first client moved in in September of last year, and I'm so pleased to share with everyone that this client has successfully moved into long-term permanent housing. Most importantly, not only does Blood Ties educate the public to the realities, prevention and understanding of HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C, they offer their clients community. With open arms, understanding and care, they help people learn to live with their illnesses.

The Minister of Health and Social Services asked me to relay his gratitude and has been asked to speak at their anniversary celebration. On behalf of the Assembly, I wish to recognize and celebrate the vision and many achievements of the Blood Ties Four Directions centre. I ask the members to join me in welcoming the executive director, Patricia Bacon; board member Larry Kwiat; housing advocate Heather Ashthorn; and HIV/HCB counsellor Leigh Ayton.

Applause

In recognition of the Battle of the Atlantic

Speaker: The Speaker will do a tribute on behalf of the House. On September 3, 1939, a German submarine sank the Montreal-bound passenger ship *SS Athenia* west of Ireland and started the Battle of the Atlantic. Across Canada, the 70th anniversary of the single longest battle in Canadian history was marked this past Sunday, May 5. On that Sunday, thousands of members of the Royal Canadian Navy, Royal Canadian Air Force and the Army gathered in Halifax.

Also in attendance, just offshore, was *HMCS Sackville*, Canada's only surviving Second World War corvette. Its part in the ceremony was to lay wreaths and to commit to sea veterans who had recently died. The ashes of 22 naval officers and merchant marines were scattered at sea. This burial at sea is a long-time naval tradition, which speaks to the dedication and commitment of these sailors to the Royal Canadian Navy, but also, and most importantly, to their fellow sailors.

The Battle of the Atlantic was fought between 1939 and 1945. Like the Battle of Vimy Ridge in World War I, the Battle of the Atlantic was a defining conflict of the Second World War and a significant period in Canadian history. At stake was the survival of Great Britain and the liberation of western Europe from German occupation. Britain could be saved from starvation and strengthened into the launching pad for the liberation of Europe only by the delivery of supplies, troops, and equipment from Canada and the United States. The friendly territory closest to Great Britain was Canada's east coast and Newfoundland and, in 1939, they were the front line of the Battle of the Atlantic.

At the beginning of this battle, Canada's navy had only six destroyers and 13 ships in total defending the two coasts. By 1945, the Canadian fleet had grown to 373 fighting vessels, making Canada's navy the third largest in the world after the United States and Great Britain.

For the last few months of the war, the Royal Canadian Navy had a strength of over 95,000 personnel — 6,000 of them were members of the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service. The fleet committed to the Battle of the Atlantic included 270 ocean escort warships. The most important measure of their success was the safe passage of over 25,000 merchant vessels under Canadian escort. These cargo vessels delivered nearly 165 million tonnes of supplies.

In the course of the operation, the Royal Canadian Navy sank or shared in the destruction of 31 enemy submarines. For its part, the Royal Canadian Navy lost 14 warships to U-boat attacks in the North Atlantic. Some 2,000 members of the

Royal Canadian Navy who lost their lives died in combat in the Atlantic.

Proportionally, Canadian merchant seamen suffered much more heavily, losing one in 10 killed among the 12,000 who served in the Canadian and Allied merchant vessels. During World War II, Yukoners of all stripes volunteered for service with some serving with the Merchant Marines and the Royal Canadian Navy.

Please stand for a moment of silence to pay tribute to those who have lost their lives during the Battle of the Atlantic and those who survived but have passed away since.

Moment of silence observed

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

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Graham: Under section 103(1) of the *Workers' Compensation Act*, I wish to present two copies of the 2012 annual report of the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Pursuant to Standing Order 37(4), I have a legislative return. It is in response to a written question from April 4, 2013, Written Question No. 4. The written document in response is the agreement between Shaanxi province of the People's Republic of China and the Yukon Territory of Canada on the establishment of a sister province/territory relationship.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?
Petitions.
Are there any bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motion?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I would just like to acknowledge Roddy Dale who has joined us in the Legislative Assembly. He is part of the hearing impaired group who came in late. I didn't have an opportunity to introduce him before. I would like the House to recognize that he was just here.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I give notice of the following motion:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to section 2 of the *Ombudsman Act*, recommends that the Commissioner in Executive Council appoint Diane McLeod-McKay as the Ombudsman of Yukon for a term of five years, effective June 10, 2013.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue to support the Yukon Conservation Data Centre to gather, maintain and distribute information on wildlife and ecological communities of conservation concern in the territory.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue to take action to prevent the spread of chronic wasting disease in the Yukon.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to extend the interim electrical rebate, which saves customers up to \$26 a month on their power bills, until April 30, 2017, in order to protect Yukoners from rising power rates.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to increase the level of resources and coordination of search and rescue services in Tombstone Park.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Liquefied natural gas

Ms. Hanson: Today is the last day of the 60-day, quote, "consultation" on the draft gas processing plant regulation. Under the Yukon Party, there has been very little long-term planning about Yukon's energy future. There has, however, been a large investment of taxpayer dollars to create background material to support the development of a natural gas industry in Yukon. The introduction to the summary of the draft gas processing plant regulation states, "natural gas from the Eagle Plain basin in northern Yukon can meet Yukon's energy requirements for the foreseeable future, is likely less expensive than diesel fuel and has 40% less greenhouse gas emissions."

Yukoners are bringing forward evidence daily that challenges those assumptions, the stats on greenhouse gases being the easiest. Why is the government rushing through regulations for gas-processing plants when it's not at all clear that gas is the best solution for Yukon's energy needs?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Once again, the Leader of the NDP is quite simply wrong and does not seem to understand the facts of the matter. The Kotaneelee gas processing plant has been in existence for many years. Under the current regulatory structure, nothing prevents the two utilities that are looking at using liquefied natural gas for electricity production from doing so, including the privately owned Yukon Electrical Company, which is in the process right now of going through YESAA with a project in the Watson Lake area.

The current regulatory structure does allow the use of natural gas to produce electricity. As I have indicated before, mines are also looking at the possibility of either converting diesel generation to biofuel, that being diesel that is mixed with natural gas, or for new mines, the possibility of setting up with

natural gas generation instead of diesel, as has typically been the case.

I noted last fall, in introducing the amendments to the *Yukon Oil and Gas Act*, that we would be bringing forward these gas-processing regulations. These regulations will strengthen the ability of Yukon government staff to regulate the use of liquefied natural gas, if that occurs, for electricity production or for other storage or processing.

Ms. Hanson: It is important to plan for future energy demands, we agree, but it's also critically important to include Yukoners, to provide cost-benefit analyses, and to look at all viable options. Part of the rationale for rushing through these gas processing plant regulations is there is an imminent, steep, increased demand for energy. Just two days ago, for example, on May 6, the minister, in speaking about Victoria Gold, said — and I quote: “Pending approval, mine construction is scheduled to proceed later this year. The project is expected to create about 400 jobs at full operation.” On the very same day we learned from Victoria Gold that the best interest of the shareholders is not to raise cash for construction activity.

Will the minister provide the needs analysis that outlines the immediate demand for natural gas that is used to justify pushing ahead with its development?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I'm not sure whether the Leader of the NDP doesn't understand the facts or chooses not to reflect them in this House. Once again, she is wrong in the statement she has made. As I indicated before and have said on previous occasions, nothing prevents the two utilities that are looking at the possibility of using natural gas for electricity production from doing so under the current regulatory structure. The gas processing regulations will strengthen the ability of government staff to regulate and modernize the tools they have at their disposal to enforce appropriate standards with anyone who might either process natural gas or use it for the production of electricity.

Mines, such as the Casino project, has been working with Yukon Energy, and they are planning to use natural gas for that mine if it comes into production.

The member's statement about Victoria Gold — first of all, she has her days wrong and, second of all, if she were paying attention during previous Question Periods, as I have indicated before, while their plan has included using grid power for electricity, in fact, there is the ability for both Cabinet and the Yukon Utilities Board to exercise discretion in this matter. We have been in discussions with Victoria Gold about the possibility of having on-site electricity production done by themselves with no direct involvement by government or its corporations.

Ms. Hanson: You know, this Yukon Party's build-it-and-they-will-come approach is a proven failure. Last year we saw changes to the *Yukon Oil and Gas Act* rammed through in a divisive way that may jeopardize industrial activity in the Yukon. This spring the government is pressing ahead on gas processing plant regulations based on its own study of *Energy for Yukon: The Natural Gas Option*, a study dated November 2010 and cited in their own paper.

That study says, and I quote: “Pipeline regulations are currently being drafted and will be followed by Gas Plant regula-

tions.” Government documents say that the next two steps are the gas processing plant regulations and pipelines. Yukoners are telling us, “Not so fast; show us all the evidence.” Will the minister revisit his position on LNG as the solution, present all the facts about all energy options and begin work now on long-term renewable energy solutions?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: The Leader of the Official Opposition is correct — build it and they will come. That is what is happening after 10 years of the Yukon Party government. We have 10 successful years. Of those thousands of people who left the territory during the NDP and Liberal administrations in the late 1990s and early 2000s, we have had 6,500 people return and 4,000 new jobs created. Retail sales continue to reach record highs every year, mineral production has gone from zero to \$450 million in 2012. Mineral exploration is at \$1.3 billion in the last 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is absolutely right — Yukon Party government for 10 years and, as a result of that, we have had an economy unlike any other in this country.

Question re: Renewable energy strategy

Ms. White: Despite our repeated requests, the minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources either cannot or will not provide a comparative cost analysis of the various energy options he is considering. The need to shift away from fossil fuels is evident: for our water, for the climate, for the economy and, most importantly, for the next generations. We have to shift toward renewable energy. We will ask questions of the Yukon Energy Corporation when they come; today we are focusing on the political will it takes to shift to renewable energy. The minister advises us to look across North America for information on natural gas, and I have advice as well: Look locally and across the circumpolar north to get and share up-to-date expert information about renewable energy sources that can and do work in our climate.

Can the government identify one consultation it has had with a local or circumpolar expert on non-fossil-fuel-based renewable energy?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, I'm not sure whether the Member for Takhini-Kopper King has not been paying attention or doesn't understand the work that has been done by the Yukon Energy Corporation. They've done extensive planning, spent millions of dollars, in fact, on researching renewable energy options. We have under this government invested millions of dollars in developing renewable energy options: the \$71-million federal investment coupled with territorial investment in the Mayo B hydro project — the largest single federal investment under the green energy fund; \$5 million of federal investment in the Aishihik third turbine, supported by another \$8 million of Yukon Energy Corporation support. Those are investments in renewable energy development. I'm not sure whether the member doesn't understand this or it just doesn't fit with her narrative.

When talking about numbers, the Yukon Energy Corporation and its staff have done the analysis. The member has repeatedly questioned in this House and cast doubt on whether they are honestly presenting the facts to Yukoners as they un-

derstand them. This government has confidence in the boards of the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation and in their staff. It's unfortunate that the NDP does not.

Ms. White: My questions continue to be for the minister, the minister in charge of energy. Although it may not be easy to answer the question we asked about the cost per kilowatt hour of energy being produced at Mayo B, it needs to be answered. Data regarding value for money for Mayo B needs to be part of any informed debate about planning Yukon's energy future. Renewables like solar and wind are too easily dismissed by this government. We are asking for the evidence so that a fair comparison can be made.

A whole lot of government money went into Mayo B — a renewable energy. For an equivalent number of dollars invested, local innovators with solar power have estimated what could be achieved and it looks very promising. Current updated evidence from across the north shows that combinations of solar and wind energies could be viable economically as well as environmentally. When and how will this government get serious about non-fossil-fuel-based energy?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: As I've illustrated to the member opposite, we've put more money into developing renewable energy options by far than any other type of energy option: the significant investment in Mayo B, the Aishihik third turbine, plus millions of dollars spent by Yukon Energy Corporation in looking at other potential renewable energy options. Money has been spent by Yukon Energy Corporation on researching wind options. I know the Member for Takhini-Kopper King has a fixation on wind.

They have spent money on projects such as Ferry Hill and researching the feasibility of that. The Yukon Energy Corporation has also provided resources to the project that is being done right now with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations that has also seen federal investment in that in looking at the feasibility of a biomass electricity project.

The member either does not understand the facts or is not adjusting her narrative accordingly. Millions have been spent on renewable energy options, far more than have been spent on fossil fuels. I would remind the member that talking about the comparison of natural gas to diesel — we're not just talking about our numbers; we're talking about numbers from other Canadian jurisdictions.

I know the member and her leader think they know better than the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States, but we place a lot more credence on what the EPA says than what the NDP says.

Ms. White: The only fixation appears to be the minister's desire to belittle this side of the House. On April 30, the minister said, "As it comes down to the issue of specific projects, in fact, I would point out to the members that no decision has been made yet to actually put in liquefied natural gas generation equipment. It is something that is being looked at and both the Energy Corporation and government have been quite open about that fact, but that decision itself has not actually been made." The decision has not been made. That's great. So let's hit restart, refresh the discussion about Yukon's energy

future, only this time include the latest information about renewable options, including solar and wind.

Before supporting liquefied natural gas generation equipment, will the minister commit to making a public comparative cost analysis of both LNG and a combination of renewables, such as micro-hydro, solar, and wind energies?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, what we see here from the NDP is a failure to reflect the facts in their narrative. The members have consistently called into question the work done by the boards and the staff of Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation. They will be here later this month — next week — to answer questions. The members can hear directly from them and they can also pose their accusations about those individuals' work to them directly.

I find the NDP line of questioning in this very unfortunate and unfair to those who have done this work; in fact, Yukon Energy has had a very public process, planning and a number of public charettes. They have provided the information about comparative costs of energy options, but when pointing out that natural gas provides lower emissions than diesel when it comes to carbon emissions, that isn't just Yukon government saying this. It is the Environmental Protection Agency of the United States, as well, and in fact the U.S. has done more to reduce its CO2 emissions through the use of liquefied natural gas instead of coal and has done more to reduce their carbon emissions through that than any other method.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we have more confidence in Yukon Energy Corporation than in the NDP and we have a lot more confidence in the EPA than in the NDP.

Question re: Electrical rate stabilization fund

Mr. Silver: Earlier this week, I asked the minister responsible for energy about the new hydro projects. He didn't want to talk about the new projects. After 10 years in office, the Yukon Party has no new hydro projects on the table ready to go. He did want to talk about rising energy rates in Yukon. I welcome this conversation. We know that power rates will be increasing by close to 12 percent under this minister's watch as a result of recent Yukon Utilities Board hearings. The interim electrical rebate provides residential customers with a maximum rebate of \$26.62 per month for the first 1,000 kilowatt hours of power used. It is automatically applied to residential power bills.

