



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 134

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HANSARD

Tuesday, April 1, 2014 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER — Hon. David Laxton, MLA, Porter Creek Centre

DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME CONSTITUENCY PORTFOLIO

Hon. Darrell Pasloski	Mountainview	Premier Minister responsible for Finance; Executive Council Office
Hon. Elaine Taylor	Whitehorse West	Deputy Premier Minister responsible for Education; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Community Services; Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation; Yukon Lottery Commission Government House Leader
Hon. Doug Graham	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Scott Kent	Riverdale North	Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources; Yukon Energy Corporation; Yukon Development Corporation
Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Economic Development; Environment; Public Service Commission
Hon. Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Minister responsible for Highways and Public Works
Hon. Mike Nixon	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Justice; Tourism and Culture

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Party

Darius Elias	Vuntut Gwitchin
Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin
Hon. David Laxton	Porter Creek Centre
Patti McLeod	Watson Lake

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

New Democratic Party

Elizabeth Hanson	Leader of the Official Opposition Whitehorse Centre
Jan Stick	Official Opposition House Leader Riverdale South
Kevin Barr	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes
Lois Moorcroft	Copperbelt South
Jim Tredger	Mayo-Tatchun
Kate White	Takhini-Kopper King

Liberal Party

Sandy Silver	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, April 1, 2014 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes which have been made to the Order Paper. The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper because they are outdated: Motion No. 253, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin; Motions No. 377, 378, 379 and 400, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake; Motion No. 381, standing in the name of the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin; and Motion No. 570, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Emily Nishikawa

Ms. Stick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the member opposite for allowing me to start off with a tribute today. I take great pride in honouring, on behalf of the Official Opposition, in paying tribute to Emily Nishikawa.

I have known Emily all of her life, literally. I met her on the day she was born.

With her in the gallery are her parents, Bob Nishikawa and Joan Stanton, and just a very small portion of family and supporters: Katherine Veale, Mary Anne Clarke and Rod Snow.

Joan and Bob are the proud parents, her biggest fans, world travellers and her greatest supporters. Emily's brothers, Graham and Martin, couldn't be here today, but I know they are very proud of her also.

In February, my colleague from Mayo-Tatchun and I had the opportunity to watch Emily race in the qualifiers in Canmore. It was very exciting to see Emily come in first — 56 seconds ahead of the next person. It was unbelievable, but it was also a pretty nerve-wracking time because Emily still wasn't sure whether she had made the Olympic team and it was awhile before we found out. I know how anxious I was about it. I can't imagine how anxious and stressful it would be for an athlete like Emily or for her parents, but it was great to gather together with friends and family and watch on CBC when it was announced that Emily had made the team and would be going to Sochi.

Emily participated in Sochi as part of the cross-country ski team. In many of her races, she was the top Canadian skier. It was very exciting to watch. I was up many nights at 2:00 a.m., 3:00 a.m. to watch it live. I would even stay up or watch the next afternoon to see it again, and it was still just as

exciting. We didn't see as much of her as we would have liked — they seemed to focus on the top three — but we did catch glimpses of Emily and it was exciting

Emily's parents were both there in Sochi — Joan and Bob — and certainly kept the Yukon informed through pictures and Facebook postings and interviews on the radio about how well Emily and the Canadian team did, and it was wonderful.

From the Olympics, Emily came back to Canada, participated in the Haywood nationals in Labrador and Newfoundland, and racked up more medals and placings in these final races of the season. Again, I don't know how she did that after the Olympics. It's a year-long training, and after the Olympics I thought that should have been enough, but no, she went on and excelled again at that.

These are amazing results for an amazing young woman, but hardly surprising. Even from a young age, Emily has given 100 percent in all she does — school, gymnastics, violin, music and, ultimately, cross-country skiing.

It's important that we recognize the support that Emily has received through her parents, her family, her friends and her fans, sponsors, the Yukon government with its elite athlete awards, volunteer coaches starting at the school level, the cross-country ski club and the amazing job they've done — not just with Emily, but with many, many young Yukon skiers.

Emily has also given back to this community. Since arriving back in Whitehorse last week, she has visited the Polarettes, where she started in gymnastics.

She visited Grey Mountain Primary, her alma mater for K-3, and saw the students there. I will mention that they sent a beautiful card with Joan and Bob to Sochi which they all signed and drew pictures encouraging Emily in her races.

Emily has been to the ski club to meet with young skiers there, encouraging them to keep trying, enjoy themselves, and have fun. Emily is also a participant and a role model for the Fast and Female program. This is a program that offers support, motivates, inspires and empowers young girls aged 9 to 19 to stick to sports and healthy lifestyles by exposing them to innovative programming led by the world-class female athletes. They are ambassadors and positive role models, and certainly Emily is one of those.

This week Emily is leaving for Nicaragua — not to ski — Nicaragua is one of the poorest countries in Central America and she is going to work for a Canadian charity called SchoolBOX. This is a program where the members of the charity work with communities, local governments and local volunteers to provide school packages that allow students to go to school for a full semester. It's not exhaustive; it is a notebook, some pencils — some learning tools. That empowers these students to be able to attend school. As well, they provide books to children, and what Emily is going down to help with for 10 days is the building of a classroom in Nicaragua for young children.

That is the amazing thing. Emily is a great athlete, but she is also a great human being. She has had the support of her community and she has given back to community, both here in the Yukon and in other places. That is why I am very proud

of her. She is also a great role model, not just for young athletes here in the Yukon, but for all of us. There is always something we can do, no matter how busy or how tiring our schedules might be, or how much we have to do to achieve our goals, we can do that. She is a good role model for that.

We encourage her to keep up with her skiing, to keep up with her community work and to keep up doing the amazing things she does, but most of all we will encourage her to keep coming back. I would ask everyone here to please welcome Emily, her parents and supporters to this Legislative Assembly.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Cathers: It is a pleasure to welcome Emily and her family and friends here to the gallery today. It is my pleasure on behalf of the government to also congratulate Emily for the fine job she did representing the Yukon on the national stage.

Emily's representation at the Olympics is just one of the most recent chapters in a career where she has already shown distinction in her sport. She is a fine example to Yukon students and others of the ability for Yukoners to compete on the national stage.

I think it's an example to kids that, whether your dreams are in sport or some other field, you can chase your dreams, achieve them and make your friends, family and community very proud of what you've done.

The Premier and I, along with many other Yukoners, signed a banner wishing Emily good luck in Sochi. I also had the opportunity in February in Ottawa, where Minister Bal Gosal, who's the Canadian Minister of State for sport, joined me in wearing the "Go Emily Nish!" shirts and sending that out via social media. It's notable as a reminder that Emily's accomplishment and representation of the Yukon was noticed at the national level as well, both by the minister and others within the sporting community.

I understand that Emily, from a very young age, has tackled all of her various pursuits — whether school work, gymnastics, music lessons or on the trail — with great focus and determination. During the Olympics, being the highest level of competition in the world, she took that drive to become one of Canada's top skiers and, despite fighting a cold and unusually warm winter conditions, she did Canada and the Yukon proud. She raced in three different races, including placing 42nd in the 15-kilometre race, making her the top-ranking Canadian in that race.

Again, on behalf of the government, I would just like to commend and congratulate Emily for all she has done and is continuing to do, as well as wishing her luck in her other fields of endeavour. I would like to thank her again for the example she provides to other Yukoners, especially to young Yukoners, about the ability to chase your dreams and the importance of and the value and personal benefits of getting involved in sport and the benefits it provides, both from an enjoyment standpoint, of course, and living healthier lives as part of her community.

Congratulations and thank you for coming here today.

Applause

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Liberal caucus, I would also like to add my voice to those Yukoners recognizing the achievements of Emily Nishikawa.

Emily, we salute you for your efforts and for your training. We salute the many hours and I suspect, lonely hours on the ski trails and in the summer, on the roads seeking your peak. You were striving to be your very best so that you could give Canada your best and you've made so many Yukoners so very proud. I just want to thank you personally for coming to the Assembly today in order that we may extend our congratulations to you and your family and to express our thanks for your years of commitment and dedication.

Thank you for so proudly and ably representing the Yukon on Team Canada and also thank you to those who helped you make it possible — your friends and your family; of course, your fellow athletes, sponsors and the Whitehorse Cross Country Ski Club.

Bottom line, Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank Emily for paving the way for future Yukon Olympians. Thank you very much.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any visitors to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members join me in welcoming a friend and a very well-known man in the legal community, Mr. Rod Snow, to the gallery.

Applause

Mr. Barr: I would like to invite members to welcome Mr. Robert Wills, professional engineer, Ross River bridge champion and resident of Lake Laberge, to the gallery.

Applause

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I would ask all members of the Assembly to welcome my mother, Diana Raketti. Thank you for being here again.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 67: Act to Amend the Income Tax Act — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I move that Bill No. 67, entitled *Act to Amend the Income Tax Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Minister of Economic Development that Bill No. 67, entitled *Act to Amend the Income Tax Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 67 agreed to

Bill No. 72: Act to Amend the Government Organisation Act — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I move that Bill No. 72, entitled *Act to Amend the Government Organisation Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 72, entitled *Act to Amend the Government Organisation Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 72 agreed to

Bill No. 68: Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I move that Bill No. 68, entitled *Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 68, entitled *Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 68 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced? Notices of motions.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to use the 2014-15 budget to increase the budget for the rural road upgrade program to \$500,000.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to use the 2014-15 budget to allocate \$600,000 for functional planning for the Klondike Highway, Freegold Road and Nahanni Range Road.

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

THAT the Yukon Party government treat all Yukoners “to live music, hospitality and an exclusive opportunity to connect with Premier Pasloski, Minister Kent and Minister Dixon” —

Some Hon. Member: (inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I believe that it is out of order to refer to members by name in the Assembly.

Speaker’s ruling

Speaker: The member is correct and I ask the Member to restate without using the individuals’ names.

Ms. White: Absolutely. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT the Yukon Party government treat all Yukoners to live music, hospitality and an exclusive opportunity to connect with the Premier, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Minister of Economic Development by extending an invitation to the good citizens of the Yukon to enjoy a gourmet dinner and scenic cruise through the Burrard Inlet aboard the Pride of Yukon.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Dawson City mining roads

Ms. Hanson: In 2011, the NDP opposition raised the concern of Dawson City residents about placer mining activity on the Dome and Mary Lake roads.

When the Yukon Supreme Court ruled in July 2012 that the operator had trespassed on the city road, residents expected the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Department of Community Services to work with them to resolve the situation.

Now, almost two years later, the Yukon government has announced it will relocate the highway to allow the operator to access the mine through the existing road — the very same road.

So, Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell this House how much the government will spend to rebuild the Dome Road and Mary Lake road and why?

Hon. Mr. Kent: This project has been done in partnership with the City of Dawson and the owners of the Slinky mine. We’re finalizing a multi-party agreement, which will result in realignment of part of the Dome Road and Mary McLeod trail, as referenced by the Leader of the Official Opposition. The idea is, of course, to not only increase the road safety in that area, but also allow for a timely end to placer mining near the road and residences and enable much-needed country residential lot development in the area.

What we’re looking to do with this is — the agreement will require the miners to surrender their right to mine any of the claims associated with the Slinky mine on the Dome within a strictly limited time period. I have been in regular touch via telephone and e-mail with the Mayor of Dawson City over the past week on this issue, and we continue to look for a solution that works for all — not just for one.

Ms. Hanson: The government has justified its decision to use taxpayers’ dollars to divert this public road by claiming that the roadwork is being done to satisfy safety

concerns. The irony is that an adjoining section of the highway — one that is actually in need of repair — isn't included in the government's proposal.

Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell this House what needs assessment was done and what is the nature of safety concerns identified in the Dome Road and Mary McLeod trail?

Hon. Mr. Kent: As I mentioned, there are a number of reasons that this realignment is being done. We are trying to facilitate an agreement between not only the Yukon government, but also the City of Dawson and the owners of the Slinky mine.

It's worth mentioning that the Slinky mine is comprised of 14 claims in total. Work on the mine site has been ongoing since 1989 and, after 1993, the City of Dawson municipal boundaries expanded to include the existing mine site. There is quite a history, as members know and as the members of the Dawson community know, with respect to this. We're looking to improve safety, we're looking to offer the opportunity for the miner to exercise his rights and work those claims, and we're looking to facilitate a solution.

There are three parties involved here and we can't just run to the side of one party. There are rights that the miner has, associated with staking those claims, and we're trying to facilitate an option that works for all. I believe we have. I'm in contact with the Mayor of Dawson City regularly, as I mentioned, to ensure that we can do this. As part of the development permit, one of the aspects is a public meeting. That's something, in speaking to the mayor on Friday, we're looking forward to holding in Dawson City.

Ms. Hanson: It is worth reminding ourselves in this House that the miner had been found to be trespassing on the city road. This government's mishandling of this issue raises some serious concerns. Resolving existing and potential conflicts over land use within municipalities requires leadership on the part of the Yukon government — leadership, I'd have to say in this case, that successive Yukon Party ministers have refused to demonstrate. Yukoners are now on the hook for roadwork that residents didn't ask for.

Does the Minister of Highways and Public Works believe the Dome Road and Mary McLeod Road diversions set a precedent and will taxpayers now be on the hook when it comes to resolving conflicts between mining and property owners?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in a previous answer, of course this is a multi-party agreement between the Yukon government, the City of Dawson and the owners of the Slinky mine, which will result in the realignment of part of the Dome Road and Mary McLeod trail. Certainly I recognize that there are issues with existing claims that are located within municipal boundaries.

When my family moved to the Yukon in the early 1970s, there was an active copper mine located just up by Mount Sima. It's something that many Yukoners have been used to for a long time. Obviously the placer mining workings in Dawson City are something that has existed for an awfully long time as well. To that end, I have asked department

officials to engage with industry as well as municipalities in a workshop to discuss and share the concerns of industry and communities when there are claims located within municipal boundaries.

So we are showing that leadership on this side of the House to address those. Of course the NDP would have expropriated those claims, but it's something certainly that we're not interested in doing and we won't do.

Question re: Renewable energy strategy

Ms. White: The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released its latest report on Monday. It reaffirmed that climate change is an ever-growing threat that we can't afford to ignore. But it's not all bad news. We have known for years that one of the most important ways Yukon can respond to climate change is to develop and diversify our own sources of renewable energy. Despite a \$2-million investment in a hydro study in the latest budget, the Yukon Party has consistently failed to diversify Yukon's renewable energy sources. Report after report continues to show that investment in the renewable energy sector brings good local jobs.

Mr. Speaker, why does this government continue to ignore the economic benefits of diversified and renewable energy when it is clear these investments would create good new jobs for Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: It's a pleasure to hear from the NDP that they're actually interested in the issue of climate change. They haven't asked a question about that particular topic in well over two years. I would note that the territory's electrical grid right now — the vast majority is carbon-free. It comes from hydro power, so we're starting from a position of power when we make these kinds of investments in our electrical grid.

As you've seen over the course of the last number of years, we've made considerable investments in developing our hydro grid. We've seen an extension to the north to join the two grids. We've seen the development of the Mayo B project, which brought on additional clean power to the territory. Now we've seen the next step in that process with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources expressing a vision for clean power for the future of Yukon. That's a very profound step forward for Yukon to have that vision of a clean energy future for the territory. I look forward to working with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources in advancing Yukon's clean energy future.

In aspects other than hydro, we've made investments in wind, in solar and in other opportunities for renewable energy, including biomass. We've tried projects in Mayo and in Old Crow. We have biomass considerations going on in areas like Haines Junction and we continue to explore all options for renewable energy in this territory. We are focused on a clean energy future for Yukon.