The Yukon Party government rebate has been in place since 2009 and has been renewed annually in the last number of years. Given the recent 12-percent increase in bills, the need for this rebate is greater than ever. What is the future of this rebate? Will it go beyond March 31, 2014?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: As I have indicated in the past, we are considering the future of the interim electrical rebate. There's a reason it was called an "interim" electrical rebate. I would point out to the member that it was interesting the member laid out the Liberal Party's position earlier today, which is to continue subsidizing energy and to continue distorting the marketplace through continuing this subsidy for multi-years. In fact, the annual cost of the interim electrical rebate is about \$3.5 million in taxpayer subsidy for energy consumption.

Clearly, the Liberal Party supports distorting the marketplace through continuing this artificial subsidy. We recognize the impact on rates, and that is why we have continued it, but there is a reason it's called the "interim" electrical rebate, and we do not envision it being left in place forever.

Mr. Silver: Clearly the minister forgets campaign promises and campaign speeches, where all three parties supported this interim rebate.

A lack of planning has left the government scrambling to keep up and, as a result, Yukoners are paying higher electricity bills. A 12-percent increase is being rolled out as we speak. With regard to the numbers that the minister is providing on how we compare to other cities, a quick look at Yukon Energy's website shows that he is wrong. The bill for 1,000 kilowatts is at least \$130, according to the Yukon Electrical Company, and almost \$140 according to Yukon Energy. Without the IER in place, bills would be even higher.

As demand continues to increase, the situation is only going to get worse. The government has failed to ensure that supply keeps up with demand. The result is higher prices. Is the government willing to commit to a three-year extension of the IER to protect ratepayers?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: No, we are not going to commit to a long-term subsidy of electrical costs, and I would point out that the numbers I gave the member were directly from the Yukon Energy Corporation, so the member claims to have Googled something else.

I will allow staff of the Yukon Energy Corporation to explain the most current numbers in this area.

In fact, the Yukon's energy costs compared to Toronto, Regina, Edmonton, Iqaluit, Yellowknife — as just a few examples — are significantly lower for the first 1,000-kilowatt hours. In fact, in the case of Yellowknife, they are significantly less than 50 percent of the cost of what it costs in Yellowknife for that. We do recognize the impact of electrical rates. That is one of the reasons that we have continued the interim electrical rebate in place, which I would point out is in fact the after-effect of the NDP's legacy, and the massive impact that they left on our power bills is still being felt. The interim electrical rebate is in fact the ongoing effect of the NDP's previous time and effort and their previous success in tanking the Yukon's economy.

Mr. Silver: Let's be clear, this subsidy is the Yukon Party subsidy. They're in power so we have the subsidy. We're clear that we like it. What is their position? One of the reasons that the Yukon power bill is going up is because the government hasn't done enough to find new sources of hydro power. With hydro we can produce electricity at approximately 10 cents per kilowatt, but diesel is 35 cents per kilowatt. The interim electrical rebate protects ratepayers from even higher electrical bills. The minister has referred to it in this House as an artificial subsidy and clearly he does not like it.

Despite the minister's objection, the Yukon Party continues to renew the subsidy which saves Yukoners more than \$26 per month on their power bills. I am looking for simply a long-term commitment to this rebate. Why is the minister so unwilling to continue this subsidy for another three years?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: The Liberal Party is suggesting that taxpayers continue to take out of one pocket to fund ratepayers in the other. We have continued the subsidy temporarily on an interim basis because we recognize the potential impact of rate charges. But when the Leader of the Liberal Party stands up and characterizes the rate increase approved by the Yukon Utilities Board as somehow suggesting a failure to manage energy supply adequately, it really is a very fanciful notion that he's presenting to Yukoners.

Yukoners know how much the consumer price index for all products goes up on an annual basis. Yukoners know how much their gas prices have gone up in the past 10 years. To suggest that there would be no incremental costs for increased cost of equipment, increased cost of labour — that that should never be reflected in your power bills — well, that is not a very realistic notion of the world. In fact, the increase approved by the Yukon Utilities Board is unfortunate, but it's also unfortunate that food prices, gas prices and the cost of consumable goods and building equipment go up, but it is reality.

It is a moderate increase. As a result of our legacy hydro and as a result of our continued significant investment in renewable energy resources, including Mayo B and the Aishihik third turbine, we are continuously among the lowest hydro rates and electricity rates in the country.

Question re: Old Crow winter road

Mr. Elias: I'm pleased to stand up in the House today and thank the government for the funds it has committed to building a winter road to Old Crow in 2014. Mahsi' cho. It has been almost a decade since the last winter road and the new one will only be available to use for about two months next winter, all conditions permitting. That's a very narrow window of opportunity. The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, along with every Old Crow citizen, business and agency have all been hard at work for years planning how to most effectively use that winter road, and I'm sure the Yukon Party government has too.

So will a minister please detail the projects that the government is planning on implementing and completing in Old Crow when the 2014 winter road becomes a reality?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: It does bring me pleasure to rise in the House and speak to the Old Crow winter road and to the great working relationship that we have with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. This is an ongoing project. I spoke earlier in our last session about the lack of snow, which was very unfortunate. I don't want to bring up that we're praying for snow yet — we want summer first.

Mr. Speaker, we are working with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation as we speak. We just finished meeting on April 26 and the draft contribution agreement is in place.

The thing to remember here is that Old Crow is the only community in the Yukon that does not have a road link. How important it is for this government, and I know for the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin and for the residents of Old Crow, to have that road access. So for us on this side of the House, I have tasked out and work with every other minister and our departments on issues within Old Crow where, with the road, we can get in there and take some stuff that needs to come out there

and bring new stuff in where applicable. This is a commitment. You have seen it in my budget — \$700,000 — and we'll look forward to working with it and getting this project done next winter.

Mr. Elias: The last thing any of us wants to be thinking of right now is next winter, but I have to. I don't want planning to go sideways, because I have heard about those meetings that have been conducted. It's important that we wrap up planning details far in advance of the winter road's establishment to maximize our investment. With the cost-savings in view, Yukon Electrical, the RCMP, Porcupine Enterprises, Parks Canada and, obviously, the Vuntut Gwitchin government are already preparing to take advantage of the winter road to perform needed infrastructure and community upgrades.

The Yukon government, with its pride of fiscal responsibility, must be making similar plans. The opportunity for Yukon Housing to ship building materials exists. Community Services could upgrade their roadwork equipment and remove decommissioned fuel tanks and healthy, non-perishable food items and storage facilities could be trucked in affordably to counter the negative effects of the Nutrition North Canada program.

Can the minister describe how the government is already planning to take advantage of this rare cost-saving opportunity to address my constituents' well-known priorities, such as housing, a community rec plex and affordable, healthy foods?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I'm not going to get into the exact different departments because they're not my department. I know at our Highways and Public Works deputy ministers' meetings, I've had that discussion that we're going to have a road and we need to be prepared, whether it's Yukon Housing, Community Services or Highways and Public Works, whether it's equipment or building material. That's one thing that I'm looking forward to next year.

This is important and in the eyes of this government, we're committed to this project, but we're also committed to working now so we're ready for next winter. What the member opposite, the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, is bringing across is exactly what we're doing as we speak right now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Elias: That's why I'm bringing this question forward so that this government can be on record with a \$70-million surplus.

This government needs to get organized and be ready to maximize the use of the winter road. The winter road, like every other Yukon highway, will go two ways. As the government already knows, Old Crow has no intention of letting any truck leave the community empty. A considerable stockpile of metal waste, household hazardous waste, waste oils, coolants, solvents and batteries and e-waste, like computers and other electronics, has built up over the years. These materials threaten the health of residents and there is a risk of permanent land, groundwater and river contamination. All my constituents want to hear is that all of the waste metal and hazardous waste will be safely removed from our community of Old Crow.

Can the minister confirm that this will be done — yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I want to acknowledge the work of the Department of Highways and Public Works as the lead, in terms of negotiating with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation in coming up with the agreement to move forward with the road. We are certainly excited about the opportunity to do some work in a more cost-effective way with the implementation of a winter road for next winter. We know that we have various departments that have things that they want to accomplish. We also know that private industry — there are some companies that also would be involved and, of course, some departments of the federal government as well, such as the RCMP and those sorts of departments. Of course, it would be the responsibility of the government to ensure that we are coordinating that across all the departments.

That, in fact, has happened and has been happening. We have had a head start, simply because we were originally looking at putting this winter road in last year. So there has been a lot of logistical work done already, in advance of next winter. I think what we'll then be looking for is ensuring we do have enough snow in place so that this road can, in fact, go in and all the work that has been identified can, in fact, be done.

Question re: Airport runway safety

Ms. Moorcroft: The Minister of Highways and Public Works — and, for that matter, all Cabinet ministers who serve in a parliamentary democracy — are responsible for policy and budget decisions so that necessary public work gets done. I would like the minister to demonstrate a sound working knowledge of his department's activities and to be accountable in this Legislature for the direction he provides to his department officials.

The runway at Whitehorse International Airport is due to be replaced in 2015. Decision-making for large capital projects is in the hands of the government, and the multi-year capital plan indicates there is future spending in 2014-15 for Whitehorse airport terminal site and runway improvements. Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works confirm that the main runway will be redone at Whitehorse airport by 2015? Can he tell us what, if any, preparatory work is being done this year?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I thank the member opposite for the question. Exactly what the member opposite said — plans are plans, and we're planning.

I just want to get this across in the House. I'm not happy with the line of questioning that comes from the members opposite, so I want to reiterate that there have been no reported near misses at the Whitehorse airport, with the exception of an incident about three to four years ago when a Jazz aircraft failed to follow procedures and landed while maintenance staff were plowing the runway. There were no injuries. A subsequent investigation by Transport Canada suggested that irregularities in NavCanada and the pilot's procedures contributed to the incident. No fault or irregularities were found within the Whitehorse airport maintenance staff or procedures. I have said this in the House before: I am very proud of our employees who work there.

Whitehorse airport did not receive any complaints about conditions of the runway this winter. One aircraft landing was

delayed approximately 25 minutes while maintenance crews worked during a snowstorm to increase landing friction to allow the aircraft to safely land. It does snow in the Yukon. There were no known flight cancellations due to low runway friction. A search of the Canadian aviation daily occurrence reporting system did not find any incidents of aircraft overruns, near misses, maintenance issues or runway-related safety concerns. I'm very proud of the employees, and this side of the House is very proud of our employees who work at the airport. I don't know where the member —

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

Ms. Moorcroft: The minister is responsible for ensuring that public safety is paramount at all times. I would say the minister should also be listening to the questions and trying to answer them. In order to do the required work of replacing the main runway for 2015, the secondary runway will need improvements so it is functioning to the required safety standard for all anticipated air traffic.

Can the minister tell us whether he has directed his department to improve the secondary runway at the Whitehorse airport this year so it can be used safely for all traffic while the main runway replacement safety upgrades are being done next year?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: The Yukon government takes the safety of Yukoners and the travelling public very seriously and we do meet Transport Canada's safety standards and continually work to improve the safety of our airports. I work with the department all the time. Whether we're talking about the Campbell Highway or airports, and the future maintenance of the airport and upgrades that need to happen on roads, airports, buildings, this government decides what we're going to do and we pass this information on to our departments.

I'm not sure what I'm hearing from across the way.

Once they're done with closing down mining, we're going to close down airports?

Ms. Moorcroft: The minister needs to understand that questioning his direction of his department is not a criticism of public servants. He can't keep hiding behind employees for his lack of leadership. The minister hasn't answered the questions and hasn't told us if he has decided what his department is going to do. Has the minister given direction to his department to replace the main runway at the Whitehorse airport in 2015 and has the minister given direction to his department to do the work to improve the secondary runway in advance of that work? Could the minister answer the question please?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I want to recite something from *Hansard* from the member opposite: "We've heard reports from people from Marsh Lake and Mount Lorne complaining that the work on the road they drive seems to have a reduced standard of crush because they're seeing a lot of problems with the road, and they're also pointing out that they contribute to bulk traffic that does, in fact, commute to Whitehorse on a daily basis." That's accusing the department of using a different type of gravel. We use the same gravel. The member opposite has been in government a long time — a lot longer than I. I provide the direction to the department. Maybe the member

opposite should think of another career change or something like that because she's not representing her constituents —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Ms. Stick: I point to 19(g) — imputing false or unavowed motives in stating facts, and 19(i). The member opposite is imputing — it's insulting language.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Actually, I will ask the minister to retract that statement about the member getting another job. Everybody here is an elected member and honourable. Comments otherwise are not appreciated by the Speaker or the House.

Withdrawal of remark

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I retract my comment, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has elapsed. We'll now proceed with Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 449

Clerk: Motion No. 449, standing in the name of Ms. Stick.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Riverdale South

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to immediately consult with the public to determine whether subsection 50(1) of the *Employment Standards Act*, the so-called probationary period which allows workers to be terminated without cause or notice, should be amended from six to three months during the 2013 Fall Sitting of the Legislative Assembly.

Ms. Stick: I want to begin the discussion on this motion — the debate — with a story. This is a story about Victoria. She is a real Yukoner, not a fictitious person. This individual has spoken to us. She is 22, and she is a young worker. Like many young workers, she is starting out in the service and retail sector. Until recently she was working for a well-known retail outfit and was doing well, but then had a run-in with a just appointed, or new, assistant manager. This run-in and dispute with the assistant manager became ugly and Victoria was feeling harassed and unsafe, so she brought up the issue to her manager.

The manager decided Victoria had to go. There was a problem between two staff members and one had to go. She had been employed just slightly more than three months, but less than six, so there was not a requirement to give any notice or severance pay in lieu of that.

I don't know the manager; I don't know the motivation behind the firing; I don't know why communicating and resolving the issue wasn't attempted, and I don't know if the solution truly was to fire Victoria.

But I do know that the manager operated within the *Employment Standards Act*. The manager didn't need to give notice. So Victoria came to her shift ready to work that day, was summoned in by the manager and terminated and told she would be paid for that one day. She was gone; she was unemployed.

Victoria knew she had some rights as an employee and went to the Employment Standards branch. They tried to be helpful there, but told her there was not much they could do. As a young worker, she was not aware of all her rights.

Employment Standards branch pointed out she had not been working more than six months, so it was perfectly within the realm of the employer to let her go without notice and without pay.

I would submit here that what we are talking about is that individual workers, or workers in service and trades, be given the same respect we give other workers. I would submit that employers be required to give one-week's notice or pay in lieu of firing or releasing a person from their job. If we did that and if that became a law, I think there would be more reason for employers to resolve the matter and not just take the first way out, which is releasing a person without notice — you are fired; no notice; no pay.

A firing is a traumatic experience. I have gone through it myself. It impacts a person. It impacts their self-esteem, how they feel about themselves. It throws bill payment into doubt. They don't know where their next paycheque is coming from — something they had counted on.

It's especially traumatic when, through no fault of your own, you are fired and thrust into the need of finding another job. Our motion is about having a public conversation, this summer perhaps, on whether we should continue to allow workers to be terminated without cause or without notice if they've been on a job less than six months. We are saying that section 50(1) should be amended so that most employees who work three months and are terminated without cause receive one week's notice, or one week's pay. It's important to remember that what we're proposing here has no bearing on an employer's right to fire an employee; employers would still be able to fire that worker without notice if there is just cause, failure to abide by the terms of a contract, or other exemptions under section 49(1), including no notice required for seasonal workers or workers in the construction industry.

We believe that these changes should happen in the interest of basic fairness for workers, especially the young, new workers in service industries that do not have the benefit of unions. We feel it is important because the Yukon is woefully behind the rest of the country. We've looked across the country to see what other jurisdictions are doing, and we are at the bottom. Some are as little as 30 days; most are three months' probationary period.

What we are asking people to vote on is just asking for the public's opinion on this. Everyone might not agree that it

should be six months or three; that's okay. What we're asking for is that this conversation should be open to the public and let's listen to what the public has to tell us about change and whether it should happen. We should never be afraid to talk to the public about this.

What we want to talk about is just a small piece of this *Employment Standards Act*. There are many other pieces in there that are out of step with today's Yukon. Just on the issue of providing notice, those who work in construction or in seasonal occupations are exempted. I'm not sure that's a good idea.

What we want to focus on is the public conversation. Should a person working for up to six months be dismissed from their job with no notice? So it's a narrow focus; it's a conversation that we think should be held with Yukoners.

I suspect that there are plenty of Victorias out there. Maybe we will hear more voices come forward with their stories. Anecdotally, we know that when workers do not have rights or feel that they do not have rights and when there is that imbalance in favour of the employer, and when workers are in precarious employment, they don't speak out. They don't speak out on safety matters or problems in the workplace for fear of being terminated immediately. Workers, regardless of their length of employment, do have the right to refuse unsafe work. There is coverage under Occupational Safety and Health. But is this communicated effectively? That might be one of the questions.

On the Day of Mourning, there was a release from the Yukon Federation of Labour that pointed out the 1,216 workplace injuries and illnesses in 2012; 1,025 of those were accepted by the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. There were 480 cases of time lost due to illness and injury, and young workers again make up a disproportionate percentage of those injuries, with 179 claims.

We can educate young people and workers about their rights in the workplace and that it is always appropriate for them to refuse unsafe work, but we can do more. We can do more to ensure that our legislation is improved and upheld. By narrowing the probation window that allows termination without cause up to six months — if we do this, this would be one step. We can proactively hold employers to account by inspecting worksites and ensuring that the laws and regulations are being followed; that does happen and we're thankful for those staff.

Just on the note of probation, we've called it in this motion the "so-called probationary period" and this is deliberate in that this early period before notice rights are established is not really probationary according to law, but it can feel like that for workers. This is the six months where they need to prove themselves.

I can anticipate that some will argue that employers need six months to adequately assess whether a worker is any good. I'm a small business owner, and I have been fortunate to have great staff. I have not had to fire or let someone go. I know pretty quickly whether a person is going to fit into the environment, whether they can do the job and whether they require more training and guidance. That's the employer's job — to

make sure that a person has the skills or has the training to be able to do the job safely and appropriately.

Even pro-employer research that we found indicates that three months should be sufficient to not only assess the skills of the employee but to assess how the employee fits into the workplace culture. Another study of behavioural effects of probationary periods and an analysis of worker absenteeism rebuts a typical argument that in three months an employee can fake or mimic good work habits.

We do feel it's fair that employees be given a week's notice after three months. Workers always have the ability to walk off the job, and many do. It's doubtful that a change would have much impact on that. But the relationship of employment is not one of equality. Yukon laws are, more than most jurisdictions, unbalanced in the favour of the employers, as I stated.

So we believe that no employer should terminate the employment of an employee who has been employed for three consecutive months or more, unless they are given a week's notice in writing or a week's notice to that person whose period of employment is less than one year and more than three months.

It is important to remember that what we are proposing has no bearing, again, on the rights of an employer to fire an employee, as long as there is just cause, failure to abide by the terms of a contract or other exemptions.

I mentioned earlier that we're at the bottom. There are two others — New Brunswick and P.E.I. — that state six months as the period; Manitoba — 30 days; Alberta — three months; British Columbia — three months; Newfoundland — three months; Northwest Territories — three months; Nova Scotia — three months; Nunavut — 90 days; Ontario — three months; Quebec and Saskatchewan — three months.

This is a motion about consulting with the public. We do not believe that the Yukon should be stuck at the bottom of the pack. We believe that a six-month period is not a fair amount of time, and that something less than that and more in line with the rest of Canada is more appropriate. We find this current legislation, in particular this part, unfair to workers, especially the young, the new worker in the service industry, and those who do not have the representation. We hope all MLAs would support this and consider having a conversation with the public on this matter. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. McLeod: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to this motion brought forward by the MLA for Riverdale South. As is the case across Canada, Yukon's *Employment Standards Act* sets out the minimum standards that employers and employees must follow.

These standards include hours of work, minimum wage, annual vacations, general holidays, maternity and parental leave, special leave-without-pay, payment of wages and termination of employment. The act is an important piece of legislation that provides certainty and protections for most employees and employers in Yukon.

The Employment Standards branch of the Department of Community Services works diligently to ensure that both em-

ployers and employees are in compliance with these minimum standards throughout Yukon. As a matter of fact, during the 2012-13 fiscal year the Employment Standards branch fielded 5,236 inquiries, dealt with 106 formal complaints and collected \$64,000 in unpaid wages.

The section of the act referred to in this motion, more specifically section 50(1), speaks to the requirement that an employer provide notice of termination to an employee only after they have been continuously employed for more than six months. This is commonly referred to as the probationary period in the employment relationship. After six months of consecutive employment, an employer must give one week's notice in writing to the employee and this notice period increases with the number of years of employment.

I would like to note that section 50(2) of the *Employment Standards Act* also provides exactly the same notice requirements for employees to employers.

At this time an employee of less than six months may leave a job without giving written notice and must give at least one week's written notice after the probationary period ends, with the number of weeks' notice required increasing with the number of years of employment. In other words, this probationary period is the same for both parties in the employment relationship.

While not named as the probationary period in the legislation, it is commonly known by that name by both employers and employees. The probationary period provides both parties the opportunity to test-drive an employment relationship and to see if the job is a good fit for the employee and vice versa.

Employees benefit from their probationary period as they can experience the job tasks over a realistic time frame and assess whether the position is the right one for them. If the experience is not working out for any reason, the employee may choose to leave the job without giving any notice or reason for their decision in that six months.

Employers also benefit from their probationary period because it provides them with an opportunity to assess whether an employee is capable of handling the duties and responsibilities associated with their new job and is a good fit into the employer's business.

The probationary period provides the flexibility for employers to hire people who might not be a perfect job at first glance, but who can prove to be excellent employees during these first six months of employment.

I am aware that in other jurisdictions, as has been noted, this probationary period is set at three months, but Yukon is not alone in the six-month time period. As noted, P.E.I. and New Brunswick also set this period at six months.

With regard to the specifics of the motion before us today, we are pleased to support proceeding to consult with the public and stakeholders on the length of the probationary period in the *Employment Standards Act*. Similar to last consultations on matters under this act, Community Services would seek input from the Chamber of Commerce, labour organizations, First Nation governments, local governments and the public.

While I support undertaking consultation on the sections of the act relating to the probationary period, I cannot commit to

doing so immediately, nor to tabling changes to the legislation during the fall sitting of the Legislative Assembly. To do so would be premature, as it is important to consider all options and perform more jurisdictional research before heading to consultation and to receive the consultation feedback prior to determining how Yukon should proceed.

Amendment proposed

Ms. McLeod: Therefore, I move

THAT Motion No. 449 be amended by:

(1) removing the word “immediately”; and

(2) removing the phrase “during the 2013 Fall Sitting of the Legislative Assembly”.

Speaker: The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Member for Watson Lake

THAT Motion No. 449 be amended by:

(1) removing the word “immediately”; and

(2) removing the phrase “during the 2013 Fall Sitting of the Legislative Assembly”.

Ms. McLeod: I am hopeful that we can all support this amendment. As I have said, government has a very heavy legislative agenda at this time and to commit to doing this immediately and by this year is far too optimistic. To remove those dates, I think, makes this far more manageable.

Ms. Stick: I thank the member for her comments on that. Quite frankly, I do not have a big problem with removing the word “immediately” and “during the 2013 Fall Sitting of the Legislative Assembly.” What I would like to hear from the government, though, is a commitment to this being brought forward and that this does not just disappear. I support this, but I would like to know that this in fact will happen within this government’s tenure, and I would like to hear or see that assurance. I don’t have an amendment to make and others might, but I do believe that we can remove the word “immediately” and perhaps find a way of ensuring that this in fact does happen.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I am pleased to rise and speak to the amendment proposed by the Member for Watson Lake to this motion.

In response to the Member for Riverdale South, in looking for commitment, this was a matter that was discussed earlier this year in debate on this particular piece of legislation, which I believe was the impetus for the original motion. As we’ve noted, though, the terms — putting the onerous time limits on this particular motion makes it difficult for the government to accept, so this amendment really allows us to support the intent of the motion without having to vote against it because of onerous timing.

Of course, in the fall sitting this year, members can rest assured that we’ve done a lot of work on a number of pieces of legislation that we hope to bring forward at that time. Bringing forward legislation is certainly not an easy thing. It’s time intensive, and it requires a significant amount of work by department officials to do. So for us to try to cram something else

into this agenda would be difficult for us and would most likely mean another piece of legislation would have to be put aside. I think this is a good step forward. I know for me, personally, as both Minister of Environment and Economic Development, I’ve got a number of things that I’d like to see come forward. Whether or not they’ll come forward in the fall or not will be determined by my colleagues and me, but in the meantime, I’m sure that members can agree that the intent of this motion is fair enough, and we’ll support it upon passing the amendment.

I did want to note, as well, that the necessity of consulting requires us to allow for the potential of a longer time, rather than simply saying that everything must be concluded in the fall. We don’t know what we will hear in consultation, and we don’t know what work or changes may be a result of that. Removing the time limit here, or the time requirement, will allow us to better engage those with whom we intend to consult. Some of the groups I would suggest, of course, would be the Chamber of Commerce, organized labour and a number of others that will come about. We don’t want to preclude what they provide us with regard to consultation and feedback.

I do feel that the amendment certainly strengthens the motion and makes it possible for government to support it. So in response to the Member for Riverdale South, I refer her to *Hansard*, where the Minister of Community Services made a number of comments about this piece of legislation when they debated it previously, so she can look to that *Hansard* page for the government’s commitment.

I do anticipate that we will be able to support this motion upon the amendment. Thank you.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Member for Riverdale South, who introduced this motion to consult with the public on the *Employment Standards Act* and on the length of time for a probationary period, has already said that she would be prepared to accept removing the word “immediately” from the motion. She also indicated that, although she could accept removing the phrase “during the 2013 Fall Sitting of the Legislative Assembly”, she wanted to see a commitment from the government.

The Minister of Environment just stood and indicated that he thought this amendment was a good step and that the government had quite a large legislative agenda, so this proposed consultation would kind of need to be set aside for now and not dealt with immediately. We don’t have a lot of information from the government regarding what legislative agenda they intend to bring forward over the next few months. I did ask for some details from the Minister of Justice, but didn’t get a very fulsome answer.

It’s only a good step if there is indeed a commitment from the government to conduct the public consultation on the *Employment Standards Act* and to report back and to bring forward legislative amendments based on that consultation.

We’re prepared to support the amendment, but we do want to hear a commitment from the government that this doesn’t mean that they will merely set it aside and not deal with it again during the period of this legislative session.

Speaker: Does any other member wish to be heard on the amendment?

Amendment to Motion No. 449 agreed to

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

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I want to first thank all the members of the Assembly for the support of the amendment to the motion, originally put forward by the Member for Riverdale South. I just thought I would spend a couple of minutes talking about this, as well, because I think there has been a little bit of misunderstanding in the context of the discussion that has occurred in this House on this point to date.

I will refer some of my comments to the quarter century as a business owner, either here in the Yukon or in the Province of Saskatchewan before that.

To say that we certainly do support the motion as amended — and we think that it's important to be able to go out and receive that feedback at the consultation from such people as the chambers and directly from businesses, from labour, from First Nations, the local governments and the public as well, and that there is a time to be able to assess all of that feedback to see what changes need to occur.

I think what's really important to notice is that notice goes both ways. The members opposite were talking about the amount of time for termination without cause by employers, but I think we have to make note of the fact that this is a two-edged sword and that entitlement is also there for employees. Having been an employer, I understand that as well, where people will accept a job and then decide at some point that they, in fact, have other plans or they're going to move away.

Over the years, I can assure you, there was a myriad of things that I heard that had occurred, but I think it is important to also note that the member kept saying that you have six months to terminate somebody without cause. The reality is that there is no time limit for terminating somebody without cause. They can be an employee for 20 years and you don't need to have cause to terminate them. In fact there are many examples of this that, had they occurred, we would just have to look at downsizing — which was a term from the last decade — in some large corporations where they decided that they needed to eliminate thousands of jobs. Those people were not eliminated because there was cause — that they had violated a breach that allowed the employer to say "I'm terminating you because you've done something that was in violation of a law or of a government policy."

So termination without cause can occur at any time and it is well articulated in the *Employment Standards Act*. This difference is that it does stipulate compensation based on the amount of time that you have been employed in the business. I think it's chapter 72, section 50(1) that says no employer shall terminate the employment of an employee who has been employed for six consecutive months or more unless the employer gives (a) one week's notice in writing to the employee whose period of employment is less than one year; (b) two weeks' notice in writing when the employment period is one year or more but less than three years; (c) three weeks'

notice when it's three years or more but less than four years; four weeks' notice — again this is all in writing; I'm just paraphrasing a bit — if they've been employed for four years but less than five years; five weeks' notice if employed for five years but less than six; six weeks' notice if employed for six years but less than seven; seven weeks' notice if employed for seven years but less than eight years; and eight weeks' notice in writing to the employee whose period of employment is eight years or more.

So that is what has to happen. There is also in there the same clause if an employee comes up to you and says, "I'm done. I no longer want to work here."

So there is 50(2): "An employee who has been employed for six consecutive months or more shall not terminate their employment until after the expiry of (a) one week's notice in writing to the employee whose period of employment is less than two years; (b) two weeks' notice...if the period of employment is two years or more but less than four years; (c) three weeks' notice..." for employment of "...four years...but less than six years; or (d) four weeks' notice...if the period of employment is six years or more."

It also stipulates that "(3) The period of notice prescribed in subsection (1) shall not coincide with the employee's annual vacation."

It also says that in the case that there could be pay in lieu of notice, or payment instead of notice. "If an employer terminates the employment of an employee without having given the employee the notice required by subsection 50(1), the employer shall pay to the employee termination pay in an amount equal to the amount that the employee would have been entitled to receive as their regular wages for their normal hours of work for the period prescribed by subsection 50(1)."