Ms. White: I was 16 years old when the first wind turbine on Haeckel Hill went on-line. At that time Yukon was on the cutting edge of a new movement to wind energy. For the past decade, the cost of renewables has continued to fall,

and that trend will continue as companies and governments around the world cooperate on developing the sector. We are seeing wind farms being built in jurisdictions from Alaska to Ontario. Even mining operations like the Diavik mine in Northwest Territories recognize the value of investing in renewable energy.

Why can't this government see the writing on the wall, and realize that diversifying our renewable sector now is not just an environmental necessity, but also an opportunity to create jobs and boost Yukon's economy?

Hon. Mr. Kent: When it comes to clean power, as I mentioned earlier in this sitting, in meetings with the federal Minister of Natural Resources, I was able to mention to him that 95 percent of the Yukon's power is derived from clean sources — hydro, as well as the wind turbines that the member opposite spoke about. Of course, the majority of that is hydro power.

When it comes to a clean power future, we're very interested, obviously, in that. As mentioned, we're looking at the larger legacy hydro project, but that's a long-term vision for meeting some of our clean power requirements.

We've also introduced a micro-generation policy, which will allow consumers to use clean, renewable sources of energy to power their homes and sell excess back into the grid. This year, we are about to undertake a discussion — a consultation — on independent power producers, which will allow larger-scale power production to be fed into the Yukon grid.

Of course, we continue looking at wind possibilities. Obviously, the work at Ferry Hill and Haeckel Hill is ongoing by the Yukon Energy Corporation, so a clean power future is something that we're very much committed to.

Ms. White: The Yukon government's Energy Solutions Centre recently released a report on the progress of solar power production in the Yukon over the past five years. The solar panels have been delivering trouble-free electricity in all but the coldest, darkest months. The report says that solar power is a reliable source of energy for the north, is comparable in price to diesel and, most importantly, is getting cheaper by the day.

Given the proven potential of solar energy in the north, why has the Yukon government once again ignored this opportunity in this year's budget?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, of course we haven't ignored the opportunities for solar energy. As I mentioned in my previous response, we have put together a microgeneration program that pays a premium to those individuals who choose solar, microhydro or wind options to not only power their own homes, but perhaps feed excess back into the grid. Of course, we heard that solar energy has been proven to be reliable, as there are no moving parts with respect to solar energy.

Again, it's part of the puzzle. We need hydro, we need to look at wind and solar options and we also need that reliable backup power that we need for those peak periods in the winter. The energy picture is a very large puzzle that we have here in the Yukon and we look forward to ensuring that as much of that puzzle as possible is derived from clean power.

Question re: Emergency medical services building

Mr. Silver: I have a question for the Minister of Community Services. Yesterday, we heard about a new government project that was \$700,000 overbudget and today I would like to return to one of the government's overbudget projects that we've talked about before.

Last fall, the minister got out his golden scissors and he cut the ribbon on a new ambulance station at the top of Two Mile Hill. The project came in at 10-percent or \$800,000 overbudget, so it hardly ranks on the top of the list of examples of where this government has gone overbudget on a new building. However, it belongs on a long list of projects where extra taxpayer money was required because of the Yukon Party's mismanagement.

The upstairs part of the building is supposed to house a new emergency communications centre or a new dispatch headquarters. Unfortunately, five months after the grand opening, that upstairs space is still vacant and dispatch is still being handled through the old station in Riverdale. Mr. Speaker, why is this space still vacant five months after the facility was opened?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: It's unfortunate — the type of narrative received from the Leader of the Liberal Party. In fact, as the Leader of the Liberal Party ought to know, if he went beyond what's written for him by the backroom boys in the Liberal Party, he would see that most projects are done on time and on budget. It is common with this government, as with all governments across the country — and, in fact, any entity letting contracts — that there is some variance in the original estimates in some cases.

In the case of the emergency response centre, our new ambulance station at the top of Two Mile Hill, that project was completed. We're very pleased to see it up and running. The space was there to accommodate the potential of moving 911 there and for integrated dispatch, but discussions are currently underway between the Yukon and other agencies regarding this potential. First and foremost, the RCMP are involved in that discussion. While those discussions are underway with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, it would be premature to simply move ambulance dispatch staff up the hill because that would have a negative impact on operations. So that space will continue to remain unoccupied until we have concluded that work with the RCMP, which also involves them.

Mr. Silver: Premature — I mean, this government has put the horse before the cart on this project. That space is empty because the government went ahead and built the facility without knowing who was going to occupy and dispatch the dispatch centre. Usually you don't build something for a client until you have a signed agreement in place with that client.

The upstairs dispatch centre at the new EMS building was built with the RCMP in mind and, five months after the official opening, the space remains empty.

This is just another example of poor planning, which this government is now becoming very well known for. Why did

the government build the dispatch centre this way, without actually having an agreement in place with the RCMP?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: It is unfortunate that we see yet another area — yet another investment in improving health care for Yukon, that the member has voted against and attempts to characterize in a negative light.

Actually the member is wrong. He did vote against the money for that project. He has voted against expenditures for ambulances. He has voted against money for fire halls and voted against money for fire trucks. The member can choose to be a little selective about his memory, but in fact, Mr. Speaker, the record shows here in Hansard.

I know that the Leader of the Liberal Party is too busy heckling to listen to the response, but I would remind the member that this is an excellent building that has been built. It was deliberately built with the capacity to accommodate an integrated dispatch system, but this does involve discussions and work with the RCMP. We are currently in the process of the two entities working together to determine operational requirements and we do anticipate that this space will be used for integrated dispatch.

We are focused on getting it right, not on making the Leader of the Liberal Party happy, because, quite frankly, if we made him happy, we'd know we were doing it wrong.

Mr. Silver: That was interesting.

This looks a lot like the Dawson and the Watson Lake hospitals, where the government built the facility first, without knowing how it was going to be used, and now, after the fact, after millions of dollars have been spent, we are left figuring out what to do.

If the government had any idea what it was doing, the agreement with the RCMP would have been signed before they went ahead with the construction. It is my understanding that the upstairs dispatch centre may not have in fact been built to RCMP security standards anyway and that renovations may be required if and when they decide to move in.

Before going into negotiations with the RCMP, it would have been a good idea to actually discuss these possibilities with EMS personnel who currently provide the dispatch services. I'm sure it was news to them that the government was looking to transfer their jobs, and possibly themselves, to another employer.

Will renovations be required to the new building if the RCMP is to move in?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: First of all, I'd like to begin by providing the member with an update on the fact that yet another area he has attacked government on, 911 — and which we have, through the good work of the department as well as Northwestel — has been tested in all Yukon communities. Were it not for the fact that we've been informed by the CRTC that we need to go through a regulatory process before activating it, we would currently, right now, have 911 in place in all Yukon communities with an option referred to as "auto select" that would allow you press "1" for police, "2" for ambulance and "3" for fire. We are committed to seeking that regulatory approval.

I'd remind the member that the ambulance station at the top of Two Mile Hill was an important commitment we made, and we are committed to advancing it quickly to improve emergency response times and ambulance response times to Whitehorse and its periphery. We are not prepared to — as the member suggests we should have — wait for longer until now since the agreement is still not concluded with the RCMP. We are not prepared to hold up this project. The room we do anticipate will be used for integrated dispatch — if it is not, we will certainly be able to find other uses for that space.

Again, the emergency response centre is a very positive investment in improving Yukon emergency response. I know the member voted against it, and I hear the Leader of the NDP expressing her displeasure with this positive investment. It doesn't appear that they support Yukon's ambulance service. We do.

Question re: F.H. Collins Secondary School reconstruction

Mr. Tredger: Long ago when the Yukon Party government announced the F.H. Collins replacement, they promised to heat it with geothermal energy. Geothermal was proposed because it would help save money over the long run, especially with rising fuel prices. The government went ahead with preliminary drilling on the geothermal well, only to cut the program after they mismanaged the building process.

The Yukon Party government cut the plans for geothermal heating to save money in the short term, even though it would have been cost-effective over the years. The government is being what we would call "penny-wise and pound-foolish". Will the Yukon Party government recognize that they missed an opportunity to inexpensively heat F.H. Collins with affordable, clean energy by cutting the geothermal heating project?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I rise to thank the member for the question. We haven't ruled out geothermal yet, Mr. Speaker. Remembering that the first project came in at \$10 million over, being fiscally responsible is important to this side, unlike the other side over there.

We believe in that so, moving forward, there will be the opportunity for geothermal in there. We're still weighing the options with it. We've tasked the department to look at that.

This government is pleased to be moving forward with the F.H. Collins replacement project. It's an affordable design for a modern facility that meets our LEED silver energy efficiency standards. There are lots of opportunities. We've listened to my fellow colleagues earlier talking about questions that came from the Member for Takhini-Kopper King. It's about moving forward with this project and looking at all the options.

Mr. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons geothermal heating was proposed was because it would reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We know that greenhouse gas emissions are leading to global climate change. This is a crisis that our children will be dealing with for years to come. What better place to use renewable energy and start a shift to a cleaner future than in our schools?

The cancelling of the F.H. Collins geothermal project is just another example of this government's inability and unwillingness to invest in renewable energy. Last sitting, while answering a question about geothermal heating at F.H. Collins, the Minister of Highways and Public Works said — and I quote: “We are still looking at that.”

Well, when will the minister finish looking at that, make up his mind and install geothermal at F.H. Collins?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I would like to thank the member for the question. Like I stated before, we still have the trades wing that we have to work on. The option for geothermal is still not out. We just have to look at some of the other projects we're doing — look at the biomass that we have up in Dawson, working with the City of Dawson, looking at cleaner energy. Look at the re-skinning of this building that we have proposed. This department is committed to energy efficiency in our facilities. We look at all sorts of different options. We don't just look at one thing; we look at all and everything.

Mr. Tredger: The lack of commitment on the F.H. Collins geothermal project is really indicative of this government's continued mismanagement of key projects — an inability to show leadership on renewable energy. We have an opportunity to have a project that is fiscally responsible while at the same time would provide us with cleaner energy and opportunities for local businesses to work in a new and expanding industry. Instead, we are left with an empty hole in the ground, money out of taxpayers' pockets and nothing to show for it.

Will the government recognize that geothermal energy at F.H. Collins is a missed opportunity and will the minister reinstate the geothermal project to both develop clean energy and save money?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I thought I just heard the member opposite say “fiscal responsibility” and that's exactly what we were doing when it was \$10 million over on the project to start with, so taxpayers' dollars are of the utmost concern for this side of the House unlike the other side of the House.

We have many projects that I can talk about being fiscally responsible: the Whitehorse seniors residence; look at our Ross River arena — that was done on time and that was actually underbudget; the Dawson City district heating system is some green energy there. There is lots of stuff that this department is doing and this government is doing toward clean energy and we look forward to more projects coming down in the future.

Question re: Takhini River bridge

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, last week we received a call from a constituent. He is a long-haul trucker operating along the Klondike Highway. Recently, he had an incident at the Takhini River bridge when his truck, another car and a cyclist all crossed the bridge at the same time. He was thankful that nobody was hurt or worse due to the close proximity they were all in while crossing the bridge.

The Takhini River bridge is simply too narrow to safely fit two passing vehicles and a bicycle. Does the government have any plan to improve the safety of all Yukoners who use the Takhini River bridge?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I thank the member opposite for the question. The Department of Highways and Public Works currently has 128 bridges and many other culverts for water to go underneath our roads.

You will see in this budget that we have money set aside for bridge work projects. All of our bridges are inspected, all of our bridges are safe and they are listed on a move-forward basis for the next phase of construction when it is time.

Our infrastructure and our government are always advancing safety and maintaining vital transportation links for our residents and ensuring the long-term prosperity for our Yukon communities and for our truckers who are out on the road to be able to drive safe and on good, well-maintained highways and bridges.

Ms. Moorcroft: This budget has provisions for repairs or upgrades for four bridges in the Yukon, but the Takhini River bridge is not among them. There were recently improvements made to the Takhini Hot Springs Road. One of the justifications for making improvements to the road was to make it safe for cyclists. Cycling from town to the Hot Springs Road requires that cyclists cross the Takhini River bridge, and the narrow bridge can be unsafe for cyclists and motorists. We would like to tell the constituents that the minister recognizes that this is a legitimate safety concern.

Will this government consider making the changes necessary to allow cyclists to safely cross the Takhini River bridge?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I would like to reiterate what I said before: we are always investing in our road infrastructure and we are always advancing safety and maintaining our vital transportation routes. Yukoners and the travelling public — our truckers and everyone else, school buses, all the way down to the RCMP and the emergency vehicles that are on our roads — rely on us to get there safely and whenever they want. Wherever they are going, it's important to them that they travel safely.

This bridge, along with all of our other bridges, is in an inventory within the Department of Highways and Public Works. If there are existing issues or there are problems with it, it is in the queue for the next upgrade.

This is an incident that I just heard of from the member opposite and I would encourage that trucker or that cyclist to contact the Department of Highways and Public Works if they do have issues. We look at everything and take it as a priority for us — safety is of utmost importance for Yukoners and the travelling public — and our good tourists, who are coming to spend their dollars here in the Yukon.

Question re: FASD programs

Mr. Barr: Liquor sales are one of this government's key revenue streams. In fact, it is the third source of self-generated revenue for this government. The government's revenue stream benefits from liquor sales, but what are the

costs? Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is a permanent disability that results from a baby's brain being exposed to alcohol prior to birth. It is preventable if alcohol is avoided during pregnancy. Beyond the social and personal costs suffered by people with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, has the government calculated the cost to government of services related to FASD?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I'll also respond as Acting Minister of Health and Social Services. As the member should be aware, the Yukon government through a number of streams, in a number of departments, has invested in supporting services for people with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

This includes, through our five-step FASD action plan, the investments that have been made in early identification, diagnoses and supports, both directly through government and through funding agreements with entities including the Child Development Centre and NGOs that we support, who provide us with very valuable services to support persons with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. It includes Options for Independence, Fetal Alcohol Society Yukon, which the Yukon government supports with a significant annual funding agreement, and other agencies.

Challenge is another example of a Yukon NGO that provides supportive service to persons with FASD.

In fact the Yukon, along with the other two territories and the four western provinces, is recognized as a leader in working in FASD identification and support services, and we will continue to invest in this area and continue to work with professionals on improving our response.

Mr. Barr: While the government very carefully tracks its income from liquor sales, it does not track the societal cost of irresponsible alcohol consumption.

In 2009 and 2010, there were 4.8 alcohol-related admissions to the Whitehorse General Hospital emergency room every day. This was reported by the Auditor General. That is certainly not a sustainable use of Yukon's health care dollars. Drinking and driving certainly costs our community a great deal too much as well.

Does the minister responsible for Yukon Liquor Corporation have any idea what the cost is to government of alcohol-related health problems, or of accidents caused by drinking and driving?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I'm not sure whether the member realizes it and is deliberately cherry-picking the numbers, or whether someone else wrote the speaking notes for him and he's not aware of the source data.

In fact, the Auditor General's report, to which the member refers, noted that a significant portion of the demand on both the emergency room and on our emergency medical services is caused by a very small group of repeat clients. I'm not going to quote the number from memory, but that data is available on the Health and Social Services website, as well as, I believe, on the Legislative Assembly website and in the Auditor General's report.