If someone has been working, for example, for more than eight years, you could give them eight weeks' notice that they are terminating their job or you could pay them what they would have earned in those eight weeks, give them the money and say they are free to go at that point and receive the money in lieu.

So it is reciprocal, in that 52(1) says that if an employee terminates their employment with an employer without having given the notice required in section 50, the employer may, with the consent of the employee, deduct from the wages due to the employee an amount equal to one week's wages at the employee's regular rate of pay for the employee's normal hours of work. If they don't agree or consent to the deduction, then the wages for the amount referred to in 52(1), the employer shall pay that amount to the director who is responsible. Then it goes into that whole process as well.

I just think it's really important to note because there was perhaps a misunderstanding that in fact termination, either by the employee or the employer, can only occur during the six-month probationary period without cause. And in fact that is not the case. As we heard from the Member for Watson Lake, right now the amount of time for this probationary period is all over the map, from 30 days, for example, to what we're using as well, for six months.

Different jurisdictions have looked at this and some haven't, and I think that sort of speaks to some of the challenges we have. We do have an aggressive legislative agenda, and we do have priorities. Many of those priorities were articulated within our platform that we said we were going to deliver on, and some of those priorities occur as a result of things that happen. I'll use the piece of legislation that is being called Jayden's Law, for example, which is before the House during this session as well.

So there are a number of reasons as to why we put forward the bills that we do and in the order that we do. What we have said is that this is something that does require consultation, and it's important that we do get feedback from everybody, so that we can then look at the situation and decide, in fact, whether or not there needs to be a change. I suspect that if you go out — we wouldn't be targeting consultation to this small section of this act as well — we would see at that point a larger scope.

I know that the House would like to continue to move on with important business. I just thought it would be important for the record to ensure that everybody does understand that at any point at time, people can choose to either leave their job without cause or because of a situation that is determined by the employer and that, in fact, is the decision that they need to do for their business, as well.

Ms. Hanson: I hadn't intended to speak to this motion, because I had assumed that this would be a straightforward discussion that all Members of the Legislative Assembly would be compelled to want to support, because what we're trying to do and what we're recognizing through this motion is the very importance of ensuring we have — and maintain — the status of being an attractive place for employees and employers. One of the challenges that we face if we get a reputation of not being such a place, when there are many, many opportunities particularly for young workers — we need to attract the young, skilled workforce here and if we get that reputation, then it doesn't bode well.

We've heard many times in this Legislature that this is a buoyant economy, that we have so many opportunities for business, and it's all because of the driving economy. To compare ourselves to economies that are struggling is unfortunate. We shouldn't be at the bottom of the economic heap here. That's an unfortunate circumstance to be placing ourselves in.

Notwithstanding that, I wanted to clarify — and I'm hoping somebody on the government side will clarify this — that when the Member for Watson Lake was speaking, it was my understanding, and I believe my colleagues' understanding, that she was simply indicating that the government was intending, based on the understanding of the comments made in the Legislative Assembly with respect to the discussion we had on the protection of families in need act, and I believe the minister had indicated that the government was intending to go to consultation within the mandate term of this government and within the life of this government. There wasn't any hedging at that time about it not being a priority; we're not going to do it ever.

It was that we will do it when it's part of our planned activities. I understood that from the Member for Watson Lake. I am not so sure I am hearing the same thing coming from the Minister of Economic Development nor from the Premier. I think that for both employers and employees, the importance of having modern — and leading the nation, as opposed to trailing; being part of the bottom of the piles — employment standards legislation that reflects the best practices is what all of us in this territory would like to see.

So I hoped that we would hear from the government that in fact it is their intention to see the employment standards legislation and those remaining elements — a comprehensive consultation — including those provisions that my colleague from Riverdale South has raised today, along with other provisions that were discussed when we were talking about the leave without pay versus the benefits that had apparently been discussed by government in putting forth the amendments to the *Employment Standards Act* on the protection of families in need act.

I think Yukoners are looking for that kind of assurance that this government does take seriously both the responsibilities of employees and employers, as reflected in the employment standards legislation, and the need to keep that current and leading in terms of best practices. We have the ability to do it in this territory. I don't see why we wouldn't be rising to that.

Ms. Moorcroft: This motion that we brought forward today is about improving Yukon's *Employment Standards Act*. Our proposal initially was to have a public conversation on labour standards this summer.

The motion, as it has been amended, will call for a consultation with the public in the future, without a specific date. However, the Member for Watson Lake and the Premier have indicated that the government would therefore intend to do a consultation of a larger scope on the *Employment Standards Act*, so I would like to speak in support of that.

The government, in its amendment, has left the motion so that it does read that one item we know we will be consulting on is the so-called probationary period, which allows workers to be terminated without cause or notice, should be moved from six months to three months. We know that will be covered. That is simply a matter of basic fairness for workers, and especially for young and new workers and those in the service industry and others who do not have the benefit of union representation. And we also note that the Yukon is far behind the rest of the country in the length of time of probationary periods.

Another item that we discussed in this House fairly recently was a bill to amend the *Employment Standards Act*, which brought into effect provisions for leave without pay for parents who had a critically ill child or a child who was missing or had been murdered.

At that time, the Official Opposition called upon the government to go further on those amendments and to have amendments to the Yukon's *Employment Standards Act* to be in compliance with federal standards. We attempted to amend the bill to provide for a longer period of leave that would have matched the federal standards, but the government defeated

that. However, the Minister of Community Services did say, quote, “We recognize our commitment to proceed with subsequent further consultation as was put forward by members of the Official Opposition as they pertain to leave positions, and we remain committed to doing just that following the assent of this particular bill.” So we do expect that the government will include in its public consultation the issue of the provisions of leave without pay.

We also have brought to the attention of this House other needs for consideration when looking at the *Employment Standards Act*. For example, a minimum age for young workers is a matter that this Assembly has discussed over a period of many years and by different legislatures.

There is the matter of the exemptions that are in place for seasonal and construction workers.

Mr. Speaker, I would like the government, if it is planning to consult, to take a broad approach, to consider the subjects that the opposition has brought to its attention and that it will indeed go out and have a public conversation and then come back and do the work that’s necessary to make improvements to our *Employment Standards Act*.

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

Ms. Stick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the members in the House who addressed this motion.

I just would like to go back to the motion. We are only looking at a very small part of it. I appreciate the government’s indication that there will be a broader consultation on the whole bill because I believe there are many things in here for improvement. This was just one that we were trying to bring forward, and with that I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Motion No. 449, as amended, agreed to

Motion No. 397

Clerk: Motion No. 397, standing in the name of Mr. Silver.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Klondike

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with non-governmental organizations and the private sector in Dawson City to investigate the possibility of turning the existing McDonald Lodge into social housing.

Mr. Silver: I am going to be very brief here today and I would just like to say that this motion is an opportunity for the minister responsible for Health and Social Services and for the Minister of Highways and Public Works to maybe speak a bit about the conversations that we have had on options for the soon-to-be-vacant McDonald Lodge.

Sometimes the public only sees the relationships that are fostered here in the Legislative Assembly as we discuss in a heated manner, sometimes, some different political points of view on Yukon’s issues. But, Mr. Speaker, as you can attest, there is a lot more going on. We meet as committees; we meet as boards, and we attend non-governmental organization forums and municipal government forums together — the list

goes on and on — federal teleconferences. We discuss issues in the members’ lounge and sometimes we even share a beverage together after a long day of deliberation. Usually the conversations are civil; most times they are items that we can absolutely agree on.

No one can doubt that there are housing issues in Dawson. If there was an easy solution or quick fix, I have no doubt in my mind that the minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation would be on it. But this is not an easy issue. A lot of times the solutions are very complicated and are based on issues that are sometimes out of government control. Today I am bringing forth this motion to discuss an issue that is not complicated and that can very well be a major piece of the housing solution for the Klondike.

The current McDonald Lodge has served the seniors of my community very well; however, with the building of a new hospital, our seniors will now have a new facility on the hospital campus. So what are we going to do with the current McDonald Lodge after the seniors have moved into their new facility?

It is my opinion, and the opinion of many Dawsonites, that this building will make an excellent residential-style housing solution for our SOVA students in the winter and/or our more frequent transient workers in the summer.

As a side note there, Dawson used to have tent city. A lot of people from my generation remember coming up, knowing that they had a place in the summer to stay for cheap. A lot of the people who had the tent city experience in Dawson stayed. A lot of them stayed because they knew that they could come up and rely on having housing for the summer. That was the hook into the community. We don’t have that hook into the community any more. It’s very hard for our transient workers, and we have a lot in Dawson. We have a lot of transient workers who come back up every year. They are a part of our community — they just don’t necessarily have a place to hang their hat so often.

Now, there is much interest in this concept of converting the existing McDonald Lodge into a residential-style housing solution. There’s a lot of interest in the private sector. The Klondike Development Organization believes that they could be instrumental in this. They were, in fact, instrumental in identifying what our current housing needs are in the Klondike, and they do have their fingers on the pulse of possible solutions.

I know that the minister responsible for Health has had some extensive meetings with them, as well as his staff members — the members of his department — and he can attest to the fact that they are working toward some solutions and some suggestions. So when this opinion was presented, they asked, “How can we help out?” But before we can make any more forward progression, an assessment of the cost of conversion must be completed.

A lot of work has been done in discussions among the Minister of Health and Social Services, the Minister of Highways and Public Works and I as these are the ministries responsible for the current building through Property Management and also for the new building and subsequent options for the existing building.

I will let them discuss these conversations if they want. I don't think I need to get into them here, but it is worth mentioning that these conversations do speak to the notion that a lot of good work does happen in these discussions that I spoke about earlier today when I started my preamble here, in and out of this Assembly.

Members of the Klondike Development Organization, the private sector and I did have an informal conversation with the Minister of Health and Social Services at the Dawson City Chamber of Commerce's after-hours event that was presented this summer. I know the Premier and his staff were there, as well as other members of the government.

At that time, we discussed options, and during this session I've also spoken with the Minister of Highways and Public Works for permission to get into the existing McDonald Lodge to assess the costs if we were going to do any conversions. I would just like to take this opportunity to thank them both for their suggestions and for their approach to this idea in a common-sense manner.

Today is an opportunity for these conversations to get on the record and for the ball to start rolling forward. With a nod in here today, Dawson City can begin to work on one option for housing that will not only help SOVA students and some of our more frequent transient workers, but it will also reduce the strain on the current rental market, which will allow us to re-focus on other housing concerns.

With that being said, I would just like to say thank you for your time listening about this important and pressing issue. I hope that I can get unanimous consent in the House today.

Hon. Mr. Graham: While it's true that I did meet with the member opposite and some members of the Dawson City community during our last trip to Dawson City, and I did participate in a business-after-hours event, I only drank tea. I want that firmly on the record.

Dawsonites are no stranger to the subject of McDonald Lodge. According to my department, conversations about replacing the lodge began some 10 years ago. A lot of behind-the-scenes work has been done by the former member from Dawson City in this Legislature beginning in about 2008. I agree with the member opposite that now the time has come to make it happen.

McDonald Lodge has served the community of Dawson City well, but the facility is 40 years old. We believe it has reached the end of its useful life. In fact, at 2011 technical survey assessment confirmed that it is time to move forward on planning for replacing the facility. At that time, it was found that it did not serve the requirements for the specific population that was and is now populating the building at this time.

The lodge or the planned new facility will be built next to the hospital, and we hope that this will serve to increase opportunities for sharing of heat, power and especially food services between the new facility and the new medical facility that is nearing completion there too.

But the new McDonald Lodge proposal will be expanded from the current 11 beds to 15 beds to help meet the growing needs of the community. We hope that the larger facility will

also provide sufficient programming space and will also provide the flexibility to meet other community care needs — convalescence care is one of those things; respite care is another; Meals on Wheels is a third, and finally the Dawson home care program we propose will operate out of the new facility.

I must say that while a brand-new facility is important, the new facility in itself wouldn't mean a thing without the excellent care and attention of the staff of the current McDonald Lodge. They are committed to maintaining the high quality of services that are already available to McDonald Lodge and they're looking forward to getting into their new building.

Speaking of that, Management Board has approved the department's estimate of some \$8 million, pending legislative approval. I certainly hope the member from Dawson votes in favour of this new facility and the budget, because it's the only way I know of to ensure that not only will the new 15-bed facility, the new McDonald Lodge, be built, but it will then give us — only by vacating the current building will we be allowed to proceed to allow the community to determine exactly what they would like to use the old facility for. I'm looking forward to the member from Dawson voting in favour of replacement for McDonald Lodge in the upcoming week.

I also have two small amendments to the motion that won't alter the intent in any way, shape or form, but I believe that it actually expands the possibilities for eventual use of the old McDonald Lodge.

Amendment proposed

Hon. Mr. Graham: I move

THAT Motion No. 397 be amended by:

(1) replacing the word "turning" with the word "using"; and

(2) replacing the words "into social housing" with the phrase "for another purpose after it is no longer used for continuing care."

Speaker: All right. Order please. The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Minister of Health and Social Services

THAT Motion No. 397 be amended by:

(1) replacing the word "turning" with the word "using"; and

(2) replacing the words "into social housing" with the phrase "for another purpose after it is no longer used for continuing care."

Speaker: Minister of Health and Social Services, you have 20 minutes on the amendment.

Hon. Mr. Graham: The reason for the two-part amendment is actually quite simple. The first part is simply wording. The second, which is really the substance, is to say that we believe this facility — if the assessment enables us or enables another group to utilize the facility — could be used for any number of different alternatives.

One in particular that I'm aware of is that while I was up there during my recent visit to Dawson near the end of April, my department had a meeting with the director of the daycare in Dawson City. One of the things that the folks in the daycare said was that they had several building issues with the facility in which they are currently housed. When the Member for Klondike brought up the fact that they would like to take a look at what else the old McDonald Lodge could be used for, this immediately sprang to mind. I was able to retrieve some information about the Dawson City daycare and they had several difficulties with the current building and the fact that it's very expensive to heat. I felt that there is a possibility then that they could be a prime tenant in this new building if it were so used. I also am aware, from personal experience, how difficult it was many summers to find accommodation beginning the last week in August for students attending Yukon College in Dawson City. Every year, through my office, we tried to arrange alternative housing accommodation for these students, and sometimes had a great deal of difficulty. So, again, this is something that makes sense and it could be used. I don't consider that social housing. Student housing is, I guess, a form of social housing or subsidized housing, maybe. But I don't see it as social housing. I know the minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation will also pitch in a few reasons for his support of the amendment.

I guess we should have also included in this amendment the fact that we would expect other governments to be interested in taking over the facility if the assessment is appropriate. But that's understood, I guess, from the motion, because no matter what we do, we will have to go through a process by which we dispose of the property. I know that after consultation with the Minister of Highways and Public Works, a decision had been made to demolish the existing building.

So, in order for us not to go ahead with that, an assessment of the property as part of the due diligence prior to vacating the site will be absolutely necessary. The exercise will include looking at the age, condition and economic viability of repurposing the facility. It's anticipated that this analysis could be done this summer.

So with those words, I commend this amendment to the House.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I'm going to be brief in speaking to the amendment. Replacing the words "into social housing" with the phrase "for another purpose after it is no longer used for continuing care", really reflects the diversity of the housing situation in Dawson City.

Of course, Yukon Housing Corporation manages social housing units, as well as staff housing units. The most recent figure that I have: of the 98 total units, 70 of them are social units and 28 are staff units. The wait-list for the social units was three and the wait-list for the staff units was 12. So that's another aspect.

Of course, members will know of the expression of interest that the Housing Corporation put out for the provision of staff housing in Dawson City. I think I reported back to the House but, if not, I'll let members know at this time that there were

five responses received to that expression of interest and they are being evaluated right now by officials at the Housing Corporation and will be forwarded to the board and then forwarded on to me with the recommendation on how best to proceed.

I am pleased that the amendment was put forward and I understand that perhaps the Member for Klondike is okay with the changing of his motion to reflect this. With that, I will thank the Minister of Health and Social Services for putting forward the amendment and let others speak to this if they so desire.

Ms. Hanson: The Official Opposition will support both the amendment and the motion, if amended. We do recognize that there is a housing situation in Dawson and the amendment goes a long way to addressing it beyond the notion of what we class as social housing. Many employers have told me that it is a challenge for them to assist their employees, particularly those arriving in town.

We've certainly heard the Member for Klondike describe his own travails when he first arrived in Dawson — camping across the river in the summer is fine, but it's not so nice in the middle of the winter. — with the understanding that the intent of this motion, as amended, and intended by the Member for Klondike, was really to ensure that a piece of existing infrastructure could potentially be used to provide another purpose. I'm hoping that the purpose will largely be focused on either the short-term or medium-term housing needs of people trying to make the transition into Dawson, as Dawson itself builds up some housing availability. There are lots being developed there. There are some lots — not a lot — being developed for housing in the municipality. This could be an excellent interim step, and we applaud both the Member for Klondike in bringing the motion forward and the government in putting forward what appear to be constructive amendments.

Speaker: Minister of Highways and Public Works, on the amendment, please.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I'll be short in speaking to this too.

I do want to thank the Minister of Health and Social Services for bringing this amendment forward. It is important also — the words I have heard from the opposite end of here — that replacing the word "turning" to "using" and then also the big one, being the phrase "for another purpose". I've also heard a lot about the shortage of housing in all communities in Yukon. With the good economy, we tend to see a lot of people looking for a place to stay. For business in Dawson — whether it's staff housing for government or for a hotelier who is looking for staff, it's important that we broaden that a little bit and speak to the amendment "for another purpose after it is no longer used for continuing care."

I know we had spoken a little bit about the demolition that was going to happen, but with the good working relationship I have with the Member for Klondike — maybe there's another solution. Maybe there's a use for this. We'll work on that.

Mr. Silver: I don't know if this is unparliamentary language or not, but "Give 'er." As far as the changes to the amendment, I have no problem with changing the words.

On the concept of social housing, I do consider students residence to be social housing. We're not talking about people with a lot of money who are coming up and going to SOVA. In most cases, I wouldn't say most of the folks I know who are going through SOVA, or even through Yukon Housing, necessarily have a lot of money, and I find that this provides for those who don't have as much.

So I have no problem with changing the wording. The bottom line with this project is that there is a way that it is going to work, and I understand that there is a process that the government has to go through. I have been told that there are a few different options — maybe keeping it internal within Yukon College and letting them decide to tender it out. There are a lot of different ways we can do this, but I really urge the government to work with the Klondike Development Organization on this. Their ability to build per square foot, at a certain cost, is going to allow this project to go forward, and it's going to allow this project to actually not cost the private sector a lot of money. Whoever decides to take on this responsibility — it's one of those things. We have to allow whoever is going to take on this responsibility to get into the building.

We can do an internal investigation as far as how much money we think this is going to cost, but I urge the government, as you look into this process of who we are going to allow to get in there, to make sure that is connected to whoever is going to take on the ultimate responsibility for the building.

The Minister of Health and Social Services also mentioned the daycare. I'm a huge advocate for this non-profit. I think it does great work, and they do have some housing needs. I'm not sure if that building matches up to their needs as it is kind of designed currently as a residence. There are lots of individual bedrooms in this particular building. But once again, I don't think it's up to me, and I don't think it should be up to — yes, I don't think it should be up to me to make those decisions. I think the community already knows what's best as we move forward, and I'd just like to say that I hope that we pay attention to the community's needs and to the community's consultation on this process so far.

With that, I'd just like to thank the honourable member for his amendment, and I have no problem whatsoever agreeing with it. Thank you.

Speaker: Does any other member wish to be heard on the amendment?

Are you prepared for the question on the amendment?

Amendment to Motion No. 397 agreed to

Hon. Mr. Kent: I would like to thank the Member for Klondike for bringing forward this motion. It gives us an opportunity to discuss the present housing situation, not only in Dawson City, but really across the territory and how we're looking to move forward to address some of the current opportunities as well as some of the challenges that we have.

We're certainly aware of the housing pressures in Dawson City as well as pressures that are in other rural communities. Dawson City is probably feeling the shortage of housing options more than some other communities because of the large influx of seasonal workers in the placer mining and tourism services sectors.

I think the amendment that was moved is important because it may not necessarily be social housing that is the best solution for Dawson's housing challenges. The seasonal economic cycle dictates the vacancy pressures that exist, primarily in the summer season and not so much over the winter, but again, opportunities exist in the wintertime to utilize this facility on a year-round basis.

The member opposite spoke of the lack of housing options in Dawson City being further compounded when the City of Dawson changed their policies for camping across the river in tent city where many of the seasonal workers were very happy to spend their summer.

It was obviously a low-cost solution for them, allowing them to save as much money as they could so that when they returned either to their homes or to university in the fall, they were able to take as much of their summer earnings with them as possible.

Speaking of the Klondike Development Organization, I too would like to applaud that organization. I have met two of the representatives, Greg Hakonson, as well as Mark Wickham. I met with that organization, and senior staff from the Yukon Housing Corporation travelled to Dawson — I believe it was early April — April 4, I think. I may stand corrected on that. They had good discussions with the KDO as well. I think they, like many Dawsonites, are a very innovative and solution-oriented group looking to make a difference in their community. They couldn't pick a better representative than Greg Hakonson to lead that organization. I know he has done some great things on a number of fronts in Dawson as a multi-generational Dawson City resident, doing some fantastic things up there on a number of different fronts.

Obviously, I spoke to the recently called expression of interest on the topic of providing staff housing in Dawson City, but there have been a number of other investments in Dawson over the past number of years. Again with the leadership of the former MLA Steve Nordick, as not only a private member, but for a short time as Cabinet, as minister there was just a little over a million dollars invested of Canada's economic action plan monies, as well as Yukon funding, contributed to Dawson City as far as upgrading some of the existing housing stock.

We renovated 350 units in total and that \$1.062 million figure was the amount attributed to Dawson City, of a total amount of \$7.4 million. So Dawson City certainly did very well on a per capita basis. Previous Yukon Party governments built 19 units of family housing in Dawson City at a cost of just over \$6 million. That was a tremendous investment, and those types of investment are important for that community moving forward.

There will be new opportunities, obviously, with the old Korbo Apartments lot, once we get the environmental remediation finished at that site. So there are some exciting options and

opportunities that are going to be coming forward in Dawson City over the next while.

At the recent Northern Housing Conference that was hosted here in Whitehorse, I was pleased to announce that work would commence on a housing action plan to ensure a strategic approach to meeting the housing needs of all Yukoners. I know that the work in Dawson City will be able to feed into that plan. As I mentioned, it may be one of the communities that is feeling the pressures and the crunch on a number of different fronts, more so than any.

What we will do with that plan is take a long-term view of the present housing situation. We need to ask ourselves what is working well and what isn't at every point along the housing continuum, whether it's those individuals who require emergency shelters or the homeless, right through to home ownership.

Recently our focus has been on housing for seniors. Reliable data indicates that as the baby-boomer generation ages, seniors are becoming the largest growing demographic in the territory. It's important because seniors are a known quantity, and we know what their needs are. Most are usually on a fixed income, and their housing needs will very likely change as they age. The seniors housing options we have are based on rent geared to income, and 25 percent of their income is what is charged for rent. I think it's an important need that we're addressing through affordable rental accommodations for our seniors.

Family housing can be a challenge to find the right balance of single dwelling units and multi-bedroom units. What we do is build housing for people, and people have different needs at different times of their lives. This is part of how the overall housing continuum functions.

Each of us here is at some place on that continuum right now. I don't believe any of the members of this Legislature are homeless, but that's on the one extreme end. Home ownership is on the other end, and the housing action plan will focus on how to best assist Yukoners to continue to be mobile on the housing continuum to where they want to be and continue to make the steps along the way.

Of course, not everything has to be capital investments. There are program investments such as the down payment assistance plan. Just to provide an update for the House on that plan, since its introduction in early March of this year the Housing Corporation has accepted 14 applications for that program, approved seven, and one family is now in their new home, and, of course, six more are waiting for their purchase transactions to be concluded. I think that's a testament to the program and the uptake that we have seen, and it's obviously a success and builds on the other successes that I have been able to speak about here today.

One of the key messages that was heard a number of times during the presentations at the Northern Housing Conference was that each jurisdiction is uniquely different due to a variety of influences, such as the local economy and labour force, the age of the community and its inventory of older buildings and land. Again, one of the things we are doing with the replacement of the Alexander Street residence — a good case study on

that situation. After all the previous senior tenants had been relocated to the new waterfront complex, there was much discussion on a number of different options, obviously, with what could be done with the Alexander Street property — of course, what we have settled on is to tear down the existing structure and maximize the use of that footprint of land.

So, it is replacing — I think there are 14 — the 14 units with 34 one-bedroom units. One of the exciting aspects of that project was the work of the accessibility advisory committee providing insight into many of the difficulties encountered by seniors and people with mobility challenges. I think everyone in this House at one time or another has showed me a bathroom in one of the previously constructed seniors housing units and the challenge that many of the seniors have in getting in and out of the tubs. That is one of the things that that advisory committee is looking at, not only with the new builds, but how we can adjust some of the more recently built projects to better accommodate their mobility needs.

The housing action plan looks to build on this inclusive approach by involving government departments, NGOs, advocacy groups and agencies involved in housing and social development. It's going to be established under the guiding principles of adaptability and inclusivity, as well as building on the strengths and successes that have already occurred and, of course, a strong focus on accountability on the action items and the results.

There's certainly a great deal of information and similar resources that each of these partners will bring to the table. I'm very much looking forward to the work and the input of the participant stakeholders working in harmony with government officials and other individuals to develop a fully supported and realistic housing plan for all of the Yukon Housing Corporation continuum.

Again, I think this is a good motion and a good opportunity for us to start. I again want to thank the Member for Klondike for bringing this forward and thank members of the House for allowing me to provide a little bit of an update on some of the programs and projects that are underway within the Yukon Housing Corporation, not necessarily Dawson City. It's an important way for us to give a snapshot of what the corporation is doing and recognize the good work of the individuals who are in Dawson City and the work they've done over the past number of years — again a focus on Mr. Steve Nordick as the former MLA there for his role in developing housing options for Dawsonites and Greg Hakonson and his team at the KDO for what they have been able to provide.

There are few people in the territory I have more confidence in than Mr. Hakonson for his great work and what he will bring to the table as far as options to address the housing needs of Dawsonites and perhaps even giving us the opportunity to borrow some of those solutions and transfer them to other communities throughout the territory.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I will try to be brief. I wanted to get up and talk a little bit about the Property Management division that plays into this with McDonald Lodge. I'd like to thank

the Member for Klondike for bringing this forward because it brought to light a few things.

We're tasked with providing comprehensive fiscally prudent portfolio management services on behalf of the Yukon government — also to ensure that the provision of good facility space through acquisition, construction and recapitalization or demolition of some of our older structures. This is to ensure that the government services are provided from the facilities that meet the building codes, health, safety, energy efficiency and sustainability standards.

The division has developed and implemented an updated integrated government-wide portfolio management system that plays into ensuring that the buildings are sustainable over time, designed to meet the primary program needs and optimized for building operation and maintenance, so an upgrade or replacement of capital assets to ensure infrastructure quality and performance, expand service capacity and/or reduce the operating costs based on the business case results.

Also, something that we do look into quite a bit here is the energy consumption and environmental impacts of our infrastructure and our operations — so reducing the costs of some of this infrastructure.

With the replacement of McDonald Lodge — the 40-year old lodge — there was a technical assessment, like the members opposite alluded to, to confirm to the Dawsonites — which many already knew — that it was at the end of its life. The previous MLA, Steve Nordick, did a lot of work on this project over the years. I'd like to thank him for that. The additional beds will be flexible and support programming space to meet other community care needs and recovery and respite care. The new facility — as my colleague alluded to — will be built next to the new hospital and increase opportunities of sharing heat, power and food service, which plays into what I was speaking to a little while ago.

I'd also like to just thank the Member for Klondike for bringing this forward and for making that call — I think it was a week ago, and then I made a quick call to my colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services — because the plan was for the demolition of it. But you know what? I'm a firm believer that if we can get the private sector involved and work with some of the locals, it's great. The good working relationship we had on this case is really good. I'm proud of that.

For the government, for us, to upgrade and comply with the building codes, it would make the old McDonald Lodge uneconomical and doesn't play into our plans for Yukon government structures in the future.

Maybe get an out-of-government agency to look at it — the private sector — and there are local organizations within Dawson that would look at it. I committed to the Member for Klondike: we'll let somebody go in and assess it and maybe this will bring it to light.

I'd like to again thank the Member for Klondike for bringing this motion forward and thank everybody for the comments. I definitely will be supporting this.

Ms. White: So in speaking to Motion No. 397, it's a very exciting day to see everyone agreeing on this important

motion. The motion urges the Government of Yukon to work with non-governmental organizations and the private sector in Dawson City. There is no mention of other governments, and I think that's an important point. This motion is asking to allow the people of Dawson, whether non-governmental organizations, so NGOs, or the business sector to be able to help direct what the repurposing of this building will be.

Who best to decide on the repurposing of the existing McDonald Lodge than the people of Dawson City?

It's incredibly important to acknowledge the hard work that the current Member for Klondike has done. The current Member for Klondike has worked very hard on this. We've acknowledged the past work, but I think we also need to acknowledge the current work.

It's interesting to hear about the 40-year old building, knowing that so many in Dawson are much older than that. The house where my parents lived in the early 1970s was already 50 years old and still standing, and a family still lives in it. I bought a house last year from 1958 and it's in great shape. My hope is that, after the assessment that the Minister of Highways and Public Works does, it's found that the building is viable and can be repurposed for new things by the community of Dawson City. With the existing infrastructure, it will be a much more affordable project than starting from scratch for whoever does take over.