The number that the member suggests would lead one to overestimate and overstate the total number of citizens

involved in the emergency room situation. We hear the Leader of the NDP kibitzing again and heckling — clearly has no interest in this topic — but the Yukon government appreciates the importance of this area. We have invested significant in early identification and diagnosis of children and adults through a team approach. We will continue to support the NGOs — including the Child Development Centre, the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon, and Options for Independence — in identifying and supporting people with FASD. We are recognized nationally as a leader in this area.

Mr. Barr: We are very attuned to the importance of this questioning. We are asking questions that we know are near impossible to answer to make an important point. Alcohol sales represent a major source of revenue for this government, but the profit from liquor sales comes with an enormous cost to society — a cost that this Yukon Party government appears to ignore.

Of all the revenues this government collects from alcohol sales, how many dollars are directed specifically to prevent the lifelong brain injury that is fetal alcohol spectrum disorder?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again the member is suggesting that the question can't be answered. I'd urge the member to actually look at the budget, because the member will see the significant investments that are made — primarily through Health and Social Services, but also through the Department of Justice — in supporting NGOs, as well as investing in government services through the alcohol and drug services unit.

As the member knows, another area in terms of addressing problems with alcohol consumption includes our commitment to move forward the Sarah Steele Building replacement that is contained in this year's budget, as well as the commitment to work with the Salvation Army on building a new Salvation Army centre to provide support in those areas.

The Yukon government works with many NGOs in this area. We appreciate the valuable work that our health professionals do. As the member should be aware, the Yukon with the other two territories and four western provinces are recognized as being leaders in the area of early identification, diagnosis and support for persons with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. We work together at a governmental level to collaborate and share research and information. We will continue to invest in this area and continue to do our part to be a leader in combatting fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of opposition private members' business

Ms. Stick: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, April 2, 2014. They are Motion No. 600, standing in the name of the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, and Motion No. 596, standing in the name of the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes.

Mr. Silver: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, April 2, 2014. They are Motion No. 408, standing in the name of the Member for Klondike, and Motion No. 594, standing in the name of the Member for Klondike.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 14: *First Appropriation Act, 2014-15* — Second Reading — *adjourned debate*

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 14, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Pasloski; adjourned debate, Mr. Tredger.

Mr. Tredger: As I mentioned yesterday, it gives me great honour and pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Mayo-Tatchun. As I mentioned, they are strong, independent and resourceful. The strength and vitality, resourcefulness, ingenuity and resilience of them and people in communities throughout the Yukon never ceases to inspire me. We can all learn from each other as we respectfully learn, earn and play together.

The residents of Mayo-Tatchun are proud of their heritage and value their quality of life. The residents of Mayo-Tatchun encourage responsible resource development, encourage responsible development of their territory, but they are also ever mindful of their responsibilities as stewards of the land and of their commitment to their elders and to their grandchildren.

I will speak later about relationships and the effect it should have on our budget-making. The greatest resource we have in the Yukon is the resource of our people and our public service. They work together to create the life that we have. They work together to innovate, to come up with ideas, to develop — and they work together to live, to play and to grow together.

When I first saw the budget of \$1.6 billion, I thought, wow, what we can accomplish. What an opportunity. However, on scrutiny I see a squandered opportunity. It seems that the Yukon Party is stuck in a time warp. We hear the same tired and worn solutions. From the Yukon Party government, we get yesterday's solutions for tomorrow's challenges. Solutions that didn't work then, will not work now and most certainly won't work in the future.

There is a lack of foresight, strategizing and planning.

There is a lack — or reluctance — to trust our civil servants and our civil service, to let them be innovative, to use their passion and to come up with ideas that will help us meet the challenges we have today. There is an off-loading of O&M costs into the future, leaving them for future taxpayers. It doesn't have to be this way. We can do things differently.

I want to take a couple of minutes to look at a couple of projects. We've examined them. We've asked questions about

them, but I think it might be instructive just to look and try to understand what happened. How did we get to where we are?

I'll begin with F.H. Collins. F.H. Collins was a dream. It was an opportunity. The community, the construction industry, the parents and the students were excited. This was an opportunity to build something we could all be proud of, something that put education at the centre of our thoughts and stressed the importance we have for education — a belief in the values of education.

I want to take a couple of minutes. Google search is an amazing thing. I did a quick search of F.H. Collins. I apologize that they're not in any dated order, but I'm sure people in this House will recognize some of the headlines.

“School report says, do nothing. On Friday, Education Minister Patrick Rouble released the school facilities study. It was dated June 25th. The document is 57 pages long. It says basically, ‘do nothing’. ‘The government has announced plans to build a new school in Copper Ridge and to renovate or rebuild FH Collins Secondary School...’” — 2007.

A Winnipeg-based proactive information service “will assess programming at FH Collins Secondary School. The \$200,000 study was prompted by a \$79,000 school facilities study by Victoria-based Hold Fast Consultants Inc., which recommended further study. That report was based on a previous report. The government commissioned the consulting firm to review...” That's 2008.

“The geothermal heating system planned for the new F.H. Collins high school will cost almost \$1 million to build, according to Yukon Education Minister Scott Kent. The total budget for the new building now sits —”

Some Hon. Member: (inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Order please. Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I believe it is against the Standing Orders to refer to existing members' names when making statements in this House.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: The minister is correct. Although you are quoting from Wikipedia, I ask you to change the names to reflect the position. In other words, paraphrase your stuff there.

Mr. Tredger: Thank you very much and I apologize for that. I will be more careful with what I say.

According to a Yukon Education minister — “The total budget for the new building sits at \$55.8 million, up \$3.3 million from the original approved budget,” said the Minister for Education.

“Spending buckets more money to decide whether to replace or rebuild FH Collins Secondary School raises several questions, says the NDP education critic Steve Cardiff.” I'm sorry — the Education critic.

“Depending on who you talk to, a controversial report on the future of a new Copper Ridge School and FH Collins is

complete. Or not.” The Education minister “insists the report isn’t finished. But the guy who wrote the report says the finished document was delivered last month.”

“The Education department sole-sourced a \$70,000 contract to a Victoria-based consulting company to help decide what kind of school to build in Whitehorse” — 2006.

“The territory has announced work on the new F.H. Collins Secondary School will restart in August. This phase, from August until October, will finalize site preparations before F.H. Collins replacement project goes full steam ahead next spring,” the Education minister said in a press release in 2012.

“The new F.H. Collins Secondary School won’t be built until August, 2015 — two years later than expected. Just three months ago, shortly before the territorial election campaign, government ministers bragged at a sod-turning ceremony that the school’s construction was underway. A large billboard — since amended —” That was 2011.

“Plans to leave F.H. Collins without a gym for two and a half years as of March” — this is spring break — “aren’t sitting well with students and parents.” The Education minister tried to quell concerns at a meeting in the school cafeteria last night.”

“FCS Architects and Engineering has won the contract to design the new FH Collins High School. The contract’s price — just under \$3 million — exceeds the \$2.7 million the territory earmarked for the project this year. But part of the work will be paid for in later fiscal years, states a news release. Seventeen proposals were submitted for the contract. FCS’s bid stood out, in part, because of the company’s experience building schools across Canada’s northern territories. FH Collins opened in 1963, making it Whitehorse’s oldest school. More than 6,000 students have graduated from it. Currently, more than 600 students are enrolled there.”

“FH Collins Secondary School will be rebuilt over the next three to four years”, says then Education Minister of the Yukon Party. “The replacement of Whitehorse’s oldest school will begin with the hiring of an architect to draft plans. The 2009 budget will have \$400,000 set aside for this work.”

“FH Collins students are one step closer to having a new school. The third draft of requirements specifications, which defines the scope of the project and what the school will contain, was approved by the FH Collins Secondary School Building Advisory Committee last Wednesday.” That was December 16, 2009.

It goes on and on. I invite anybody who wishes to Google F.H. Collins.

A school that we can be proud of, a school built for 21st century learning, and a school that we can grow into, attend and work in with pride — however, the saga of F.H. Collins reads like something from Monty Python — one of those “You had to be there” episodes. Reading this on April 1, I thought, unfortunately, this is not an April Fools’ joke — twelve years of starts and stops, promises, renegeing on promises and numbers in the millions thrown out at this government’s convenience.

So where are we now? After many studies, starts and stops, 12 years of rising repair bills, concerns about health from the old dilapidated school, putting off painting, putting off ventilation systems, and telling kids for 12 years, “Don’t worry, you’ll graduate from a new school.”

In 1993, the then Minister of Education for the Liberal government, the Member for Riverdale North, promised a new F.H. Collins school for the price tag of \$25 million, followed by more promises and more studies. In the next election, the Yukon Party promised schools in Granger or Riverdale for less because, as they like to trump it, the Yukon Party is the fiscally responsible government.

I guess promises are indeed cheap. It doesn’t cost much to break a promise. Once elected, we’ve been treated to a series of studies, starts and stops, more studies and, finally, maybe, some movement as the old school slowly crumbled. As I mentioned, costs of the annual repairs and heating are rising astronomically, so much so that, for several years, a new line item was added to the budget just to cover the increased costs at F.H. Collins.

A renowned and very well-respected architectural firm was hired — \$3 million — to work with the department, with the building advisory committee, parents and staff to create a school for the 21st century.

Learning was to be flexible, reflecting new ways of teaching and learning. The Premier got out his shovel and started another shovel-ready project. Unfortunately it was a shelf-ready project and was put back on the shelf.

More promises were made, more promises were broken. The building advisory committee was dissolved. Parents and students were told, “Just trust us”.

We had construction start. The grounds were torn up. Geothermal test wells were dug. The school went for over a year with their parking lot torn up, with their entrance in a construction zone. The gym was scheduled to be demolished. Remember that fiasco just prior to spring break? The staff did not know if, coming back in two weeks, the old gym would be there or not.

Things really got quite interesting. A tender was let, it was changed, let again. The bids were deemed too high, too expensive, a waste of money. The Premier had better things to do with his \$10 million that he was saving on a school building.

We threw out the previous design, the one that incorporated a renowned architectural firm — the one that incorporated students, parents, a building advisory committee and school council. We brought in a cookie-cutter design from Alberta. It didn’t meet northern codes — oops — we’ll have to retender that. Not enough rooms to accommodate current requirements — oops — cut out some gathering spaces, make the rooms smaller and retender. Forgot a cafeteria — oops — here, put it over here. See, everything fits. We saved \$10 million because the Premier has better things to do with our money — or was it \$17 million? Did we budget \$42 million or was that \$51 million? Oh, maybe it was \$56 million. The numbers come, the numbers go, but the Yukon Party says,

“Don’t worry, it’s just numbers.” How can the public have any confidence in the Yukon Party’s math and accountability?

We have been treated to a very public example of Yukon Party financing — financing on the fly — and it’s not a pretty sight.

So now what are we left with? Where did our dream go? Well, the gym, the centre of the school, is smaller than the current one. There’s no stage. There are fewer seats for events. It no longer will hold the fashion show, a mainstay for the graduating class. It will no longer hold graduating events or assemblies. The gym parts into two rooms for two classes. However, currently there are three phys-ed classes operating in some blocks. Don’t worry. We can use the multi-purpose room. No room for assemblies? Don’t worry. We can rent you the Convention Centre.

So we have the multi-purpose room. I don’t know if any of you have been to a school or a college or university lately, but one thing I can tell you about teenagers is that they like to eat and they like to hang out. They like to work in groups. They like to study together and to lounge about. Walk into the college and you see people hanging around, working together and getting stuff done. It’s relaxed. But in our new school, we have no cafeteria space. “We’ll use the multi-purpose room as a cafeteria.”

But it is also being used for a gym class or other classroom space. Imagine this: the bell goes, gym classes politely file out of the multi-purpose room; 500 kids descend on the multi-purpose room to get their food and eat their lunch, out come the tables and the chairs, 40 to 50 minutes later the bell goes again, all of the tables and chairs have to be washed and put away, and classes start. Sounds like a disaster.

In order to add more rooms, classes have been made smaller. You need more rooms? I forgot to mention that there weren’t enough rooms in the original cookie-cutter design to accommodate all of the courses and classes being offered. So we needed some more rooms. Well, that’s easy, we will just add a few more lines on the drawing here. We’ll make some of the classes smaller; we will take some of these lounging and meeting spaces and make more rooms. We forgot kids like to hang around — 21st century learning indeed.

It did not have to be this way. The original design had parent input and community input into a school that we could be proud of — a centre of learning and something to grow into. We could have looked within that design that we spent \$3 million on for accommodations that could have been made. We could have used our local contractors to offer suggestions, to come up with a design that works both for the 21st century and meets fiscal demands. It could have been different.

I was very fortunate when the leader of the federal New Democratic Party, Mr. Thomas Mulcair, came to Whitehorse. He is quite interested in education, so we went up to the college to see it. A college that, I might add, was built many years ago by the then NDP government. It is a college that was built with room to grow, with architecture to celebrate spaces and to celebrate as a Yukon centre for learning. We were escorted around by Dr. Barnes and her staff. We went by areas where students gathered, where they were sitting and

working on projects. The building was light and open. There was an obvious pride from the instructors and the students in their building. The building has grown and met the demands of Yukon people over the course of time.

I touched briefly in Question Period today on the geothermal energy that could have been developed for F.H. Collins. Yesterday, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released its report on climate change. This report from leading scientists around the world was a call to all citizens, to all humans. It was a call to us and a warning to us. The world as we know it is in grave danger, and we drastically need to reduce our dependencies on fossil fuels.

Each and every one of us must use our imagination, our ingenuity, and together we must resolve to tackle the burning of fossil fuels.

The burning of fossil fuels for space heating accounts for 20 percent of Yukon’s total energy use — the equivalent to three B-trains of trucks a day.

Geothermal studies have proven the economics to cut heating costs, to provide certainty, to ensure that our heating costs are maintained, if not dropped.

We had a chance to develop geothermal in one of our schools. This was another lost opportunity. Government buildings should show leadership. This was an opportunity to develop skills and technologies within our workforce, and opportunity for our businesses to expand their horizons, to use their skills to develop a heating system that works.

I know that studies have shown the geothermal in F.H. Collins was valid and can work. However, it didn’t fit the cookie-cutter design and we abandoned the work. There seems to be no set plans to use geothermal in the new building. It is really another squandered opportunity. The money has been spent, the studies have proven the fiscal benefits, and yet this government chooses to save money today to place another burden on future taxpayers.

When it comes to renewables, this government is “big talkers but little walkers”. The IPCC report reminds us that it is past time for talking. We must begin to act. I call on the government to restore the geothermal project at F.H. Collins, to look at the project we abandoned at Whistle Bend when in initial stages it was looked at, and to look for other opportunities to build on this technology.

Mr. Speaker, we just had a building boom. Many condominiums were built. This would have been an opportunity to work with the business community, with the contractors and with the builders to install geothermal energy. Instead we have hundreds of new homes being heated by electricity at the very same time that we are meeting an electricity crunch.

Where was the leadership? Where was imagination? Research has shown us — other jurisdictions acknowledge that the least expensive energy is that which can be saved. In other words, rather than building more capacity, it makes economic sense to conserve. Geothermal capabilities have been around for some time now. The promise to use area heating in Whistle Bend, in our condominiums and in new housing — to put our knowledge about insulation and about

geothermal heating — is just another empty promise. What is needed is leadership.

We are reaching a point where we're going to need more energy, yet this government's solution — we see grandiose plans to build 200-megawatt legacy projects, billion-dollar connectors to Alaska or B.C.

The inexpensive fiscally responsible thing to do would be to promote local renewable energies. Twelve years ago there were three windmills on Haeckel Hill. We were at the forefront of research. The Energy Solutions Centre was staffed with inspired people who had a passion and wanted to go ahead. We were at the forefront of research and renewable resource development. Now we hardly go a day without picking up the paper and realizing that wind farms are supplying more and more energy around the world. There is one being built in P.E.I., there are several in Ontario. Drive down to Alberta and there are wind farms that abound. Wind farms in Alberta, B.C., P.E.I. and even in China are counting for more and more power generation, yet we sit and talk. The time for talk has passed.

I see my time is coming to a close. I will just wrap up with — what I find hard about this budget is the wasted opportunity. My dad once said, "In a moment of lesson, any fool can spend money." It's easy to spend other people's money.

But as a government and as a territory, we must focus on spending it wisely, focus on the future generations, ensure that when we're spending money we're accountable and responsible, and ensure that we are including Yukoners and other governments — municipalities, First Nations — in our decision-making process so that, indeed, we can get information. The closer to the source where we're spending it that we can have involvement in spending our money, the better it is. If there's one thing I would ask this government, it is to reflect on the vitality, the resourcefulness and ingenuity of Yukon citizens. Listen to them and use them, as we move forward.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I would like to thank my constituents and especially my family. I would also like to throw a little apology out to both my constituents and my family. Being the Minister of Highways and Public Works, you can see there's a lot of stuff in our upcoming budget. It keeps me very busy, so the opportunity to get back to people right away, as I like to, or to be out in my riding — it keeps me in Whitehorse a little too much than I would like to be, but it is part of the job.

I'd like to thank the constituents — like the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin — of the great riding of Kluane though, from Beaver Creek, White River, Pine Valley, Burwash Landing, Destruction Bay, Silver City, Bear Creek, Nygren subdivision, Haines Junction, Kathleen Lake, Dezadeash Lake, Sixty Mile, Klukshu and Blanchard rivers, Stanley Flats, Forty-Eight Mile, Marshall Creek canyon, Cracker Creek, Aishihik, Champagne, Mendenhall, Takhini — 640-plus kilometres. I forgot about Andre at Quill Creek — Quill Creek, too.

It is an honour here and a privilege today to respond to the 2014-15 budget — another billion-dollar budget — the third budget of this 33rd Yukon Legislative Assembly. Part of budgets wouldn't happen without the great work of the Department of Highways and Public Works and all the other departments and their ministers that go along with them. I would like to say a big thank you to them.

The 11 previous budgets tabled by three successive Yukon Party governments have helped make the economy of the territory one of the strongest in Canada and have placed Yukon in an enviable position, and a good fiscal position. The Government of Yukon's budget for 2014-15 is \$1.318 billion. This is the sixth Yukon government budget to exceed the \$1-billion threshold, more than a doubling of the budget when the Yukon Party took office in 2002. This budget, like its immediate predecessor, has a healthy, over \$7.2-million surplus, which is very good.

Some of the funding pressures the Government of Yukon is facing — I'd like to speak a little bit about that. The new Building Canada fund, which was announced in the 2013 federal budget, will see the Government of Canada invest over \$53 billion in infrastructure across the country over the next decade. Yukon will see approximately \$257 million under this fund. Our territorial health investment fund expires and it is providing \$70 million over three years for a new targeted and time-limited fund to increase services in the three territories' priority health areas and to reduce the reliance on the outside health care systems and medical travel. Yukon's share has yet to be determined.

Funding by the Government of the United States for the Shakwak Agreement to upgrade and maintain the North Alaska Highway and the Haines Road was removed from the MAP-21, the U.S. government 2012 transportation bill, which means \$280 million to \$340 million that is estimated to complete the work is no longer in place.

I have been working diligently with various senators and representatives and been on the telephone, trying my best to reach everyone and bring this to their attention. The Premier recently travelled to Washington to meet with the senators and congressmen to advocate for the continued U.S. federal government funding for the Shakwak project. We remain optimistic that our lobbying efforts will pay off.

One of the funding pressures that Yukon Electrical customers will not face is the cancellation of the interim electrical rebate as the \$3.45 million has been provided for a one-year extension. That is a good thing, Mr. Speaker.

In view of the challenges facing the territory, our government focus is squarely set on growing the economy in the Yukon. As Minister of Highways and Public Works, I am cognizant of the fact that both mining and tourism are largely dependent upon the Yukon's transportation infrastructure — our primary roads, secondary roads, rural roads, resource roads, bridges, airports — like some of the questions I get from the members opposite. At a time when the private sector is facing economic challenges, this is the time for the Yukon government to step up to the plate. We have to invest in infrastructure that will facilitate and stimulate the private

sector. The 2014-15 budget is providing \$85.264 million, the largest transportation budget ever, and will be allocated as follows: \$48.17 million for highway work; \$14.23 million for bridges; \$16.31 million for airports — including surfaces, air-side improvements and facilities; and \$3.33 million for other roads such as the Silver Trail and turning lanes being built at the Couch Road entrance, among other things.

All BST sections of the Yukon highways are evaluated and rated by transportation experts on an annual basis. Condition reports are prepared annually, which allows trends to be identified and monitored. The condition reports form the basis for the decisions on the O&M expenditures for our BST replacement. BST application is also funded under some of the capital program in areas under new construction. Every year is different.

While the funding for the Shakwak project was removed from the United States government transportation bill, paving and permafrost rehabilitation work will still continue under the existing framework until all committed funds are expended. YG has enough committed funds within the Shakwak program for another three years of construction. This year's budget is \$23.25 million and projects include: pavement construction, Copper Joe Creek culvert channel rehabilitation, permafrost remediation at Beaver Creek, bridge upgrades and site cleanup and ditching. Yukon government considers Shakwak project funding crucial to address the maintenance and permafrost challenges on the Alaska Highway — our main artery and the only road link to Alaska — and being in the Kluane riding, it is a priority.

In addition to this roadwork, a further \$8.7 million has been allocated to the reconstruction of the Robert Campbell Highway between kilometre 97 and 107. The Atlin Road will also be receiving \$1.4 million for ongoing granular research, design work and partial reconstruction, including the design and permitting for the Snafu and Tarfu bridge crossings.

Our government has been working collaboratively on an ongoing basis — and in my department also — with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation government to fund the Yukon government contribution to the Old Crow winter road, which was a great success.

We allocated \$700,000 for this purpose last year. It was due to the lack of snow that it was cancelled so it's in this year's budget. The winter road project was opened February 27 and was open for a period of three weeks.

I know that right now Canadian Rangers — members from each patrol — are headed up that road and off to the north to wave the flag. I think that's a great thing, too.

Other roads and transportation improvements include \$2.2 million to perform erosion control and rehabilitation of the Dempster Highway and \$600,000 to do functional planning that we spoke about on the Freegold, the Nahanni Range Road and the Klondike Highway. When new resource developments come on board, we will be ready to make the necessary adjustments to the roads to enable traffic to move easily and to increase the safety of the travelling public.

There is the following: \$675,000 to do local safety improvements on Hunker Creek road, Ten Mile Creek road,

and rehabilitation of the Klondike Highway; \$500,000 for roadway improvements to the North Canal Road; \$200,000 has been allocated for community highway lighting enhancement, including Two and One-Half Mile and Upper Liard; and \$300,000 has been added to the rural roads upgrade program, which brings it up to \$500,000.

Our Transportation division branch maintains a total of 4,819 kilometres of road, which includes 351 kilometres of paved road, 1,907 kilometres of BST, 2,561 kilometres of gravel road, eight kilometres of bridges and ferry crossings. We manage 128 bridges, 238 culverts, four airports and 25 aerodromes. We operate two full-time weigh scales and have one additional weigh scale that can be activated as required.

There is a lot going on in the Department of Highways and Public Works. Some major accomplishments of our Transportation branch division are that we have continued major highway reconstruction programs on the Atlin Road, Robert Campbell Highway and the Takhini Hot Springs Road. We mitigated a significant number of washouts and flooding damage to highways throughout the Yukon. We completed the installation of the second passenger bridge at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport through a YACA agreement with Kwanlin Dun First Nation. We successfully relocated Transportation Services Motor Vehicles branch to a new combined space without an interruption in service. We continue to do major bridge upgrade programs, with the improvements completed on the Upper Liard and Stewart River bridges.

Bridge work this year will see the Nisutlin Bay bridge slated for a major upgrade — \$7 million being allocated this year and further money allocated next year. Work includes a new concrete floor system, replacement of the existing steel-grate deck and a bicycle path and pedestrian walkway will be added on the side of the bridge, with a viewing platform and lighting for the walkway.

Construction of a new single-span Tatchun Creek bridge has started and the majority of the work will be done during the summer of 2014. This 43-metre bridge will see the allocation of \$5.5 million. The Nares River bridge replacement has an allocation of \$500,000, and \$600,000 has been allocated to various secondary road bridges and rehabilitation projects.

This year, almost \$18 million has been set aside for capital improvements to airports. Airports seem to be a bit of a liking for the members of the Opposition. They seem to ask a lot of questions about this.

The Whitehorse airport apron panel replacement project is receiving \$8.1 million to remove the existing panels and construct new concrete apron panels. The federal government — a good working relationship there — is providing \$6.4 million for this project under the airports capital assistance program provided the project is completed by October 31, 2014.

Work continues on the reconstruction and repaving of the secondary runway at the Whitehorse airport, which runs parallel to the main runway. The runway resurfacing project

began last fall and is scheduled to be completed in the summer of 2014 with an allocation of \$3 million.

A further \$1.7 million is being provided at the Whitehorse airport to extend the current water and sewer system to the area south of the terminal. The work is scheduled to be completed this summer and \$550,000 is being provided to develop 10 more lease lots at the airport.

Capital funding is also being allocated to various community aerodromes, such as Burwash Landing, Beaver Creek and Teslin. The Yukon government is the largest aerodrome operator in Canada. We operate and maintain four airports and 25 aerodromes in the territory.

It's an interesting fact that, last year, approximately 292,598 passengers used the Whitehorse airport while an estimated 80,000 visited the airports, either meeting passengers or utilizing airport services. The Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport along with the Dawson City, Old Crow, and Watson Lake airports are certified to meet federal regulations for scheduled air carrier flights. Whitehorse has seen a 94-percent increase of passengers arriving and departing from the airport over the past 10 years. Our government is working right now in Dawson City, and working with the Canada Border Services Agency, Holland America and Air North to facilitate the new CBSA facility in Dawson City to support the expanded air service.

Mayo is our third busiest site. Community aerodromes support aircraft charter activities and provide the communities with access to emergency health care through the support of air medevac operations, and they facilitate the RCMP, Justice, aerial firefighting activities, and have become a hub to support emergency relief efforts following any real or potential disaster, which we've seen occasionally.

Achieving a better quality of life is an unending quest as our government strives to make the lives of Yukoners better. One of our major commitments in this platform was to build a new secondary school in Whitehorse to replace F.H. Collins. We are doing that as we speak. The Yukon government is pleased to be moving forward on the F.H. Collins replacement project with an affordable design for a modern facility that meets LEED silver energy efficiency standards.

I listened to the member opposite earlier, but although the footprint of the new school will be smaller than the one first proposed, the space efficiency design still incorporates features and learning spaces requested by the school council, the building advisory committee and the educators there.

For the member opposite, I do have a teenager and, yes, he does like to eat and he likes to mingle with his friends — social media. I had the opportunity, along with the now Minister of Education, to go down and have a look at the Mother Margaret Mary school that this one is patterned from, and there are a lot of things in that school that the members opposite have no idea we are going to accomplish. One of the biggest things that I liked about that school was the openness — the thing the members opposite don't like. I like the openness and their ability to be out there. The way the bathrooms are designed — and the reason I say that about the openness, Mr. Speaker, is because they design it so the

educators can keep an eye on the students. When you keep an eye on the students, things like bullying go down.

The other thing I want to talk a little bit about is the geothermal, and I bring that across. I had the opportunity to be up in Carmacks the other day with the members for Mayo-Tatchun and Takhini-Kopper King. I'm not sure which fossil fuel they used to get there — but maybe it was a geothermal car or maybe a wind-operated vessel of some kind — but we need fossil fuels to operate. It is just part of doing business in the Yukon. We have to have alternate sources at some point, when we build these structures. We can't rely on one thing. We have to think of all things.

One of the other objectives was to ensure that the school is built well and built in a timely and fiscally responsible manner. We are confident that we can build a world-class facility that meets the current and long-term needs of our school community in a fiscally responsible manner. A decision was made in the spring to adapt and approve a cost-effective school design from Alberta. This design has been built in a number of Alberta communities. It was shared with the Yukon government by the Alberta government at no cost and we have thanked them for that.

During the bidding process earlier this spring, all the bids came in under our approved budget for this project. Clark Builders was the successful bidder on the construction contract, submitting the lowest bid. Mr. Speaker, the construction of the school is expected to start in the spring and to be completed in the fall of 2015. Our objective was a tender that would create local jobs and promote the local economy. Clark Builders has a solid reputation of working with communities on major projects. Over the next several months, Clark Builders will be working with local contractors to identify how they can participate. There are three sub-contractors already attached to that. They have had job fairs looking for managers. They have been all over looking to hire locally. We are pleased to see that Clark Builders have recently advertised a lot of these local project management jobs, with a priority to be given to Yukon residents. They have a good track record as a builder in Canada's north and as one of Canada's best 50 employers.

I wanted to speak to a few other projects we have going on, some of the ones we're currently managing. Alexander Street seniors housing complex — the building design incorporates a number of new innovations in the common areas of the residence. Some of these include a storage area, a recharging station for wheelchairs and scooters, which will also act as a heated waiting area for transportation pickup and drop-off, and a large common room, complete with a kitchen, to be used as a multi-purpose space for celebrations, meetings, personal services or clinics, exercise classes or other similar issues. Construction is underway, with scheduled completion in 2014. An allocation of \$4.78 million has been made to complete this work.

I'll talk a little bit about the Beaver Creek fire hall. The government is committed to replacing the Beaver Creek fire hall and providing a quality facility at a reasonable price that will address the needs of the community. Once construction of

the new fire hall is complete, the old facility will be demolished. The new fire hall has three truck bays, a training room, a radio room and a heated water storage space. Retender is scheduled for this April and completion is anticipated by the end of this year.

McDonald Lodge — work on the new Alexander McDonald Lodge is proceeding on schedule. Some changes to the original design have been made to help manage costs. This facility will be a single-storey modular building with approximately 1,100 square metres of area, linking to the hospital. The existing nursing station will be demolished to make room for the new lodge beside the new Dawson City hospital.

Sarah Steele replacement — the replacement of this building is an important part of maintaining Yukon's alcohol and drug services and programs. The scope and budget are currently being finalized for this project. This new, larger facility will be a great opportunity for my colleagues in Health and Social Services to offer improved addictions and mental health treatment and \$1.284 million is being provided for this phase of the project.

Watson Lake district office replacement — this project has recently been awarded to Ketz Pacific, a local company, and it is scheduled to be substantially completed by October 2014. Whitehorse continuing care facility — the Yukon government is currently in the planning stages and preparing the business case for a 300-bed continuing care facility in Whitehorse. There has been \$6.9 million allocated for the phase 1 design, which will include an initial 150 beds with a capacity to expand by another 150 beds as required in the future. St. Elias group home will see \$1.235 million allocated for this project. This is design, engineering and initial construction phase. It is anticipated that this facility will be open in late 2015.

This budget includes a multi-year capital plan that also enables Yukon private sector contractors to plan ahead in relation to our commitment to stable, predictable investment in key sectors of our economy. In view of the impact that government's capital projects have on Yukon business and industry, we will be tendering some of these capital projects in the fall in order to give contractors certainty about upcoming work, as well as ensuring the government get the best available pricing.