I look forward to passing this and moving on with business.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I'd like to thank the Member for Klondike for bringing forward this motion and the Minister of Health and Social Services for bringing forth the amendment. I think it's a good idea certainly to do this review, but I think in terms of jumping to conclusions about what the end outcome will be, I just want to — for members — add a note of caution there. I do know it is an old building. I recall from what I'd heard from staff at Health and Social Services during my time as minister there, there are some challenges associated with that building structure. I'm not saying that those can't be addressed and that it may not be in fact the best option to make some renovations, repairs, et cetera, and continue to use the building. I would just encourage people, before additional work is done and reviews are done around the structure, not to make too many assumptions about it, because I do recall that there were issues and challenges that had to be addressed and significant amounts spent on maintaining it. There is a point in a building's lifespan at which it becomes more expensive to maintain it, patch it, et cetera, than to replace it or, perhaps where significant renovations may be required, to enable it to continue to be used.

I think it just requires taking a look at that before determining where things should go.

I do also want to commend the groups up in Dawson that others have referred to for suggesting that it not be assumed that demolition is necessarily the best option. Perhaps renovation, repair or repurposing would be viable and appropriate options. There would also seem to be the potential that although the building is somewhat inefficient when it comes to

heating and expensive to heat in the winter, seasonal usage for spring, summer and winter housing might be another potential end outcome that could be determined to be appropriate for that building.

There have been within recent years some significant costs required to maintain the boiler and furnace system. I'm not sure as to the current status of that system, but that is another matter that would need to be looked at to determine whether additional repairs are necessary to extend the life of the heating system.

With those cautionary notes placed on it and the fact that, as the Minister of Highways and Public Works alluded, there is the sense that the building is reaching the end of its lifespan, if there is a way to extend its life and continue to get valuable usage from the building before tearing it down, it does make sense to give full consideration to that option and give full consideration to the ideas of citizens of Dawson City.

That's about all I had to say on that motion. I would also like to just acknowledge that the consideration of replacing McDonald Lodge has been an item on the agenda within the Department of Health and Social Services for awhile. It was determined in the last term of the Yukon Party that replacing the nursing station with a hospital/community health centre was a higher priority at that time, but this project has been under consideration for some time.

I would just like to thank all the staff of Health and Social Services and other departments that have been involved in both developing the replacement of the nursing station with a new hospital and health centre, and for continuing to keep McDonald Lodge operating and providing high quality care to residents of that facility.

Along with my colleagues, I also give credit to former MLA Steve Nordick for his work on this, as well as to his predecessor, the former MLA and former Mayor Peter Jenkins, for his work on addressing the health care needs of the community of Dawson City.

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

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, we may as well mention more of them too. We have Art Webster; we have Mr. Dave Millar as well. I mean, we need to get them all on the register here today. Lovely. I'm sure there are more.

I'm not going to say too much other than I think it was the minister responsible for housing who mentioned it — calling it "social housing" does kind of handcuff it. If we're going to have a partnership with the private sector, we really shouldn't handcuff the private sector when they want to come in here and take a look.

I'm not really sure what kind of message I'm getting here today from the government as to how they want to proceed on this. But, once again, I'm going to put that cautionary note out there: somebody is going to inherit this building if we go forward with this, and that somebody is going to be in the private sector. Let that person go in and let that — let different people — if there are a bunch of different of people who want to — take a look at different options, let them go in themselves, be-

cause they are the ones who are going to be responsible for paying for these renovations, and they need to know if they can actually make money on it. So let the best company win or whatever, but allow that relationship to be fostered between the government and the private sector, and don't overcomplicate this with government bureaucracy. That's all I have to say. I'd just like to thank everybody for voicing their opinions today, and hopefully we can vote and move on. Thank you.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the motion, as amended?

Motion No. 397, as amended, agreed to

Unanimous consent re members taking a recess

Hon. Mr. Cathers: This being motion day, of course, we typically wrap up motions. We're now proceeding to third reading on a bill, but if I could request a brief recess to allow the Minister of Finance time to prepare his third reading speech, that would be appreciated.

Speaker: The Government House Leader has requested unanimous consent for a 10-minute recess. Are you agreed?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: There is unanimous consent. This House stands in recess for 10 minutes.

Recess

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Hanson: I would ask all members of the House to join me in welcoming Lily Quan. Lily is a relatively new arrival and immediately on arriving here became fully immersed in the volunteer efforts of the successful effort at the Guild Hall, the play *Chicago*. She is a writer and a welcome addition to the artistic community in the Yukon.

Applause

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 8: *Third Appropriation Act, 2012-13* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 8, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Pasloski.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I move that Bill No. 8, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2012-13*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 8, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2012-13*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I will just rise very briefly to introduce Bill No. 8, *Third Appropriation Act, 2012-13*, at third reading. This bill is a third appropriation act for the 2012-13 fiscal year. The total sums required in this appropriation are outlined in Schedule A, which is attached to the act. The legis-

lation also presents, in Schedule B, the amounts required to be approved by the Legislature for grants.

In my second reading speech I laid out for members of this Legislature the contents of the supplementary budget. In summary, it is requesting sums required of \$5.641 million offset by sums not required of \$28.357 million. Again, I would just take the opportunity to thank the people within the finance wings of all the departments who have worked diligently with the Department of Finance to put this forward.

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

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Again, I appreciate the support of the members opposite and their interest in pursuing, as they deemed, the more important business of debating the budget mains for 2013-14.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 8 agreed to

Speaker: I declare the motion carried and that Bill No. 8 has passed this House.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and 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 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 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources in Bill No. 10, *First Appropriation Act, 2013-14*. Do members wish a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 10: *First Appropriation Act, 2013-14* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 10, *First Appropriation Act, 2013-14*.

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources

Hon. Mr. Cathers: It is my pleasure to introduce the 2013-14 main estimates for the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. Energy, Mines and Resources works to responsibly manage and support responsible management of Yukon's energy and natural resources and facilitate integrated resource

and land use. This budget provides details on how the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources allocates funds and collects revenue in carrying out this important work.

It's important to note that the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources works to not only reduce or eliminate adverse effects from resource development, but also enhance its many social, economic and sometimes environmental benefits. To successfully achieve these goals requires informed and collaborative decision-making. The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources works with many other government and non-government agencies, YESAA assessors, First Nations and the public to make well-informed and balanced decisions on resource development projects, which take into account economic, social and environmental interests.

This is exciting and challenging work, in that decision makers often face challenges and potential conflicts in values and interpretation that need to be addressed. The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources allocations within this budget reflect the steps and provide the resources for staff to do the work I have outlined. The overall budget for the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources for the 2013-14 fiscal year is \$65,493,000.

Operation and maintenance comprises \$64.2 million of this and the capital budget is \$1.2 million. Revenues this year are estimated to be \$32.8 million, including \$29.1 million in transfers from Canada and \$3.5 million in taxes, fees and royalties. I should also note that not included within royalties are the royalties that we transfer to another party, such as the money that is received from Capstone Mining and transferred to the Selkirk First Nation, because mines that are on category A settlement land do pay those royalties to the First Nation, but the calculation of it and the collection of it is administered by Energy, Mines and Resources.

In the area of agriculture, supporting local agriculture improves food security, contributes to the local economy and supports the health and well-being of Yukoners.

This budget allocates \$2 million for agriculture. Staff members at the Agriculture branch have been devoting their expertise and enthusiasm in support of Yukon's growing farming sector through policies and programs.

To support our agriculture sector over the next five years, we're implementing the Canada-Yukon Growing Forward 2 policy agreement that provides funding on a 60-percent federal and 40-percent territorial cost-shared basis to deliver agriculture programs in the Yukon. As I've noted before, we're particularly pleased that, in comparison to the agreement it replaced — the Growing Forward 1 agreement — we're receiving significantly increased annual resources from the federal government.

Examples of previous Growing Forward projects benefiting Yukoners include purchase and operation of the mobile red meat abattoir and provision of meat inspection services to allow farmers to sell meat in the local market; reclamation of over 320 acres of farmland; prevention of wildlife damage through funding for fencing and guard dogs; development of environmental best management practices that improve water access, quality and irrigation efficiency on farms; and coopera-

tive equipment and storage facilities that have reduced input costs for farmers.

The 2013-14 budget estimate envisions allocating \$375,000 to various recipients to keep Yukon's agriculture going forward.

In addition, on an ongoing basis, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources works with various First Nations to determine agricultural capability on their settlement lands and supports them in considering the possibility of doing such development. Our staff also provides on-farm management consulting and instruction in Yukon master gardener courses. This work demonstrates Yukon government's commitment to working with farms and industry associations to increase production of locally grown foods in a sustainable and profitable manner. The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Yukon government are proud of our local agriculture industry, and it's a pleasure to support Yukon's local farming sector.

In the area of forest management, this current budget allocates \$3.5 million. To date, forest resource management planning has been completed for the communities of Haines Junction, Teslin and Dawson. Planning is anticipated in the Whitehorse and in Southern Lakes with First Nation involvement. We very recently finalized the *Dawson Forest Resources Management Plan*, and I'd like to take a moment to recognize Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the Dawson District Renewable Resources Council and the regional forest industry for their efforts and collaboration.

The goal of forest management plans is to guide how the industry can be sustainably developed and managed for the long term with regard to integrating ecological, traditional, heritage and other community values.

Also, as I was pleased to announce recently, the tender for the south-central Yukon vegetation inventory project has been awarded and is valued at \$751,000 over two years. This project is jointly funded by the Government of Yukon and the Government of Canada under CanNor's strategic investment and northern economic development program, which is contributing \$400,000 of that total cost. Updating the vegetation inventory for this area will help ensure that the most up-to-date information is available for making sound forest management decisions while ensuring the long-term health and sustainability of Yukon forests and will also aid those considering harvesting our forest resources in understanding the potential and being better informed when they apply for permission to do so. All Yukoners can be proud of the good work being done to protect Yukon's forests while ensuring a viable forestry economy.

In the area of oil and gas and mineral resources, this budget allocates \$40.8 million for this portion of the department. Our commitment to supporting the responsible management of Yukon's mineral resources as an important part of the Yukon's economy is evident in the considerable growth of the sector that we have experienced in the past nine years.

We have seen a significant contribution to the private sector economy from Yukon's mineral sector, including from our three operating mines, from those that are in the permitting process, and from mining exploration and the placer mining sector. This is the result of the Yukon government's work to

improve Yukon's investment climate and establish a streamlined and clear regulatory regime.

Yukon's status as one of the best places in the world for mining investment continues to improve in the Fraser Institute's 2013 global annual mining survey, where Yukon placed eighth in the world, up from 10th place in 2012. I would note that, prior to that, no territory had been ranked in the top 10 as a good place to invest in mining.

The Yukon government continues to provide financial and technical assistance to prospectors and junior mining companies via the Yukon mining incentive program. As risk capital for exploration becomes increasingly difficult to raise, we have committed an additional \$200,000 to the program for this fiscal year, for a total of \$770,000 to help sustain early-stage exploration activity and the economic benefits that provides. As I believe I indicated previously to the House, the estimates are based on past investments in this area — that for every dollar the Yukon government spends in the Yukon mining incentive program, we have typically seen an additional \$4 of private sector money invested.

Also, because of the way the program is targeted, it especially helps out the grassroots prospectors, who do tend to be Yukoners, and has also led over time to the discovery of some of Yukon's most significant and exciting projects, including the White Gold area, which was the result of a YMIP funding support that allowed the discovery of that project and saw significant staking within the entire district.

Mining and mining exploration have been our territory's main private sector drivers over the last two years. Over 950 people are directly employed by hardrock mines in the Yukon. Another 2,600 direct jobs are in placer mining operations and mineral exploration projects throughout the Yukon. The total value of Yukon placer gold produced in 2012 was approximately \$67.7 million. It is also worth noting, however, that the Yukon's placer mining sector has, of course, been a major contributor to the Yukon economy since the Klondike Gold Rush of 1898 and has continued over that time, with some fluctuations in the total value of gold production, to be an important part of our economy.

It is also notable that this sector, which is often referred to as a Yukon version of "the family farm", has also been facing increasing challenges in recent years. In fact, the total amount of placer production, despite record-high gold prices, is below the levels it was at its peak point in recent production in the 1980s.

Ninety percent of exploration in Yukon — and I'm returning, pardon me, Madam Chair, to the area of all mining exploration — 90 percent of mining exploration in Yukon is conducted by junior exploration companies, which also contributes significantly to the Yukon's economic development and growth. Expenditures for 2012 were approximately \$150 million and expenditures for 2013 are expected to be \$100 million. I would note that 10 years ago, the total amount of spending in mining exploration, prior to the Yukon Party taking office, was \$6.9 million, so there has been significant growth due to the increased certainty and stability in government.

It's also notable that the last three years we've seen are the three highest in mining exploration. The 2011 numbers were roughly \$320 million — almost double that of the previous year. That unprecedented boom is something that is not likely to be seen in the foreseeable future. It was a combined result of a number of exciting projects, such as those in the White Gold area that I mentioned, and the combined impact of the global economic downturn, which led to gold prices going through the roof. As investment in other areas, including the stock market and the U.S. dollar, declined significantly, there were a number of investors who looked for gold and gold projects to invest in. One of the things we're seeing very clearly within markets today is an overcorrection, not only for investment in the Yukon, but in fact, worldwide in commodities, including within gold stocks. This is a challenge that is being faced by mining companies right across the world and is something that is abnormally hitting both the large mining companies and early-stage exploration, which has not been the typical pattern in past periods where it's challenging to raise money in the market.

That has led to the undervaluing of a number of Yukon projects. As with all things in the stock market, those overcorrections typically return to a more logical valuation within time. As a result of the significant exploration that occurred, Yukon has a number of advance-stage exploration projects that we expect to see interest in as market prices return to a higher level. Despite this challenging time, we've also seen success from Yukon companies in raising money, including a recent investment by Colorado Resources in the Oro property and the investment by Agnico Eagle in Atac's Rackla area project back in March or maybe early April.

We owe Yukon's success in mining partly to Yukon's rich mineral resources. It is also due to having a regulatory regime with clear goalposts and clear standards, which is science- and evidence-based. It provides certainty and clarity to investors and protects our environment.

In fact, as has been said a number of times, the Yukon Environmental Socio-economic Assessment Board process, although it does have its challenges, is, compared to the other socio-economic and environmental assessment regimes in the country — we have the only process in the country that is a one-window approach. In the provinces, typically you have both the federal and provincial processes, which duplicate each other and, in some cases, conflict with each other.

So the YESAA process, which is the result of implementing the commitment made in the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and the development assessment process, has been an advantage for the Yukon in having a clear and clearly understandable permitting assessment process that has defined timelines for most stages in the process, and that has been an important part of improving the Yukon's reputation as a jurisdiction where companies can have a predictable set of standards to meet and where they know they will be expected to demonstrate clearly that they can undertake activities in an environmentally responsible manner. But they have more clarity in terms of the timelines involved in assessing the technical aspects of their projects.

Moving on to the area of oil and gas, since 1998, the Yukon government has regulated oil and gas activities in Yukon. The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources ensures that necessary regulatory requirements are efficiently and effectively carried out to protect public and environmental safety. Our budget allocates \$2.6 million for this work. Developing Yukon's oil and gas resources has the potential to create significant economic development opportunities and economic benefits throughout the Yukon, as well as providing reliable energy for Yukoners and for segments of the Yukon economy, including for industrial customers, such as large mines.

In the Yukon, we have examples of what is occurring there. There are two oil and gas projects underway. Northern Cross Yukon initiated a seven-well exploration program on their permits in Eagle Plains last fall. In the southeast Yukon, the Kotaneelee gas field rights have been purchased by EFL Overseas Energy. So to ensure responsible development, our government is reviewing oil and gas regulations to ensure that they reflect best practices and prevent any activities that may create unacceptable risk to the public health and the environment.

Of course, as you are aware, there are a number of initiatives to this end that we are working on, including the gas processing plant regulations that are currently out for consultation, which will strengthen the ability of staff to regulate processing plants, such as that which currently exists in the Kotaneelee area, as well as give them more tools to manage, and those who may choose to use liquefied natural gas for the production of electricity, which we know both Yukon's electrical utilities are looking at doing. One, the privately owned Yukon Electrical Company, is currently before YESAB for a project that would include using liquefied natural gas, along with diesel fuel, in its existing generation equipment in the Town of Watson Lake, which would enable them to reduce their costs and their greenhouse gas emissions and is something of an innovative approach they are currently working on — subject, of course, to the ultimate outcome of the YESAB and permitting process.

As well, as I've mentioned before in the House, there are a number of mine projects that have been looking at using liquefied natural gas for electricity production. That includes consideration that has been given by Victoria Gold to the use of liquefied natural gas for electricity productions. The Casino project has determined in their feasibility study that they expect to use liquefied natural gas for electricity production when that large project is completed and comes into production.

Madam Chair, I believe that you're indicating that my time allotment is up. I will have to continue the remainder of my remarks at another opportunity.

Ms. White: Just before I get into the department — in the Yukon, First Nation elders play a pivotal role in Yukon's past, present and future. I'd like to acknowledge the passing of a much-respected Little Salmon Carmacks elder, Roddy Blackjack. Today his friends, generations of his family and his community are gathering in Carmacks to honour his life and our thoughts are with them today.

Understanding that the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is very large, I know the minister said he'd get back to his comments, but I hope that we can go in a more back-and-forth fashion.

My first question today is about agriculture. We are limited by topography and social conditions and where we can grow food in the Yukon. In the past, many agriculture leases were awarded. How much of agricultural land and leased land is in production and how much of it is actually growing food? How much agricultural land in the Yukon that has already been distributed is actually growing food?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Madam Chair, the agricultural land program sales from 1982 to January 2012 saw 325 titles conveyed, for a total of 12,983 hectares or 32,069 acres.

Current agreements for sale, which do not have title issued at this point in time, cover an area of 2,040 hectares, or 5,039 acres. So, what I would also note with that — just with the agreements for sale — is that under the 2006 agricultural policy, those who are successful in getting through the application process and go into the agreement-of-sale stage have a period of time to bring their land into production and meet the requirements of the policy, which require them to put in an investment in that property of a value equivalent to what the value of the property was assessed at, at the time when they entered into the agreement for sale. If memory serves, I believe it is 10 percent of that that they are allowed to allocate toward their primary residence, but 90 percent of a house cannot be considered for that.

The total area, according to the 2006 federal census — so this is the most recent number we have from the federal government, I believe, but not the most current number. I think we may have more current numbers than this, but I don't have them at my fingertips. The total area in crop or seeded pasture is 8,327 acres, with 10,447 acres reported as natural farmland for pasture, woodlands and wetlands. At 2006 numbers, 4,755 acres of hay and 1,372 acres of oats that were harvested that year, with the rest of the land being used for things, including pasture, potatoes, vegetables, berries and nursery products. I'll see if we have more updated numbers than that and try to provide them at a later date if we do. Of course there has been significant growth within the Yukon agriculture sector since 2006, so those numbers are certainly not a current reflection of the state of Yukon's farming sector.

What I would note to the Member for Takhini-Kopper King's questions, or what I think she is asking about, is the use of land for purposes other than agriculture.

Really, one thing that has to be understood contextually is that during a 19-year period that began in 1984 and ended in 2003, within a 20-mile radius of the City of Whitehorse, the federal government, which then had administration of land policy, had a freeze on rural residential spot land applications. As members may know, there were 64 applications processed contrary to that policy, which raises some questions about how things were being handled under federal watch at that point in time. The net effect of that was that people who wanted to acquire land outside of Whitehorse had the ability to under the 1982 agriculture policy, which required them to bring, I be-

lieve, 53 percent of the land into cultivation. Once they had fulfilled that requirement, it allowed them to raise title. That provided a path forward for people who did not have the ability to apply for rural residential land and were really after rural residential property. The only option open to them was using the 1982 agriculture policy for a purpose other than that which it was intended to fulfill.

That's an important piece of context that has also led to people who purchased properties afterward and in some cases brought what was not a producing farm into production; in other cases, they may have purchased it simply for a large home area that really fit more with a rural residential-type usage but that has changed over time, as well, through increased house ownership and people who are getting into agriculture on a smaller scale.

I just wanted to set that context for the members because really, we as the inheritors of what happened through there — it's important to understand history so that it's not repeated through other mistakes. I refer not just to the area of land policy but to other areas of government policy where government goes too far in trying to socially engineer — for lack of a better term — how people would be able to do something and creates a way that there is not an easy path forward to use something for its intended purpose, but there is a way that it can easily be used to meet what is a strong public desire of a number of citizens who are not being permitted through policies intended for that purpose.

That is the conduct that we've inherited. That is also one of the reasons why both Growing Forward 1 and Growing Forward 2 in the Yukon portions of the agreement includes money to encourage agricultural land that is not currently in production to be brought into production. Of course, when people bought land that was not a producing farm and didn't wish to farm it, we were really left with trying to incentivize and encourage them to bring it into production. It's difficult to do anything other than incentivize them and encourage them to bring that land into production and help them see the value of doing so.

I got right to answering the member's questions. I'd also like to return briefly — she made mention of Roddy Blackjack, a respected elder in the Carmacks area who passed away, a respected member of the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. I did not know Mr. Blackjack well, but I did go on a river trip with him once as part of what was then a course being offered by Yukon College for the northern studies portion of the program for Yukon teachers. At that point in time, actually for a four-year period where they were at a program, my family and I, through the business I was involved in at that point, were operating boat tours and received the contract successfully for taking a number of students, as well as First Nation elders, down the Yukon River from Lake Laberge to Dawson City. He joined us for part of one of those trips. I enjoyed spending time with him. Unfortunately, I did not get to spend very much time with him beyond that period, but I found him a very pleasant man. I know his loss will be very much felt by his community and his family, and I wish to express my sincere condolences to them.

A few other remarks — returning to some prepared remarks I have that I think are important to set the context for the department. One of the things that is an important part of the regulatory process and the work done by Energy, Mines and Resources includes working with Yukon First Nations throughout all of Energy, Mines and Resources' branches and honouring our commitment to engage First Nations — both our legal obligations to do so and the areas where we do so out of good public policy and the desire to be inclusive in working with all citizens and communities, including, of course, First Nation governments and other levels of government, such as municipalities and unincorporated communities.

To ensure the growth in the resource economy benefits Yukon First Nations and their citizens, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources provides funding support to conferences, like the recent Yukon First Nation Resource Conference and Student Job Fair, which brought together industry and First Nations. We also fund educational workshops around specific mining technologies. We are continuing our commitment and our efforts to ensure that our resource economy benefits all Yukon citizens.

In the area of assessment of abandoned mines — as I've spoken to in the past, we want to ensure that we don't repeat resource management mistakes of the past, including those we inherited from the federal government. The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources' Assessment and Abandoned Mines branch works to develop and implement cost-effective approaches to protect the environment and human health and safety at the former Faro mine, Clinton Creek and Mount Nansen, while maximizing training, employment and business opportunities within the Yukon.

It's also important contextually to make sure that members and those listening are aware that Faro — because of its role at one time as such a major part of the Yukon economy — for many people who grew up here, it has a large part in what they see mining as looking like. But it's important to recognize that the Faro mine project is the largest liability on the federal government's books, although those numbers may adjust because of recent changes to the assessment of the liability costs of the Giant mine that was a federally regulated mine in the Northwest Territories. Faro is a larger liability than more famous environmental liabilities, such as the Sydney tar ponds, and really is a reflection of the lack of understanding at that point in time of acid rock drainage and what occurs when sulphides are exposed to air and to water simultaneously.

So our structure, including our modern security regime, where we take security for reclamation costs — a driving force within that is ensuring that we never make significant mistakes, certainly never including anything of the scope and size of the mistakes made around the regulation of Faro by the federal government.

As I spoke to, maximizing, training, employment and business opportunities within Yukon have been a part of these projects, especially the Faro mine. The 2013-14 main estimates include a \$27.8-million allocation for Assessment and Abandoned Mines. Nearly 100 percent of this is recovered from the Government of Canada. The Yukon government is finalizing

its five-year plans with the Government of Canada on the Faro mine and, once that plan is included, we will be including the cost of additional work in the first supplementary budget later this year.

As well, I referred to working with First Nations, and there has also been a significant benefit to First Nations directly and to First Nation companies as a result of the Faro mine closure project which, to date, I believe, stands at \$7 million directly and an additional \$2 million for businesses owned by Yukon First Nations.

In addition, the recently procured care and maintenance contractor, Aboriginal Engineering Ltd., is a 100-percent First Nation-owned business.

In the area of Client Services and Inspections, behind our solid regulatory regime, the Client Services and Inspections branch is a key part of ensuring the Yukon will not be faced with any more negative environmental legacies, like Faro.

In this budget, Client Services and Inspections is allocated \$6.5 million. Our inspectors work diligently to ensure all the requirements under legislation and regulations are enforced in a timely and professional manner. The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is organized to ensure that Client Services and Inspections can fulfill its mandate neutrally and objectively. It is a separate branch from the other branches that deal with the permitting side of things, notably Mining branch, Forestry branch, Agriculture branch, Oil and Gas Resources branch and Land Services branch.

The permitting folks within the department are kept separate and independent from Client Services and Inspections. Client Services and Inspections is focused on fulfilling its mandate neutrally and objectively.

Our inspection and enforcement activities in all resource sectors are governed by policies and principles and are consistent with the practice of modern regulatory law enforcement agencies.

Land Management branch has been allocated \$2.8 million in the 2013 O&M budget. Part of this work involves making land available for housing for Yukoners, contributing to a better quality of life. Within the City of Whitehorse, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is reviewing vacant Commissioner's lots for potential availability through direct sale. We have also been in discussion with the City of Whitehorse about potential lots we have identified and offered them the opportunity for their input before determining how those lots should be made available. Additional work on identifying inventory of existing titled lots and other areas where official community plans support development has been done within other Yukon communities, including Dawson City.

A selection of lots is now available for sale over the counter in most Yukon communities, including Dawson City, Haines Junction, Beaver Creek, Carmacks, Destruction Bay, Watson Lake, Grizzly Valley and, of course, within Whitehorse. In addition, approximately 60 residential and country residential lots have become available as a result of new subdivision policies in place for the Hot Springs Road area, Ibex Valley and Golden Horn, as well as most recently the change to minimum lot size for the Mayo Road zoning area, which fol-

lowed a request by local area residents to review the minimum lot size and an opportunity for both a review of the potential for reducing that minimum lot size and of the zoning regulation itself, which indicated clearly that most residents in the area were supportive of reducing the minimum lot size.

I should also note that we did survey residents in the Mount Lorne area. However, at the request of the local advisory council, we will be doing an additional survey to reflect concerns the local advisory council had with the wording of the survey that was sent out before. Out of respect for what they have said, as well as a petition that was received, signed by a significant number of residents of that area, we have listened to the community and will be re-asking and re-surveying them, incorporating the input that we heard from residents of that area.

The Land Planning branch of Energy, Mines and Resources is an important part of doing this work and developing local area plans and establishing zoning regulations. Planning initiatives resolve competing land uses by providing area residents and First Nation governments with an opportunity to participate in balancing land use policies to create certainty over future land use.

The Yukon government is continuing to prioritize planning and zoning initiatives in the Whitehorse periphery and in other areas of the Yukon to address matters including population growth and both current and anticipated land development pressures and pressures created by other activities.

The Marsh Lake and Carcross local area planning processes are expected to be completed in early 2013 and are good examples of First Nation, community and Yukon government collaboration. The Fox Lake local area plan process is also being initiated, which is the result of requests that I received from constituents in the area who wanted to see a local area plan for that area. I am pleased to note, as I announced last year, that that plan is now beginning.

You are signalling me that I should be sitting down, right now, Madam Chair, so I will do so.

Ms. White: Understanding that the Opposition has no ability to influence when departments get called, I'm going to get my whole slew of questions out, understanding that it is almost 5:00 p.m. and I'm guaranteed a 20-minute response. If I'm able to break them out after, I will. For *Hansard's* purposes, I'm going to use a title, so it will be easier for them when they're listening to me right after.

So under agriculture — is there any plan to conduct an audit of agricultural land to ensure that land designated for agriculture purposes and obtained under these auspices is being used for its designated purpose?

I recognize that there are more Yukon food products at the grocery stores than in years past. What is the plan to get more Yukon food into stores? What is the plan to have Yukon government internally and key institutions, like the hospital, buy more Yukon food?

What is being done to facilitate the ability of chicken farmers to sell eggs at markets and in local stores?

Young families who want to farm find the costs of land, equipment and services prohibitive. Has the government considered offering agricultural properties to new farmers at a low

cost, with an ability to make annual payments over the long term, linked to a requirement that land is to be used for farming purposes only?

First, the Grand Chief of the Council of Yukon First Nations and its member First Nation governments signed a joint letter to the Premier. This is what they wrote, and I quote: "Although we understand that the Yukon government wants to establish integrated resource management, the protection of waters and natural resources of the Yukon cannot be subordinate to the objectives of mining development and interest of mining proponents. Given that EMR's mandate is to promote the development of mining and mines in the Yukon, the CYFN maintains that mine inspections, enforcement and security under the *Waters Act* must not be the responsibility of the EMR minister." What does the minister have to say to the CYFN and the Yukon First Nations? With potentially new mining development on the horizon, what is a long-term plan in terms of staffing for inspections? This is about LNG, and the issue was raised in Question Period.