One of the projects we will be focusing on over the next years is the Faro RCMP detachment. It is in the planning stages to replace the Faro detachment, addressing the unique public safety needs of the community and the surrounding area. The budget provides \$318,000 in capital funding.

Salvation Army — subject to the Salvation Army's capital planning and funding process, the Yukon government will be proceeding to design for an expanded and improved Salvation Army facility that will include additional shelter beds and new transition housing.

The MRI — the Government of Yukon will provide an additional \$2.775 million to the Yukon Hospital Corporation, pending legislative approval, to build a temporary home for

the Whitehorse General Hospital's new magnetic MRI scanner.

The Mayo seniors residence — work has begun on determining the sustainability of the lot for the new energy efficient six-unit Mayo seniors housing complex. The tender for this facility design was let in February with the allocation of \$2.941 million and the project is slated to begin construction this fall. For the 48-unit Whitehorse seniors residence, \$12 million is being provided in this budget to reconstruct a new 48-unit seniors building in Whitehorse.

The Yukon government continues to fulfill its platform commitments one after another. We committed to continue to make energy efficiency and conservation a priority to reduce energy consumption, energy costs and emissions. The Department of Highways and Public Works is using Power Smart to reduce the energy used by each individual computer. That has reduced the energy consumption by 292,521 kilowatt hours per year, amounting to over \$37,000 in savings annually. ICT has begun working with other departments to expand the Power Smart initiative and reduce the government's electrical consumption by an additional estimated 1.78-million kilowatts, or another savings of over \$229,000 annually.

The Yukon government is also committed to improving access to government buildings by its employees, clients and the general public. This commitment means taking steps to ensure that persons with physical disabilities can safely enter, exit and function within any government building where they work or access public services.

In the past five years, Highways and Public Works has worked collaboratively with the Yukon Council on DisABILITY to perform some accessibility assessments on a number of YGs larger facilities.

More than one dozen assessments have been completed and the findings are taken into account during the capital and space planning. Yukon government has been steadily improving the accessibility of its building in five years by: ensuring that all new construction of leased space is accessible from day one; moving services from inaccessible buildings to ones that are accessible; responding to the specific access requirements of building tenants on an as-needed basis; identifying accessibility as a key factor when setting annual priorities for capital maintenance; and addressing accessibility issues during capital upgrades undertaken for any other reason.

The Government of Yukon is modernizing how it procures goods and services. This is to make government contract regulations, policies and procedures fair, consistent and accessible for all businesses. I've said it in this House before, but approximately 40 percent of the Yukon government's budget is expended through contracts. The government issues over 6,500 contracts annually.

A few milestones — two of them — occurred on April 1, 2013 with changes to the contracting and procurement regulations and the introduction of a new procurement support centre. We have a fiscal responsibility to ensure that we are getting better value for our money and at the same time, we

want to reduce the cost of doing business with us, generally providing better procurement services, standardization of contracts and much more.

By enhancing our relationship with the businesses, we are better able to match government needs and the availability for local resources and help businesses to be more competitive. So we will continue to work proactively with our local businesses to ensure that they are our suppliers of choice whenever possible.

There's a lot of other stuff in the Premier's budget that applies to the great riding of Kluane and, in my newsletter, I will be updating my constituents on that.

In conclusion, the 2014-15 budget is the third budget of this mandate. I can see, as many Yukoners can see, that we continue to make strategic and fiscally sound investments in Yukon's projects and people. This is a good budget for Yukon's economy and Yukon's people. From Beaver Creek to Watson Lake and all the way up to Old Crow, this is a very good budget for Yukoners and I will support it fully.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 14 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): I now call Committee of the Whole to order.

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate in Bill No. 14, First Appropriation Act, 2014-15.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 14: *First Appropriation Act, 2014-15*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate in Bill No. 14, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2014-15*.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I am pleased to rise in Committee of the Whole today to present the introductory remarks to Bill No. 14, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2014-15*, commonly referred to as the "2014-15 main estimates."

Madam Chair, according to our Bureau of Statistics, in 2003, Yukon's population was just under 30,000 people. Ten

years later, in 2013, Yukon's population was just over 36,000 people, an increase of 22 percent. For 2022, Yukon's population is projected to be approximately 42,000 people. I spoke at some length last spring about how Yukon's population is increasing and the infrastructure required to support our growing population. I spoke of our need to be planning and anticipating as a government — as Yukoners — to ensure we have the wherewithal to maintain a strong financial position allowing us to be responsive to our emerging and potential future needs.

Madam Chair, I spoke of our successive budgets that have built financial capacity and how we continue to build on that capacity with forward-looking financial plans. This budget further builds on that tradition and provides for sound, affordable and sustainable infrastructure investments. This is a very significant budget, a budget that initiates a number of important infrastructure investments on behalf of all Yukoners. This is not a spending binge as some members would have you believe.

Secure in a very strong financial position, our government has identified an opportunity to deliver this important budget, a budget of significance to all Yukoners, a budget with a vision of important investments over a multi-year horizon. This budget is not a one-off exercise; it highlights our commitments to provide important programs, services and investments to Yukoners while maintaining Yukon's strong financial position over the long term.

Madam Chair, the 2014-15 budget projects an annual surplus. Further, we continue to target balanced budgets throughout the next few years as members will note from our multi-year plan. With net financial assets forecast in the \$100-million range over the next four years, I am confident the Yukon public will appreciate our commitment to fiscal discipline. As we have done throughout our mandates, we continue to maintain a very healthy net financial resource position and to avoid net debt. In an environment where many other Canadian jurisdictions are working toward achieving balanced budgets and reducing their net debt, Yukon is already there. We have balanced budgets and we continue to avoid net debt. This is a very important consideration. Our 2014-15 budget builds on our history of delivering on commitments in "Moving Forward Together" and provides a strong financial base to be responsive to emerging priorities and opportunities as they arise.

I wish to take this opportunity to offer some observations on comments made in the media by the Member for Klondike. Our government recognizes that many potential solutions present themselves to address the challenges facing Yukon. It is the elected government that has the obligation to pursue solutions as we can best determine on behalf of Yukoners. I and my colleagues fully expect to be critiqued, and I appreciate the opportunity to engage in meaningful debate with all members opposite. Public open and productive discourse is always welcome, as it challenges our government to develop and implement appropriate solutions on behalf of all Yukoners.

As I said, Madam Chair, I appreciate open dialogue and I always look forward to meaningful debate. What I do not appreciate is the apparent character attack launched by the Klondike member. If I may quote the media extract, they are "...spending like drunken sailors..." This is an attack on my character, the character of my colleagues, with apparent impunity. It is not acceptable. This is not open dialogue; this is not meaningful debate; this is nothing more than grandstanding with the slur of our government's character.

Let me assure you once again, Madam Chair, that our budget is strong. Yes, it has significant capital spending targeted for this year and for the foreseeable future. I am proud of our efforts to provide meaningful investments for Yukon.

This is not the irresponsible spending of the aforementioned sailor. This is planned, significant, affordable, and sustainable investment on behalf of Yukoners. I cannot save the member from his folly; however, I can encourage him to first apologize to this Legislature for his inappropriate comments in the media and second, and perhaps more importantly, apologize to his constituents and the Yukon electorate at large for being disrespectful.

Our record stands for itself. Having managed the government's finances over a multi-year horizon since 2003-04 — in fact, a period of 12 years now — our government has delivered effective, responsible and disciplined spending initiatives and investments on behalf of all Yukoners. What this Legislature will recognize in our 2014-15 budget is the continuation of our efforts. We continue to plan, budget, and deliver the best of programs, services and investments for Yukoners.

The aspersion cast by the Member for Klondike is sadly unfortunate, and inappropriate. Last week, my colleague, the minister responsible for Economic Development, Environment, and the Public Service Commission summed it up very nicely. In order to be tabling this budget — which of course, includes the largest capital budget in the history of Yukon, while simultaneously offering a \$72-million surplus — it is important to recognize that our strong record of fiscal management has allowed us to do that.

Something we need to recognize is that, without the responsible decision-making that has occurred on this side of the House for the last number of years, we wouldn't be in the position to make these sorts of investments to create the sorts of opportunities that we are creating with this budget.

Not to put too fine a point on it, Madam Chair, our government continues to plan, to budget and deliver programs, services and investments for Yukoners with due consideration for fiscal discipline.

Before I move on to review some of the expenditure highlights of the 2014-15 budget, allow me to provide an overview regarding the Yukon government's financial position. This is now the third year that the Yukon government has included consolidated financial information within its budget documents. As I noted previously, I believe this to be a significant advancement toward achieving more transparency and accountability in government.

Having said that, I have also stated in previous comments in the Legislature that the primary purpose of an appropriation bill and the accompanying estimate document is to provide disclosure regarding expenditures of the unconsolidated entity — those departments and corporations that require spending authority to be approved by the Legislative Assembly through an appropriation act.

As such, we will be considering, debating and voting on Bill No. 14, the *First Appropriation Act, 2014-15*. Madam Chair, I wish to reiterate that the continued inclusion of consolidated summary financial information is an important component of financial reporting of any government. It provides an overview of the finances for the entire government entity, not only those departments subject to funding through the appropriation bill. However, as Bill No. 14 will be subject to debate by the Legislature, I will limit my comments here to the specifics identified in the subject bill and the accompanying summary financial information.

Members will find the supporting summary financial information for Bill No. 14, referred to as the non-consolidated summaries, starting on page S-5 of the 2014-15 estimates document.

Focusing on the unconsolidated side, total expenditures or appropriations identified in the 2014-15 main estimates are \$1,318,400,000, of which \$1.025 billion is allocated to the operation and maintenance and \$293.4 million represents our government's investment in capital.

Once again, our government has provided a strong budget for all Yukoners. Shortly I will speak of some of the expenditure highlights contained in this budget. Suffice to say, our government continues to deliver on our "Moving Forward Together" commitments and to make significant expenditures on behalf of all Yukoners in the delivery of program, services and capital investments.

We have done this without breaking the bank. With all things known today, all decisions to date considered, our 2014-15 budget forecasts an annual surplus of \$72.207 million. This means that revenues for the Government of Yukon are projected to exceed expenses for the 2014-15 fiscal year.

Of course, surplus is not the only indicator of our financial well-being that should be considered. As I have stated previously in this Legislature — and I am sure to repeat many more times — the preeminent measure of the government's financial strength is net debt.

We have a net financial resource position of \$140.422 million forecast for the year-end of March 31, 2015. Yukon government continues to maintain a healthy financial position and avoid net debt.

Most other Canadian jurisdictions are reporting net debt. This fact alone is significant, but let me phrase this in a different way. Net debt provides an indication of future revenue requirements for government. That is, net debt provides a measure of future revenues required to pay for the past. The significance of this should be of comfort to Yukoners. As one of the only jurisdictions in Canada not in a

net debt position, it will not be necessary to allocate future revenues to offset or pay for past expenditures.

Our government can say that we are paying as we go, and, yes, we do have positive net financial resources to invest in future programs and services. As I have said, our strong net financial resource position is the most important indicator of our government's fiscal health. This indicator speaks to the future and, as I have observed previously, the 2014-15 main estimate forecasts our net financial resource position to be a very healthy \$140.422 million.

One final comment on our financial health — our government continues to manage the Yukon's finances over a multi-year horizon. Our government saves when it is prudent to do so. Our government makes expenditure investments when it is necessary.

Again I find myself reflecting on the comments of the Member of Klondike.

Given the identified needs expressed by Yukoners and the opportunity to deliver on behalf of Yukoners, our government has indicated a number of important projects. I am taken aback by the member's observation that this is obviously a re-election budget. Is the member suggesting that, provided the same set of circumstances, a Liberal or NDP government would pass up on the opportunity to invest for Yukoners?

If I may, Madam Chair, this is perplexing — absolutely perplexing.

We see many needs and we are taking the opportunity to address those needs. We do this on behalf and for the benefit of Yukoners. As legislators, we need to look beyond the short term and consider the long term. We continue to plan and spend according to our plan. Our government has done this to the benefit of all Yukoners. We have done this without mortgaging the future.

I have stated previously that our financial health is extremely strong. Our history of significant investments continues with our government's 2014-15 budget, as our strong fiscal framework provides us the flexibility to be responsive to emerging priorities and opportunities as they are presented to Yukon.

I noted in my earlier comments that this 2014-15 budget reflects total expenditures of approximately \$1.318 billion, of which just over \$293 million is directed toward significant capital investments for the benefit of Yukoners, and approximately \$1.025 billion is allocated for operation and maintenance.

As I have emphasized throughout, our commitment to fiscal responsibility remains strong while we continue to invest strategically in the Yukon and for the benefit of all Yukoners.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of our more significant expenditure initiatives. While I am no less proud of what we have accomplished on the O&M side, in the interest of time, I will limit my comments to the capital investments identified in this budget. Of course, individual ministers will be happy to provide full details for their respective portfolios, once we get into the departments.

Our government has had a string of significant capital budgets — seven successive years where capital investment has exceeded \$200 million — and 2014-15 is no exception.

Before I move on to speak about some of the highlights, I would like to take this opportunity to speak a little about our recent history, and how our government has worked to maintain stable and consistent investment through our capital budgets. Much has been made about our government sitting on funds previously received under the northern housing trust. Like all jurisdictions across Canada, there is no denying Yukon government was the beneficiary of some significant transfers from Canada — northern strategy, northern housing, Building Canada, economic stimulus and affordable housing all come to mind. Each program had certain terms and conditions attached; for some arrangements, one significant condition was time. Some of these arrangements were time-limited and/or had expiration dates attached. Like it or not, Yukon's capacity to identify, to plan and then to deliver was limited.

Under the previous mandate, our government made the difficult choice to first leverage transfers subject to an expiration date, and therefore set upon delivering initiatives under Building Canada, economic stimulus, and affordable housing as a high priority.

As all projects under economic stimulus have been delivered and we find that Building Canada and affordable housing are winding down, our government now has northern housing to draw upon to support local employment opportunities while delivering much-needed affordable housing. Madam Chair, I applaud the efforts under the previous mandate to have had the vision to recognize the need for planned management of our capital expenditures. As some significant funding programs come to an end, our government has money in the bank, so to speak, to continue providing opportunities for Yukoners.

Having gone through the request for qualification, or RFQ process, and now into the request for proposal, or RFP process through this budget, Yukon Housing Corporation has identified \$9 million for the 2014-15 year; \$13.5 million over two years under its community and industry partnering program to develop a number of affordable housing initiatives for Yukoners. I believe this is an initiative all members should support.

As I see the time, Madam Chair, I will sit down and proceed through questions to finish with my opening remarks. Thank you.

Ms. Hanson: Madam Chair, my comments will be extremely brief because I do think it's in the interest of the whole of the Legislative Assembly to move forward to a review of each of the departments and in fact, have more detailed opportunity for questions, because I believe I've heard this speech before and I have to say that I was reminded of *Hamlet* here. To paraphrase Shakespeare: The gentleman doth protest too much, methinks. Yukoners are wise. They will judge for themselves.

In response to the briefing with respect to the Department of Finance, there was a question and I would ask the Minister

of Finance to address the question with respect to the total debt of our Yukon corporations. If he could itemize those and put on the record the outstanding debt of Yukoners through those Yukon corporations, that would be appreciated.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: As you are aware, our debt limit is \$400 million currently. Right now, it is used as follows: YDC is approximately \$116 million; YEC is approximately \$13 million; Yukon Hospital Corporation approximately \$49 million; Yukon Housing Corporation approximately \$13 million; and Yukon government approximately \$5 million for a total of \$196 million.