Today is the last day of the government's consultation — and this is their terminology, "consultation" — on the draft gas processing plant regulation. The introduction to the summary of the draft gas processing plant regulation states, and I quote: "... natural gas from the Eagle Plains basin in the northern Yukon can meet Yukon's energy requirements for the foreseeable future, is likely less expensive than diesel fuel and has 40 percent less greenhouse gas emissions." The Yukon government's EMR has paid Wolf Island Engineering \$700,000 since 2007 for consulting work.

This company has a robust view on the potential of the Eagle Plains gas use for the territory. Does the minister support the vision expressed in the reports paid for by the Yukon government and referenced in the consultation of a major pipeline development from Eagle Plains, a processing plant at Stewart Crossing, and pipes extending to mines, like Victoria Gold, at a cost in the hundreds of millions of dollars?

Is it not premature to amend these regulations prior to the select committee on fracking going out and doing its work and having them come back and report on that work?

There is a lot of talk about "social licence" in Canada these days, particularly in western Canada. Social licence refers to the informed consent, legitimacy, trust and support of the people for a particular project — governments proposing major projects that currently do not have social licence to proceed. A brief line in an election platform does not give consent or social licence. Does the minister feel he has a social licence to go forward with these regulatory changes?

I'm going to move on to Mayo B. When was Mayo B declared operational and running at full capacity? Has there been any review, internal or independent, of the operation of Mayo B? Can the minister please provide details? Are the turbines running as expected? Is the minister prepared to state categorically that the flooding of land, particularly farmland — raised in the House on previous occasions — has nothing to do with Mayo B?

What is happening to support development of infrastructure that encourages increased local food production and improved safety and security?

Can the minister please clarify the statement under sustainable resources: “to make agricultural land available to industry”. What does this mean? How is planning happening around subdivision of rural lots? Does this include subdivision of agricultural land, and who is being consulted?

Rural lots — and we’ve heard lots about this from LACs, villages and hamlets and their need for lot development. Where is this at? We are looking for areas, particularly away from Whitehorse.

Under genetically modified organisms: Does the minister believe GMO seeds can safely be introduced into the Yukon environment? The minister is looking for consensus between farmers on GMOs as to whether or not they should be allowed to be used in the territory. What is his plan to achieve this consensus? What if there is no consensus? It is a divisive issue. It may be impossible to achieve consensus. Will there be a public consultation on GMOs? What role do consumers have in this important discussion?

When can we expect a statement from this government on their clear view of the introduction of GMOs?

We have seen what spruce bark beetles can do, if we look around the areas of Haines Junction. Do we know if the mountain pine beetle is in the Yukon yet? What type of monitoring are we doing to ascertain if it is here or if it is not here? Do we have regulations around the transportation of raw wood products into Yukon to prevent further spread, or any spread, of the mountain pine beetle from northern B.C.?

The minister mentioned \$67.7 million of placer gold. Referring to his department’s website under “Placer (Gold) Mining in Yukon”, it says “Yukon Gold Royalty”. I’m just reading right off their website: “Under the *Placer Mining Act*, Yukon levies a royalty on all gold shipped from Yukon for export, whether in the form of gold dust as mined or bars. The royalty is computed at the rate of 2.5% of the value of the gold, or at such lesser rate as may be fixed by the Commissioner-in-Council. For this purpose, gold is valued at US\$15 per ounce.”

I was just on-line and looking through many different sources, and currently 24-carat gold is valued at approximately \$1,400 per ounce, and that was on May 5. So my question is this: What royalty money did the Yukon receive on that \$67.7 million of placer gold?

Again, for *Hansard’s* sake, back to LNG — we find it troubling, much as the community finds it troubling, that the government is making these regulations a priority ahead of larger community issues, including incomplete land use planning and an incomplete water strategy. Of note, the development of this industry is being expedited ahead of renewable energy options. No analysis has been presented that demonstrates pressing ahead with oil and gas is the best way to go, despite our repeated calls.

Even if the case could be made that Yukon should expand the natural gas industry, this set of regulations provides very little detail about the actual setting, maintenance and enforcement of safety and environmental standards for things that mat-

ter a lot to Yukoners, such as the location of gas plants and emergency planning and preparedness.

Where are the gas plants going to be located? Yukoners are interested if this conversation has happened. Who is involved in the planning and paying for emergency preparedness? Although the industry is being expedited, the environmental framework is missing. The regulation should include a commitment to the definition of “escape” and it should include gases such as methane, but not limited to methane. Will the minister commit to the establishment of baseline environmental data and monitoring cumulative impacts before proceeding with investments in Yukon’s oil and gas industry?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I will attempt to answer as many questions as I can for the Member for Takhini-Kopper King. She was going a little faster than I could write. My shorthand is not good and, as anyone who has seen my handwriting knows, it’s not the most legible and if I write really fast, even I can’t read it. So she did kind of get ahead of me on some of it there.

To begin with questions that the member asked — as far as whether there is an audit of agriculture land for what is in production or not — as I indicated to the member, I believe we have more updated numbers on it. I feel that I’ve largely answered the question that the member was asking in giving the context about the combined effect of the 1982 agricultural policy, coupled with the federal government’s land freeze on rural residential spot land applications within 20 miles of Whitehorse borders. As I pointed out, there are some troubling questions to this day about the application of that and why many people were turned away and others were being told that they couldn’t apply for it. Sixty-four applications were in fact processed within that time, but that is something that is contextual. It was done years ago, and all we can do is try to clean up any challenges that we were left with.

As far as a plan to get more land into production, the plans for that include the investment that we have, both under Growing Forward 1 and the continued investment in this, encouraging farmers to bring land into production. As I noted, that led to reclamation of over 320 acres of farmland in the past and certainly is something that we would hope we would do better with in the future.

One of the things with a new suite of programs that government has to deal with is that when you implement a new type of program, you do have to assess how that works. You have to create a sense of awareness within those who may be eligible for it, particularly if those are people who are not currently thinking of themselves as farmers or wanting to think of themselves as farmers. There might not be as much uptake as you would preferably hope. We have continued this program. We will continue to take steps to encourage people to get into the farming sector.

That includes the investments that we make in a wide variety of areas, including support for organizations representing Yukon farmers, support for the development of infrastructure, including, as I mentioned, the mobile abattoir; the no-till drill is another example — fertilizer bins have also been purchased in the past. There is a manure-spreader, as well as another piece of centrally owned agriculture equipment — because one of the

things we've heard consistently from farmers is that some pieces of equipment are necessary to do certain types of work, but the cost of the equipment, versus the number of years it would take for one farmer to pay it off, is quite substantial and can be a barrier to people doing it at all.

One of the solutions for this that has happened in the past, and we would anticipate having other examples in the future, is assisting industry organizations in purchasing equipment, which then would be managed through a contract and rented out to farmers on a fee-for-service basis. Last year we approved and signed the lease agreement for 65 hectares of land for the Yukon Agricultural Association, which is held in trust for Yukon's farming sector and is intended to enable them to have somewhere to put centrally located infrastructure to do site development. They have already invested, through money from Growing Forward 1, in doing fencing work and we expect to see further site development work this year. We have continued to support them with financial resources, to help them with a consultant to do planning. This is in addition to the work that has already been done under the multi-year development fund for the Yukon agricultural sector. All these are in answer to the member's simple question of what we are doing to get more land into production and get other agricultural land into production.

The best answer I have to that is the Growing Forward 2 program guide and the many resources and publications made available by the Yukon Agriculture branch. It would take me quite a bit of time to list all of the work that is being done, and in doing so I would undoubtedly miss some of the good work that is being done by staff within the Agriculture branch. While I do have a good understanding, I think, of what goes on there and have a significant percentage — most, about 70 percent — of farmers within my riding, there are so many moving parts and so many areas within this sector of the economy. The picture is changing as more and more people on both a large and small scale get engaged in the farming sector, and undoubtedly there are new developments on a regular basis that escape any one person's attention.

As far as chicken farmers and getting eggs in stores, I will commit to getting back to the member with more details about that.

I believe there are challenges around that related to federal regulations, but rather than quoting off-the-cuff on that — my recollection? I'll commit to getting back to the member with details on that.

As far as low cost of land for young families, one thing within the 2006 agriculture policy that was something that I went to work on as the MLA for Lake Laberge was at the request of farmers who had been in the plan of the department to continue the policy that was put in place back in 1991 by a previous NDP government. This policy required farmers to put in twice the value of land through development of it. It was called the "two-for-one" policy. It required them to spend twice as much developing a piece of land than if they were to simply go buy a piece of titled farmland from a farmer who had brought it into production. That was a concern that was identified by the farming community and farming organizations. Along with my

constituents, I brought those concerns to the then Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, Archie Lang, and I would like to thank him and staff of Agriculture branch and Energy, Mines and Resources for listening to that concern and putting in the current one-for-one policy.

This means that new farmers spend as much developing a new piece of land as it would cost to buy another piece — well, it still actually would end up being a little more, because if you go and buy a titled piece of agricultural land, the house cost would be included in that, whereas, as I indicated, only a small portion of that counts as a development cost for bringing a property to title.

That was put in place in 2006. Of course, that policy — it has lowered that cost. As far as the specific program the member referred to of lowering it specifically for young families — that type of thing I think would be fairly difficult to do: target a specific group. We are concerned about the costs of agriculture land. That's one of the reasons why there has been work on things including planned agricultural developments.

Subdivision of agricultural land was allowed in 2006. Prior to that, it was not allowed. It is a very restricted program that allows single, one-time subdivision of agricultural land and only after someone has held the title to that property for at least 10 years.

Both parts of that property need to continue to be zoned agricultural land.

Moving on to other questions from the Member for Takhini-Kopper King — as far as water inspections go, as I indicated, Client Services and Inspections has the responsibility for water inspections. They are kept completely separate from, and independent of, the other branches that do permitting. I would point out that if the member were to take a look at the budget, she would see that assertions by anyone that Energy, Mines and Resources' mandate is to promote the development of mining is not what is in the budget and not what our program objectives are. We are the regulator. The Department of Economic Development has primary responsibility for promotion. We are primarily a regulator and aim to be a responsible regulator. Client Services and Inspections branch does the inspections and ensures that compliance occurs.

Other questions the member asked — again, my pen was not keeping up with her questions. As far as consultation goes on the gas processing plant regulations, one thing that I really can't emphasize enough to members opposite is that they seem to have a conception of what they think is happening that allows their fears to colour their vision of the world.

I point out that, just like updating regulations that apply to gas stations — by that I mean gasoline and diesel, the service centres we see throughout the territory. Updating regulations that apply to those stations or to the storage of diesel fuel in tanks for home heating or for electricity production is completely separate from a decision to develop and refine gasoline and diesel fuel in the Yukon.

Obviously, there is some potential connection that could occur at some point if those resources are developed, but those decisions and permitting processes are separate. Allowing the use of imported fuel does not mean that diesel and gasoline will

be pumped from the ground as oil in the territory and refined, produced and subsequently sold, nor does updating regulations apply to storage and processing of liquefied natural gas mean that there will be any additional development of those resources.

Those matters are subject to separate permitting processes. The regulations that are just concluding consultation today — as I indicated during the fall sitting of the Legislature when we put forward in the Yukon *Oil and Gas Act* a clause to enable development of those regulations, which at that point I committed to go out to public consultation on early in 2013, and we are now doing. It is the advice of staff within Energy, Mines and Resources, and the advice of our legal counsel, that updating these regulations gives our staff more ability to regulate the use of natural gas, including for the production of electricity. Since we know that one utility is currently applying to do just that — use liquefied natural gas as part of producing electricity for the Town of Watson Lake — and we know that the other utility has identified that they believe that an important part of their energy mix will be use of liquefied natural gas for electricity production.

We know that there are a number of potential mines — advanced stage exploration projects and mines like Casino — that are large projects that have identified — in the case of the Casino project — that their energy production, their electricity production, would be through using liquefied natural gas generators to produce electricity. That is why staff advised that it was appropriate to update the gasprocessing plant regulations. The title is the one that they suggested, perhaps to avoid misperception. We should have called it “gas processing and storage facilities regulations”, but the regulations are intended to improve the ability of staff to responsibly manage the use of this fuel source. But again I have to emphasize that that fuel source — natural gas — can currently be used within the territory and currently used for electricity production. In the case of production of natural gas, the Kotaneelee wells have been producing natural gas for years under the existing regulatory structure.

As far as the vision a consultant identified within a specific report — the member referred to Wolf Island Engineering’s report. Consultants make recommendations; they provide their own advice, their own visions. They are for consideration by government, but they certainly do not reflect government’s vision. To the member’s specific question about whether we expect to see pipelines being developed from north Yukon throughout the territory and to various mines, that’s not something that I see as being a very likely thing — that type of network or pipeline she refers to. It’s certainly not something where we are endorsing anyone’s vision of doing such.

Consultants are just consultants. As far as the member’s question about where the gas processing plants are going to be, I really can’t answer that. I don’t know where or if there will be gas processing plants ever developed within the territory. That’s a hypothetical question; it requires somebody to actually propose building it and they have to go through a permitting process to be successful in fulfilling their plans or their vision.

There is certainly no guarantee that they would be successful in doing so.

That type of expectation is like asking anyone to predict what retail stores will be in Whitehorse in 20 years. That’s a very hypothetical question and it depends on who wants to do something, has the resources to do so and if — a big if — they are successful at going through whatever levels of government approvals they need to do to bring about their proposed project.

As far as Mayo B and its efficiency and the numbers around that — that’s really a question I’d encourage the member to bring up with the corporation when they come into the House here next week.

As far as the reference to agricultural land being provided to industry — that’s for the agricultural industry. You can call it the agriculture industry, the agriculture sector, the farming sector or the farming industry — use whatever term you like. They’re doing the same thing. They are increasingly growing a greater share of Yukon’s local food supply.

A few other things I’d like to just touch on in the area of energy and corporate policy — supporting Energy, Mines and Resources management responsibility, Energy, Corporate Policy and Communications division has \$4 million in O&M in this budget. A key part of this work is the programs and services provided by the Energy Solutions Centre. It has been allocated \$1.2 million, and a very important part of its work includes not only delivering energy policy projects and programs that increase the sustainability of energy use in the Yukon by providing information to the public, but also through the good energy program, we have provided rebates for years, which have been very successful as a demand-side management program that has encouraged consumers to —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I hear scoffing from the other side. The reduction figures that we have on the amount of electrical usage that has been reduced as the result of the good energy program is significant, and it’s unfortunate that the members are choosing to heckle rather than listening to the numbers on this.

The good energy program has been a successful program for the Yukon. It has been successful in reducing energy use significantly.

Seeing the time, I move that the Chair report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Madam Chair, 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: Mr. Speaker, 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 stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:29 p.m.

The following Sessional Paper was tabled May 8, 2013:

33-1-84

Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board 2012 Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements (Graham)

The following Legislative Return was tabled May 8, 2013:

33-1-1

Sister Province (Territory) Relationship: Agreement (dated September 18, 2012) between Shaanxi Province of the People's Republic of China and Yukon Territory of Canada on the Establishment of (Dixon)

Written Question #4, dated April 4, 2013, by Ms. Hanson