Chair: Does any other member wish to participate in general debate? Seeing that there are none, we will move on to the departments.

We are going to start with the Department of Justice, Vote 8. Does the member need a few minutes?

Some Hon. Member: (inaudible)

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 10 minutes.

Recess

Chair: We're going to go into general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice.

Department of Justice

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Madam Chair, I rise to speak to the Department of Justice main operation and maintenance and capital budget for 2014-15.

The budget before you strategically allocates resources so that we can continue to deliver programs and services that build safe and vibrant communities. The budget also positions the department to continue to provide better access to justice for Yukoners — in the next year and well into the future, I might add.

We remain committed to providing quality correctional services, innovative and responsive policing, and services for victims or persons involved in the Yukon's justice system. We are also committed to modernizing our operations and upgrading our infrastructure in order to provide efficient and economical justice services.

Our justice system must meet the unique needs and values of Yukoners. We also need to be cognizant of our counterparts in other jurisdictions across Canada and keep pace. As we amend our legislation and regulation, we must also modernize our business in order to administer our justice system efficiently. This budget is a forward-looking framework that represents good governance and allocates resources to initiatives that provide a high-quality justice system for all Yukoners.

The Department of Justice continues to strategically partner with the RCMP to ensure a professional, efficient and effective territorial police service, one that indeed represents good value for money and one that promotes the principles of public trust, transparency, and accountability.

As I've noted in past addresses, Yukon signed a new 20-year territorial police services agreement with Canada in

March of 2012. The agreement gives the territory more control over key areas, such as cost, governance, and operational and financial accountability. As part of the service agreement, there are provisions outlined for Canada and Yukon to jointly maintain policing infrastructure throughout the territory and, as such, I was pleased to announce that Faro will be the site of a new, three-member RCMP detachment. \$318,000 has been allocated to commence planning and design to replace the existing 43-year-old detachment. This project has a 30-percent — or \$95,000 — cost recovery from the RCMP.

Today I'm pleased to update members that the new arrest processing unit is preparing to open in April and the project will come in on budget. The arrest processing unit is a joint initiative between the Department of Justice and the RCMP in response to the recommendations from the review of Yukon's police force to provide better care for those in custody. This is a great example of how we can create innovative Justice services through collaborative partnerships.

Last year, capital funding of just over \$3.6 million was allocated for this project, with \$1.351 million being recoverable from the RCMP.

The unit will provide care and protection for 46 persons in police custody, including acutely intoxicated and other vulnerable individuals. We look forward to opening the unit, and I thank all of the people who were involved in its planning.

I'd also like to take the opportunity to share that 85 percent of the recommendations presented in the *Sharing Common Ground* report have, indeed, been implemented.

The report's 33 recommendations have served as the foundation for establishing a new relationship between Yukon citizens and the RCMP. Therefore, to continue to deliver the recommendations in the report, \$90,000 has been reserved from the 2014-15 operation and maintenance budget to fund its ongoing implementation.

Maintaining a productive partnership model with the RCMP is of great importance, and we look forward to working together to deliver quality policing services to Yukoners.

Madam Chair, did you know that FASD is the most common, 100-percent preventable disability? Yet it costs Canada approximately \$6.2 billion annually. Yukon is taking a leadership role on the federal, provincial and territorial stage to address the needs of persons diagnosed with FASD, and to learn how to make the justice system better suited for those individuals.

As members will recall, the departments of Justice and Health and Social Services are conducting a ground-breaking FASD prevalence study to better understand the prevalence of FASD, mental health and substance abuse problems in Yukon's corrections population.

Time-limited operation and maintenance funding of \$367,000 has been allocated for the 18-month study, where approximately 150 offenders will be voluntarily assessed. The University of British Columbia Children's and Women's Health Centre of British Columbia Research Ethics Board

approved the study methodology on February 18 of this year, and recruitment and assessments will be soon underway. Colleagues across Canada in both justice and health and social service fields are looking forward to the results of this important study.

The Department of Justice delivers diverse services for those affected by crime, and it works with the community to provide programs that prevent crime and make our community safer. This year, \$500,000 has been allocated for phase 2 of augmenting the Yukon *Victims of Crime Strategy* project, which is a funding agreement with Justice Canada. Of these 2014-15 funds, \$425,000 is being allocated from the operation and maintenance budget and \$75,000 from the capital budget. These funds are 100-percent recoverable from Canada.

We know that to prevent crime and to help those affected by crime, we must look for specialized and collaborative programming opportunities. I'd like to share some examples of our work in this area. Last year the crime prevention and victim services trust fund awarded more than \$330,000 to support 18 projects across the Yukon to reduce crime, prevent violence against women and children, address the root causes of crime, provide information about crime prevention and victimization, and provide services to victims.

This project is important because it supports grassroots, community-led initiatives that have proven to achieve results. The department is also leading the implementation of Project Lynx, which is a Child Advocacy Centre initiative that coordinates a team of multi-disciplinary inter-agency partners in the delivery of services uniquely tailored for children and for youth. The project adopts current national best practices and it facilitates consent-based services for young victims and witnesses of crime.

Furthermore, I'd like to share that we continue to have great success with the safer communities and neighbourhoods — otherwise known as SCAN — unit in the Department of Justice. The unit received 68 new complaints of illegal activity in 2013. Of those 68 complaints, 98 percent were related to trafficking in controlled substances. SCAN took action to resolve most of these cases through landlord-assisted evictions or by way of formal warnings. Since its inception in 2006, SCAN has received more than 591 complaints. Of these, 566 were in relation to trafficking in controlled substances. The capital budget has allocated \$8,000 this fiscal year for specialized surveillance equipment to ensure the unit has the right tools to effectively deliver the program.

Modernized business processes and integrating new technology is allowing the Department of Justice to deliver more efficient and economical justice services to Yukoners. The department is tackling multi-year business improvement initiatives that are both improving our service delivery and also saving time and money, which is a benefit to all Yukoners.

I would like to congratulate the Court Services team for successfully implementing two new court technologies. The new digital audio recording system is now live in Whitehorse, Watson Lake and Dawson City courtrooms and mobile units are being used for circuit court.

This is a significant business improvement project, but more importantly, it allows individuals to access court proceedings and create or obtain court transcripts at lower costs. Court clerks who are already present in the courtrooms operate the system and additional contracted court recording services would no longer be needed.

Another successful project that is near completion is the video remand project, which involved installing video conferencing equipment to connect Whitehorse Correctional Centre with the law courts in order to allow court appearances by video. This increases public security and means that an accused does not miss out on work and program opportunities because of a court appearance. It also reduces the costs associated with transporting inmates. Court Services has successfully tested the video conferencing technology and conducted several pilot remand appearances. It is expected that the video remand system will be fully operational in the coming months. We see the value in technologies like this and therefore plan to continue to build our video conferencing technology. The 2014-15 capital budget allocated \$75,000 for video conferencing equipment that will facilitate out-of-courtroom testimony for child and youth victims and witnesses.

The purchase of this equipment is 100-percent recoverable from Canada and aligns with our mandate to provide responsive victim services, which I mentioned earlier.

The replacement of the court registry information system to the new justice enterprise information network, otherwise known as JEIN, is still underway and great progress is being made and \$407,000 from the capital budget has been allocated to this multi-year project. Last year, I highlighted that two modules of the system are helping Victim Services with their case management needs. Currently there are 20 users in three communities, and approximately 1,500 files in the system. It has improved workflow and the efficiency of that office. The Sheriff's Office also began using its new modules in the spring of 2013.

Extensive business preparation activities are still being conducted to prepare the court registry to undertake the systems development phase of the project, which is scheduled to begin this spring. Implementation of JEIN for criminal court is expected in the 2015-16 fiscal year, followed by civil court in the 2016-17 year.

Preserving our physical assets and planning for the future is critical, and therefore this fiscal budget allocates funds for maintenance and renovations on our buildings. The Law Centre requires immediate attention and, subsequently, \$1.2 million of the capital budget has been reserved to complete this important work. The 2014-15 budget requests: \$20,000 for additional office space; \$738,000 to replace the building chiller, or air conditioning system; \$50,000 for a skylight replacement design; \$346,000 for energy upgrades; and \$50,000 for a structural building assessment.

Ongoing renovations are also needed to ensure the continued health and safety of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. A total of \$40,000 from the capital budget has been allocated for these improvements. It is time to finally say

goodbye to the old Whitehorse Correctional Centre. Demolition preparation is underway and a review determined that it would far more costly to refurbish that building than it would be to demolish it. Highways and Public Works — and I would like to thank the minister responsible for his work on this — has developed a demolition plan and preparatory work has indeed begun. The 2014-15 capital budget allocates \$1.3 million for this demolition project.

Finally, Madam Chair, I would like to thank and recognize the Department of Justice employees for their commitment and dedication to delivering our justice programs and important services. We have a government mandate to attract, to develop and to engage talented people to continue to provide high-quality service to the public and therefore this year's budget has allocated funds in this regard. We must strategically address our human resource needs and provide staff the right tools and the right training for them to excel at their jobs. In both the capital and operation and maintenance budget, funds have been reallocated for branch human resource needs, technology upgrades and professional development.

Funds have been permanently reallocated from the Community Justice and Public Safety division to fund positions within the department, including additional positions within Legal and Regulatory Services, Land Titles Office and Court Services.

We also have allocated a capital budget of: \$60,000 to provide 70 replacement computers, 25 replacement monitors and seven laptops; \$4,000 for new printers; and \$7,000 for replacement of court chairs.

Madam Chair, \$41,000 from the operation and maintenance budget will be used to fund wireless access points and virtual serving hosting.

The 2014-15 budget before you today aligns with our vision to deliver justice programs and services that foster harmonious relationships and that build safe, healthy and peaceful communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the main operation and maintenance and capital budget for 2014-15. I'd like to now welcome other members to ask questions and debate this important budget.

Ms. Moorcroft: I would like to thank the minister for his opening remarks, and I may have some questions that he spoke to in his opening remarks and I didn't quite capture everything he said, so if he would be patient when I do have questions, that would be appreciated.

I also want to extend a thank you to the Department of Justice officials for a very thorough briefing earlier in the week.

One of the questions I asked officials about was the cost of outside legal counsel. The officials indicated that, although individual departments will cover the expenses of lawsuits, the Department of Justice provides somewhat of a central agency role. They review the contracts for legal services and they also review the bills as they come in from outside legal firms.

I asked what the anticipated cost is of outside legal counsel for the government in the coming year. I was given an estimate of \$575,000, but I'm not certain if that was for the previous fiscal year or for the current fiscal year. So I'm going to start with that question for the minister. Does he have available with him the total costs across the Government of Yukon for outside legal counsel for the 2013-14 fiscal year, and does he have the budget estimates for the 2014-15 fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for her question. As it stands today, there is no estimate for the 2014-15 year. The estimate that's provided there of \$575,000 approximately is for the 2013-14 budget year.

Ms. Moorcroft: I would like to move on to the Legal Aid budget.

Legal Aid in the 2013-14 fiscal year had to request additional funding in order to meet their expenses over the course of the year and they also applied for an increase in their core funding.

I see in the budget that there is a \$21,000 increase to legal services, which is a rather modest increase. The last time we were speaking about this in the Assembly, the minister indicated that they were doing a review of Legal Aid and the Legal Services Society, and I would like to ask the minister if he can let us know when he anticipates that the department might be in a position to respond to the request from Legal Aid for additional core funding.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for her question. The increase is 2.75 percent to the legal aid budget, and that is the amount of \$21,000.

As for the questions as to future funding and the relationship between the Department of Justice and Legal Aid Society with the current request that is on the table, there has been a lot of work that has been done. I have been very proud of the work that has been done between the department and Legal Aid Society.

There is some fine-tuning that is being done right now, but there is no announcement at this time as far as the 2014-15 budget goes. As you will note, there is no line item in the budget and more work is needed, but we are working with them and are afforded with a good relationship with Legal Aid.

We do look forward to working with them. This government has proven in the past that, when there were cases before the courts where they weren't sure if they would have enough money to get through those cases, the department has always come to the table.

Just a note here — since 2011-12, Yukon has provided approximately \$850,000 in additional funding to Legal Aid. That truly speaks to the relationship we have with them moving forward, and I'd like to thank the Legal Aid Society and everyone who works there for the good work they do providing legal services to those who are in need of it.

Ms. Moorcroft: The fact that the federal funding has remained static since 2003-04 is certainly a contributing factor to the budgetary challenges that the Legal Services Society faces. The minister indicated that the government has come to

the table with additional funding as needed, and in particular for when there are large trials that may not have been anticipated when the budget estimates were put together.

It is unfortunate, though, that last year the society had to suspend some of their services for a period of time, until they were informed that the shortfall would be covered by the Yukon government.

The minister indicated when we were in debate on this item last year that Yukon Justice would be involved with the Legal Services Society in a review and so it has been underway for approximately a year.

Can the minister be a little more specific on when he thinks they might finish the ongoing work that he just referred to?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: The Department of Justice, as I mentioned, worked with the assistance of the Yukon Legal Aid Society, looking at longer term funding solutions for Legal Aid in Yukon. As I mentioned, we funded Legal Aid fully for this 2013-14 fiscal year as requested, and we are in the final stages of reviewing future funding arrangements. Following the work that is still laid out, potentially an announcement would be made when that work is complete.

In the meantime, Legal Aid will and does have sufficient funding to continue to operate and they have indeed a significant surplus right now of about \$300,000 in their account that they can draw on in the event of an emergency with their base amount flow as of April 14. There is more work to be done with Legal Aid. We are afforded a good relationship with the team there and the Department of Justice, but as I said, there's no announcement to be made on the floor of the Legislature here today, but there may be an announcement as work continues with the Legal Aid Society.

Ms. Moorcroft: I would like to turn now to the *Sharing Common Ground* report and the recommendations related to the *Sharing Common Ground — Review of Yukon's Police Force — Final Report*. The minister indicated that those recommendations were 80-percent completed and that he had \$90,000 that was reserved in the current budget year to fund ongoing implementation. I have two questions. One is: Could the minister provide by a legislative return a report on the recommendations that have been completed that were found in *Sharing Common Ground*? My second question is: Will the department be providing ongoing funding related to the recommendations in *Sharing Common Ground* that has been given to the coalition of Yukon women's groups that have been working with the department and RCMP on recommendations that were specific to women's concerns?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: As for the first question that the member opposite was asking, we do have documentation available on the 33 recommendations that have been already addressed. As for the second question, I am going to ask the member to repeat the second question as we were looking up some other information that she was asking. I apologize for missing that question.

Ms. Moorcroft: The Department of Justice budget has provided funding to a coalition of Yukon women's groups to work with the department and the RCMP on implementing the

recommendations that were of particular concern to those dozen or so women's groups. Most of those were related to sexual assault, and to violence against women. The coalition had some funding to enable them to participate on an equal footing with government officials, and they weren't expected to work for free.

I'm asking the minister whether there will be funds in the \$90,000 that's reserved for *Sharing Common Ground* implementation to continue to support the coalition of Yukon women's groups that has been working with the department on the implementation of the *Sharing Common Ground* recommendations.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Deputy Chair, I was just looking up some information when the member asked the first question, so going back to the point, it is anticipated that a formal report of the *Sharing Common Ground* implementation would be tabled sometime in the coming months. I can assure that the member opposite will receive that information.

As to the \$90,000 in the budget right now to progress the *Sharing Common Ground* report — I would like to mention while I'm on the floor of the Legislature about everyone who has worked on the *Sharing Common Ground* report. There's tremendous work that has been done within our community with NGOs, volunteers, citizens, and the Women's Directorate. Certainly there's good work that has been done.

With regard to the members opposite's question, I am going to have to get back to her on that specific information. We'll get that information hopefully soon here, and if the member opposite would like to ask, we'll go into further questions.

Ms. Moorcroft: My next question relates to the *Coroners Act* and to the conduct of coroner's inquests. The family of Teresa Scheunert, a nurse who died at Watson Lake hospital a couple of years ago, has indicated publicly that they would like to know from the coroner's office whether they will be given standing at the inquest, whether they will be able to call expert witnesses, whether they will be able to present evidence, whether they will have the ability to examine and cross-examine witnesses as well as to make submissions and arguments.

Can the minister indicate whether the coroner's office will be contacting the families of the deceased for the inquest that is scheduled in June and whether the families will have the ability to present evidence and will be given disclosure to the evidence that may already have been presented by other parties?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: You many already know this, but Mr. Norman Leibel, former deputy chief coroner of British Columbia who retired just last year, was appointed as coroner in the Yukon on March 9 for the purpose of presiding at the Scheunert/Johnny inquest.

Coroner Leibel has extensive experience in conducting coroner's inquests and sudden death investigations through his 12 years with the B.C. Coroners Service. Coroner Leibel will make all decisions relevant to the inquest, including what witnesses will be called, what evidence can be entered and

ensuring that the inquest truly remains fact-finding and not fault-finding.

The Yukon Coroner's Service may not make any findings of legal responsibility but, as I said, it's a fact-finding body. A coroner's inquest is a public formal proceeding where evidence is presented to a six-member jury of community members. The inquest jury is charged with considering the evidence presented and determining, if it's possible, the identity of the deceased and where, when, how and by what means the death occurred. The purpose of a coroner's inquest is to confirm facts of a death, and also to focus public attention on preventable deaths, to answer public innuendo and rumour, and to assure the public that systems for the prevention of death are in place. A coroner's inquest jury is entitled to make recommendations aimed at preventing future similar deaths.

The Coroner's Service, like the courts, must remain independent from political influence.

As such, it is inappropriate to comment on the floor of the Legislature any aspect of an inquest or a decision of the coroner's office.

Some Hon. Member: (inaudible)

Deputy Chair (Mr. Hassard): A recess has been requested. Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Deputy Chair: We'll continue debate on Justice. Ms. Moorcroft.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Deputy Chair, I just want to be clear for the record that the Yukon NDP believes completely that inquests should be conducted by independent and adequately funded bodies, and we will continue to press the government as well to update the *Coroners Act*.

I want to raise the issue of land titles. The Premier said in his budget speech that the government is working closely with Yukon First Nations to determine options for addressing First Nation concerns related to registering land under the *Land Titles Act*, but there are no financial commitments that would be needed to make that happen in the Department of Justice budget.

Before the last election, the Yukon Party said it was open to working with Yukon First Nations to develop opportunities for housing subdivisions on settlement lands. In fact, before the last election the government announced that it had signed a letter of understanding with Kwanlin Dun First Nation to work cooperatively on paving the way for new housing opportunities in Whitehorse on settlement land. The letter of understanding committed the governments to work together to develop a framework to develop long-term leasing of affordable lots that would be available to all Yukoners.

Providing settlement land for housing benefits First Nations by generating revenue from leases and eliminating the

property tax, as property taxes become the responsibility of the leaseholder.

Kwanlin Dun receives a portion of the income tax paid by residents on settlement land through a standard provision in the land claim agreements and the negotiated tax-sharing arrangements. One of the key issues that needs to be solved is developing a land registry system to satisfy the banks and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation before they will lend money to build on land that is not owned but is under a long-term lease.

Providing housing opportunities on leased aboriginal and is new to the Yukon, but the opportunities and advantages are very clear and there may be experience of practice in other jurisdictions that could be helpful.

The Premier said that the land titles modernization project is now in its second phase and is identifying options for an appropriate computer system and business processes and that the government aims to table a new land titles act in the fall of 2014. Issues related to settlement land leases need to be resolved so a solution can be included in the new act that the government intends to table this fall.

Delivering on this pre-election commitment will provide important financial opportunities for Yukon First Nation governments. Does the government have a timeline to work with First Nations to finally come through on this promise to work with First Nations to develop opportunities for housing subdivisions on settlement lands?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for her question.

The land titles modernization is something that I have been keeping a very close eye on, and I should mention that I'm very appreciative of the work that has been done thus far by everyone involved — by our government, by NGOs, stakeholders, other jurisdictions that have welcomed us into their land titles office to see and learn how their processes are different from ours. It gives us ideas for how we can move forward with our land titles modernization as well.

The Yukon government has advised First Nations that it is open to discussing options for registering category A or B settlement land in the Land Titles Office in a manner that would not necessitate the First Nation giving up any aboriginal title on that land.

Any potential option would have to address the interest of the First Nation in maintaining aboriginal title on its land and the interest of government in maintaining the integrity of the land titles system here in our territory. All privately titled land in Yukon is registered in the Land Titles Office. Discussions on a potential option that might meet all interests are definitely ongoing.

The *Umbrella Final Agreement* anticipated that First Nations would establish their own registry for settlement lands and our understanding is that this is exactly what some First Nations are indeed doing. Presumably that registry would be fully receptive to the specific needs and interests of First Nations and settlement land. The best source of information on the proposed First Nation land registry is from those First Nations involved in that registry.

Backing up a couple of questions, I committed to getting some information for the member opposite. We do recognize the importance of ongoing dialogue and strong relationships in addressing policing and community safety issues. Relationships with women's organizations, police and government have been indeed strengthened over the past few years during the *Sharing Common Ground* implementation. This improved working relationship is leading to improved trust between organizations and better service for clients. Department officials are currently working with the women's coalition to explore ways to continue to provide financial support to that coalition.

Ms. Moorcroft: I thank the minister for his update and would point out that in exploring ways to continue to support the coalition, it's pretty clear that the coalition, in order to continue its work, is going to require some funding. So I do want to advocate for that and hope that the minister and his department will be able to continue to financially support the coalition of women's groups that is working on the policing initiative.

I would like to turn now to the summary document from the briefing that profiled changes from last year's main estimates to this year's main estimates. In the Community Justice and Public Safety division there was a reallocation of \$637,000, which was then applied to other branches within the department. In the detail, it indicates that there was a decrease in personnel of \$454,000. I would like the minister to provide us with the information on what that \$454,000 decrease at Whitehorse Correctional Centre will mean to that facility.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for her question. The decreases for the Whitehorse Correctional Centre are a result of a continuous review of the staffing requirements within the new Correctional Centre and as a result of correctional redevelopment. Several positions were deemed to not be required at this time and funding for those positions were transferred within the department to fund positions elsewhere. In addition, strategies for delivery of some services have indeed changed.

WCC will continue to monitor staffing requirements going forward to ensure that there is adequate staffing for the correctional facility. Reductions at the Yukon Adult Resource Centre are a result of a reduction in available beds at the facility. Those beds have been made available to the Yukon Adult Resource Centre for offer to other users. The resulting savings have been transferred within the department.

To provide a little bit of background, what I can tell you is that it has been reallocated from Community Justice and Public Safety & Investigations to other branches within the Department of Justice. For example, in personnel, there was \$454,000 from WCC, so one FTE. This position was transferred to Whitehorse Correctional Centre approximately three years ago. The incumbent has been on a temporary assignment at Health and Social Services for the last two years. The position has not been backfilled during that time; however, the contracted psychologist services have been used to meet assessment needs, as required.

Also, one FTE, WCC supervisor, offender services — the original case management model for the Correctional Centre included three case managers. Although all three positions were filled at one time, the third position was not used for case management purposes. As the count has dropped considerably since the opening of the new facility and the sentenced count remains low, the loss of this position will not currently impact case management operations. Case management capacity will also be strengthened in part if successful implementation of the First Nation reintegration worker is accomplished.

For three FTEs — correctional officers — the positions were not staffed. The staffing model anticipated dedicated resources to assist with medical transfers, escorted temporary absences and women's programming. Alternative strategies will be developed to further our objective of enhancing women's programming.

Yukon Adult Resource Centre contract of \$100,000 — the contract for the ARC was renegotiated last fiscal year for a number of reasons, one being that, despite training their staff, the Salvation Army have not run any offender programs as per the deliverables of previous contracts and realized that they did not have the capacity to do so. Also, because the Yukon Adult Resource Centre no longer has the same number of beds available for Corrections' use — it was diminished from 13 to 11 — this transfer will not affect current operations.

Another allotment allocation of \$83,000 was relocated with the branches of Community Justice and Public Service divisions.

Ms. Moorcroft: Before I came into the House this afternoon, I reviewed some of the questions that I had put on the record when we were debating the Justice main estimates last year, and one of the questions that I don't recall seeing an answer to was the total amount of overtime pay at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre over the 2013-14 year.

I would like to ask the minister if he has that information on what were the overtime costs of personnel at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and do they anticipate that increasing or decreasing this year.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: The Whitehorse Correctional Centre, as members here will already know, is a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week operation. 24-hour, seven-day operations present staffing and scheduling challenges that are unlike typical government services. These 24/7 operations require an overtime budget based on the terms of the collective agreement for statutory holidays. The Correctional Centre operates under policies that set operational staffing complements to ensure the safety and to ensure the security of the entire facility, the staff and the inmates.

Designated posts must be filled even when it creates overtime costs. In fact, overtime costs are driven by a number of factors, including statutory holiday pay, staff vacation, illness, training, special leave, recruitment lags, inmate escorts, coverage while inmates are hospitalized and the need to ensure a minimum staff complement at the Correctional Centre itself. Taking that into consideration, the Whitehorse Correctional Centre has developed an overtime reduction

strategy that focuses on having more available qualified auxiliaries through: enhanced advertisement of correctional officer vacancies and increased correctional officer basic training courses; filling vacancies as soon as possible that occur through retirement, staff resignation or sometimes staff promotion; maximizing the number of designated reinforcement workers permitted by the collective agreement; and advanced planning for required training.

The total overtime to date as of March 14 is \$484,845.20. Of that, \$201,444.30 is directly related to statutory holiday pay. The total overtime for the 2012-13 year was \$598,478.11. Of that, \$272,168.42 was directly related to statutory holiday pay. Many factors contributing to overtime cannot be easily anticipated or managed. For example, in May of 2013, 44 percent of overtime incurred was due to an emergency medical escort out of the territory and coverage at the Whitehorse General Hospital. In August 2013, 45 percent of the overtime was due to the supervision of two prisoners at the Whitehorse General Hospital.

I commend the staff of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre for making themselves available for overtime in times of need. Their work does not go unnoticed by our officials and by me and by this government. They have certainly made a great impact moving from the old facility into the new one. Standing on the floor of the Legislature today, I thank them for their work.

Ms. Moorcroft: I would also like to thank the minister for providing the Opposition with a tour of Whitehorse Correctional Centre last week, and to thank the staff, both the ones I met at the tour and at the open house, and all the staff who work at the facility.

My next question is related to training for the Whitehorse Correctional Centre staff. I understand there has been a fairly large turnover and a lot of new hires at Whitehorse Correctional Centre in the past year. I'm wondering what opportunities the staff have for meetings with elders or for in-service training with members of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre Elders Committee. Do correctional officers have, as part of their training or orientation, any education about the Yukon's experience of residential school history? That is certainly something that is a contributing factor to the criminality in the Yukon and for people who may end up incarcerated at Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I again thank the member opposite for her question. The Whitehorse Correctional Centre has a sufficient staff complement to run the Correctional Centre safely. The Whitehorse Correctional Centre has a total of 78 permanent full-time equivalent positions. The Correctional Centre also employs 22 auxiliary-on-call correctional officers, plus eight reinforcement workers — for example, full-time correctional officer positions. In addition, the Correctional Centre has 15 casual correctional officers.

In the past fiscal year, Whitehorse Correctional Centre has undertaken two external recruitment initiatives. WCC has hired 14 auxiliary-on-call correctional officers and 22 casual correctional officers in the past fiscal year.

This past fiscal year, the Whitehorse Correctional Centre has also hired a new superintendent, a manager of health services — who the member opposite met during her tour — a manager of correctional services, casual cooks, two registered nurses and a licenced practical nurse as well as the reintegration worker. In this past fiscal year, the Correctional Centre has experienced turnover issues that are really no different from those experienced by other correctional facilities. Working in this facility requires shift work, which can be very challenging for families. Because it is a 24/7 operation, it requires a pool of auxiliary-on-call employees to cover vacations, illnesses, training, planned and unplanned vacancies.

The men and women at Whitehorse Correctional Centre work with some of the most troubled people in our society and face challenges in their everyday jobs that are sometimes difficult for us to appreciate. People leave the field for a variety of personal reasons. Those who stay and make corrections their career of choice are dedicated. They are hardworking individuals who demonstrate a great deal of understanding for the clients and resilience to the demands of this job. As I said before, I am very proud of the corrections staff at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and their dedication to the inmates they work with for making Yukon a safer place to live.

Ms. Moorcroft: I am very pleased to hear the minister report that the inmate count is down and that there are fewer people being incarcerated. I would like to ask the minister about the fetal alcohol spectrum disorder research project in the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. He indicated that University of British Columbia had approved the ethics review. When I questioned the minister about this last year, he said that he would be able to provide the Opposition members of the Legislature with the terms of reference for that FASD research project, once the ethics review had been completed. That's my first question.

The minister indicated that the data collection would be starting soon, and my second question is: Can he provide more specific information on when "soon" might be? Do they anticipate finishing that in two years or three years? What would the end date be? Do they have a doctor on the project? Will there be a University of British Columbia physician or professor conducting or overseeing the data collection?

I think I had better stop there and let the minister respond before I come back with my final questions.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: The Yukon Department of Justice implemented an FASD prevalence study in two phases. Overall, the study will determine the prevalence of FASD and identify mental health and substance abuse problems in Yukon's adult correctional population.

Phase one completed the research methodology and the project plan. The study is currently in phase two, which includes obtaining formal ethics approval — which has happened — recruiting adult Yukon offenders to participate in this study, assessments and diagnoses of the participants, data analysis and a final report outlining results and outlining conclusions. The University of British Columbia completed its

ethics approval of the project in February of this year. Participant recruitment can now begin.

The process for assessing adults for FASD requires a team of clinical professionals to administer medical exams, neuropsychological tests and multiple interviews. The studies' research team has been assembled and trained: a principal investigator, a study manager, a psychologist, a physician, a research assistant, a supervising neuropsychologist and a post-study coordinator. The next step is to launch a pilot assessment study with three to five participants to be run at the Correctional Centre itself.

The Department of Justice is trying to learn more about how many offenders in fact do have FASD and to better meet their needs in the future. FASD is not actually a diagnosis, but rather it is an umbrella word that describes permanent brain damage that is associated with prenatal exposure to alcohol. Persons with FASD experience difficulties, such as decision-making, problem-solving, mental health problems or drug and alcohol abuse.

There is very little data on the prevalence of FASD in the criminal justice system, and I can assure all members of this House that when we have federal, provincial and territorial Justice ministers meetings, the nation is watching this study very, very closely.

Madam Chair, the participants in the study will have an assessment of their specific needs and strengths, which may or may not include finding FASD. This report can help to inform service providers where intervention should focus for that particular individual. This research does not actually target individuals who are suspected of having FASD or prenatal exposure to alcohol. Rather, it will recruit a wide range of individuals with and without behavioural and health challenges to accurately determine the prevalence of FASD among the adult correctional population here in our great territory.

The member was asking about terms of reference and data collection, and that information will all be a part of a very exciting announcement coming soon.

Ms. Moorcroft: That was very similar to the remarks I heard at the briefing from the officials — that there would be an announcement coming soon. When I asked for the terms of reference, I want to be clear that I'm looking for a copy of the research methodology and the project plan. I'm interested in how the data might be used to affect services and programs in future years, and I'd like to know if the study will be able to help the government in looking to identify non-incarceration options for adults with FASD.

The minister indicated that there would be some reporting on where interventions should focus for individuals who may have FASD. I guess I will just have to wait for the announcement, but I want to be clear so the minister is aware of what information I'll be looking for, as hopefully part of that announcement.

I'd like to ask the minister about the Whitehorse Correctional Centre elders advisory committee input into programming. They would like to feel that they have more of an influence on the nature of programming and the services

that are provided to aboriginal inmates. Generally, between 75 and 85 percent of the inmates at Whitehorse Correctional Centre are of First Nation, Métis or Inuit ancestry.

Can the minister answer whether the elders advisory committee has made any specific recommendations regarding programming and what attention has been given to that?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for her question and her interest in the Correctional Centre.

Madam Chair, First Nations cultural training is provided by the Whitehorse Correctional Centre elders advisory group, or EAG. The WCC elders advisory group provides personal delivery of traditional teachings and oral histories. The WCC elders advisory group produced their own historical documentary video for presentation to the staff of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

Existing WCC training will be supplemented by Yukon First Nation history and cultures, a program developed by the First Nation initiative for the Northern Institute of Social Justice. WCC will adopt this program to supplement existing correctional officer basic training as well as providing the training to existing staff.

In addition to providing a wide range of basic training for new correctional officers, the Correctional Centre provides the following regular training and recertification to its officers — that would be case management and programs — fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, specifically — mental health, first aid, motivational-based interviewing skills, conflict resolution and crisis intervention, working with female offenders, first aid, CPR and automated external defibrillator and use of force as part of the national use of force model.

Also, specifically to the elders advisory committee — it was formed in 2007 and is made up at the present time of nine elders, representing several First Nation communities. The elders contribute to the Whitehorse Correctional Centre by providing one-on-one counselling with offenders, participating in ceremonies — such as solstice, smudging, cooking, talking circles and other spiritual services — teaching offenders and staff about the First Nation culture, and liaising with offenders, staff and communities.

The elders commit their time at WCC in accordance with their personal availability, and I thank them for making their time available. The elders advisory committee meets once a month with the Whitehorse Correctional Centre management to provide counselling on aspects of programming and operations. The elders have a very calming influence when they are in the Correctional Centre. The management team would like them to be there as much as they can. It is entirely appropriate for elders to play a role in mitigating conflicts that may arise between inmates and between inmates and staff.

Officials report that elders are very effective in resolving conflicts between inmates because of the respect the inmates have for them and for their work.

The Whitehorse Correctional Centre has completed a strategic planning exercise that involved Corrections branch, First Nation staff, the elders advisory committee, the community advisory board and inmate representatives in the development of a First Nation programming strategy.

The first phase of the project was to consult on ideas for programming that could be offered at the centre. Suggested programming that is being pursued immediately includes things such as increasing the number of elders on the advisory committee, increasing traditional teaching — such as crafts and drum-making — exploring available resources for language classes and increasing the use of talking circles. Advertisements were run in the local papers, seeking people who were interested in delivering First Nation programming.

Longer-term initiatives to be examined this next fiscal year would include things like undertaking further research on First Nation cultural programming, enhancing staff training, incorporating First Nation culture into case-management practices, and exploring restorative justice programming.

Ms. Moorcroft: I have asked the minister to provide information in the past, related to separate confinement. Separate confinement — or solitary confinement, as it is more usually referred to — is the confinement of a prisoner alone in a cell for all or nearly all of the day, with minimal environmental stimulation and minimal opportunity for social interaction. I believe that lockdown is usually for 23 hours a day.

The Whitehorse Correctional Centre's inmate handbook tells inmates that — and I quote: “You can be placed in separate confinement if you are a danger to another person, or a danger to yourself, or for security or medical reasons (including mental illness).”

Recent media reports highlight the disturbing fact that mentally ill inmates are increasingly held in solitary confinement at Canadian prisons. It is estimated that over one-third of inmates entering Canadian prisons have some sort of mental health condition and that a disproportionate number of those people are held in isolation.

Unfortunately, the Correctional Service Canada has repeatedly ignored calls for reform on solitary confinement, despite the overwhelming research showing the risks to inmates who suffer from mental illness and other concerns.

A March 2013 report by the Office of the Correctional Investigator stated that in 2011-12, nearly a quarter of Canada's federal prison population spent some time in solitary confinement. Nearly 40 percent of those offenders were held in segregation for longer than 30 days and 16.5 percent for more than 120 days. A disproportionate number of inmates kept in isolation struggle with mental health conditions. The correctional investigators office report calls attention to an over-reliance on segregation to manage mentally ill offenders and states that the use of solitary confinement in such cases may escalate behaviours that are associated with disorders. One of the issues of concern is a lack of sufficient limits on how corrections are allowed to use segregation against problematic inmates. Prolonged periods spent in solitary or in separate confinement can have lasting and very negative, effects.

Canada's correctional investigator called for an end to solitary confinement for the mentally ill, as has the United Nations, which has also taken a position against segregation

lasting longer than 15 days. Separate confinement is inappropriate for persons with mental health challenges.

Has the government considered whether the Yukon would benefit from a correctional investigator? Is the minister concerned that the use of separate confinement may in fact be inappropriate for persons who are incarcerated and who do have mental health needs?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Pursuant to the *Corrections Act*, separate confinement can be used for one or more of the following reasons: to protect staff and other inmates from situational or chronic violence; to protect the inmate from others; to isolate inmates with significant physical or mental health problems that cannot be accommodated in other areas; to protect the inmate from self-harm; to isolate an inmate who is believed to be concealing drugs or other dangerous contraband; and to isolate an inmate for the purpose of having his or her mental health condition assessed under the terms of the *Mental Health Act*. Inmates may be segregated pending or as a disposition of a disciplinary hearing. Inmates placed in segregation for disciplinary purposes are heard before independent adjudicators as per section 26(1) of the *Corrections Act*.

All separate confinement placements are indeed reviewed by a manager. The reasons for separate confinement are given to an inmate in writing within 24 hours of the placement. The inmate has the right to provide their reasons to the manager regarding whether they believe the placement is inappropriate or their circumstances have changed or that an alternate placement should perhaps be considered.

The *Corrections Act* established a system of independent adjudication to ensure that the rights of the inmates are upheld during disciplinary processes. Inmates have a right to appeal disciplinary decisions through the Investigations and Standards Office either by mail or by telephone. All inmates are briefed on this process during their admission to the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

Time already spent separately confined pending a disciplinary hearing may be deducted from disciplinary disposition imposed by the independent adjudicator.

Inmates are only placed in separate confinement in a non-disciplinary situation if there are no other options available to ensure the safety and the security of the inmate or other inmates, or the Correctional Centre and the staff working there. The vast majority of inmates have never been separately confined. Sixty individuals were separately confined at the Correctional Centre during the 2013 calendar year. Ten were separately confined for medical observation; three individuals were placed under separate confinement voluntarily; 46 individuals were separately confined because of their conduct; and three were women — one for medical detox. Case managers work very closely with long-term, separately confined inmates in an effort to return them to their regular living units at the earliest opportunity.

Again, I thank the staff at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, but I'll be specific in thanking the staff that works in the separately confined unit. Their hard work is very much appreciated by this government.

Ms. Moorcroft: Sixty does seem like a rather high number of inmates to have been placed in separate confinement over the course of a year. I understand that periods of separate confinement may be as brief as 15 days, which is not really a very short time.

It would seem like an awfully long time if you were locked in a cubicle for 23 hours a day of those 15 days. It may extend as long as 200 days or more. So I am pleased to hear the minister refer to other means of ensuring the safety and security of staff and inmates, where possible.

The minister also spoke of disciplinary hearings and access to an independent adjudicator, where an inmate would like to challenge the disciplinary measure. Can the minister indicate what training and qualifications are required of independent adjudicators and what rules of procedure are used in the conduct of those hearings that are adjudicated?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Allocating these individuals is done through a public process, and that process includes seeking people who have experience in decision-making and some experience particular to these situations. Getting into the finer detail of those requirements, I would have to get back to the member opposite if the parties opposite want that information. The public process does look for individuals who are experienced with decision-making processes.

Ms. Moorcroft: I would be pleased to have the information sent in writing subsequent to this debate.

I have a question for the minister related to Regulatory Services and the Workers' Advocate office. There is an increase in funding for operational expense increases and this is recoverable from the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. I'd like to ask the minister if there has been a notable increase in the number of files that have been handled by the Workers' Advocate office or if he has other information related to the workload of the Workers' Advocate office?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: The annual report from that office has just been received by the Department of Justice, so we haven't had time to look over that report, but I suspect it will be on-line through the venue of that office, if I'm correct, likely in the coming weeks.

Mr. Silver: Thanks to the department officials for their time today, and thank you to the Member for Copperbelt South for her questioning.

I only have a few items left from listening to the debate today. I want to go back to solitary confinement.

In 2011, the United Nations special rapporteur on torture called for an abolition or abandoning of solitary confinement for youth and people with mental disabilities. If the minister can comment on whether the current policies here in the Yukon mirror this report and, specifically, with the mental disabilities and confinement outside of the facility — I know that the practice at the old jail — the old correctional facility — was to segregate inmates at the hospital. I'm wondering if this is still the practice.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for his question.

It would be under unusual circumstances that we would segregate an individual at a hospital. If they were going to a hospital, it would be in part that they required medical attention. However, having said that, we do have medical staff available at Whitehorse Correctional Centre now. We have almost a full complement. We have one more full-time position that should be hired in the next little while. They do an exceptional job at providing medical services to the Correctional Centre and to the arrest processing unit.

There is a separate area within the Whitehorse Correctional Centre for separate confinement. I didn't extend an invitation to the member opposite to accompany us on the tour of the Correctional Centre. Due to certain circumstances, we weren't able — and time permitting — to get up to the segregation units, but they are very similar. They are a smaller area than the area for regular inmates up there. It's a safe environment and it's monitored by staff. It is nice and bright and there are fresh air areas — the same as the regular living units. I'm pleased with the work that the Correctional Centre did in forecasting what they would need for separate confinement.

It seems to be working well — as I went through the list, and I don't think I need to do that again — protecting people from themselves, from harm — whether they want to harm other people or other people want to harm them, I suppose. The staff and management at the Correctional Centre do a fantastic job to ensure that inmates in segregation or separate confinement are supervised and well-monitored.

Mr. Silver: Thank you to the minister for his answers and I do apologize if my information was incorrect. If he could just confirm that there wasn't a policy to take inmates with mental disabilities to the hospital — just a confirmation that that did not happen previously — and then I am going to move on. That is just a yes or no.

Forgive me if these were answered already, but I just have a couple of questions based upon some of the previous comments and debates with the Member for Copperbelt South. I would like to thank the minister as well for his invitation to tour the facility. I am sure that will be an open invitation. It is very hard during the session and the week before a session for me to get away, being a one-man show in the Legislature.

Another housekeeping question: the demolition of the old jail — \$1.3 million is allocated this year. Once again I apologize if this was already answered — when will this project be completed?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: To answer the member opposite's first question, an inmate could be moved to the Whitehorse General Hospital under the *Mental Health Act*. So there could be an overlying area there where the services are not fully complementary at Whitehorse Correctional Centre, so there might be more services available on an ongoing basis at the hospital. I hope that answers the member opposite's question.

In addressing the member's second question with regard to the demolition of the old Correctional Centre — and again, I have to thank the Minister of Highways and Public Works for his support and good work on this file. It has been a

pleasure working with him and the two departments — those being Justice and Highways and Public Works. They have worked very well together in this regard.

HPW has developed a plan and preparatory work has been completed, in preparation for demolition. Management Board approval for the demolition was obtained last fall. Highways and Public Works is the performing department on this project, with the demolition targeted for this year. I don't have a specific date, other than that we should see work starting there, weather permitting.

Mr. Silver: With the funding for legal aid — we did talk about the shortage of funding for legal aid being an ongoing issue, and the minister did speak of an upcoming announcement. I wasn't clear as to whether or not this announcement was going to happen during this session of the Legislative Assembly — this spring session.

Could he answer that? I have one final question about the arrest processing unit. Can the minister provide an update on this project? Is it supposed to be open this year? When will it be open? In last year's budget book, the final cost for this project was listed at \$4.58 million. I'm wondering if that is still the final cost, and thank you to the minister for his answers today and for the officials from the department.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for his question. First I'll address the arrest processing unit question that he had. We are just waiting for a specialized door that is being used between the admissions area, which we're using for the APU now, and moving into the actual APU that we'll be using in the future. That door, from what I understand, was shipped last week. We're waiting for it to arrive and then contractors can move it into place. We'll have to shut the admissions APU area down. We can use existing cells at RCMP detachments for a couple of days while they break through the wall and get that secure door in place. That was the holdup. We were hoping to get the APU open earlier. However, it's a very specific sized door, so it has been built to suit what we need it for.

As for the cost of the APU, we're on budget with this project. I do have to thank my caucus colleagues and the Minister of Highways and Public Works specifically for keeping that on track.

The member opposite asked a question about Legal Aid funding. In the 2013-14 fiscal year, Yukon provided Legal Aid with core funding of approximately \$754,000, which additionally flowed through a further \$864,000 from Canada that was received under the access to justice services agreement for Legal Aid. The total core budget for Legal Aid is about \$1.6 million. A further \$435,000 was provided by Yukon in additional funding in the 2013-14 fiscal year — as the member will already know — to assist with the high-cost cases and other operating expenses. As well, a further \$35,000 was provided by Yukon for legal services specifically related to the Community Wellness Court.

The federal contribution for Legal Aid has been frozen, as the member is well aware, since 2003, and will not change before 2017. The Department of Justice worked with the assistance of the Yukon Legal Aid Society for longer term

funding solutions for legal aid here in our territory. We funded Legal Aid fully for this fiscal 2013-14 as requested, and we are in the final stages of reviewing the future funding arrangements and a potential announcement, as I mentioned to the Member for Copperbelt South — that a potential announcement would be forthcoming. In the meantime — and I've already said this today — Legal Aid will and does have sufficient funding for this year. In fact, they are at a \$300,000 surplus, as it stands now.

Again, I have to extend my appreciation to the department and to Legal Aid Services for their ongoing relationship. It certainly makes our job easier, when we all have a common vision and a common goal moving forward.

Ms. Moorcroft: I have one quick final question here. Pre-release planning for inmates and getting supports in place, such as housing and social assistance, is key to preventing recidivism — or, in other words, preventing an inmate ending up back in the Correctional Centre fairly soon after they have been released. Are there plans in place to get inmates from the communities back to their communities upon release? This is something we've discussed before and I'm just wondering if the minister can give me an update on whether there has been any progress and whether there are plans to help inmates get back to the community they come from when they are released from Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

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

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. Moorcroft that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Cathers that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 14, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2014-15*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker: This House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:27 pm.