



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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33rd Legislature

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## HANSARD

Tuesday, April 8, 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

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

## GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

### Yukon Party

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

## OPPOSITION MEMBERS

### New Democratic Party

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

### Liberal Party

<b>Sandy Silver</b>	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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## LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Rudy Couture
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Doris McLean
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Tuesday, April 8, 2014 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of National Victims of Crime Awareness Week

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I rise today to pay tribute to National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. This year's theme is "Taking action" which highlights the many ways citizens can be and are active in supporting victims of crime. Whether it's a person's job or in a volunteer capacity, Yukoners are actively pursuing ways to curb violence and to support people affected by violence. There is a need in our community to improve access to support services to victims of violence.

Just this past January, the departments of Justice and Health and Social Services offered Making Connections, which is a women's support group facilitator training at no cost to participants. This low-barrier support group is innovative because it's open to women who have had or are having experiences of violence and/or mental health concerns and/or substance use issues. 32 Yukoners from across the territory who work in professions such as mental health, addiction treatment, social work, corrections and First Nation health successfully completed the training and can now facilitate Making Connections support groups in Yukon communities.

I'm also please to share with you information about project Lynx, which is a program run by the Department of Justice Victim Services Branch. The justice system is multifaceted and all of its components function with the good work of a number of people: judges, lawyers, clerks, police officers, social workers and so on. However, from the outside, the justice system can be intimidating or foreign, especially for a child or a youth.

Project Lynx exists to coordinate the services and programs for children or youth who are either victims of or witnesses to crime during their justice journey. Programs and services that support victims of crime can only be successful with the collaboration and cooperation of governmental departments and programs and non-governmental organizations.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize some of the groups that work with the Government of Yukon to improve services to victims of and witnesses to crime: Kaushee's Place, Dawson City Women's Shelter, Health and

Hope for Families in Watson Lake, Many Rivers Counselling and Support Services, Victoria Faulkner Women's Shelter, Kwanlin Dun Counselling Services, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon and the Women's Coalition and Les EssentiElles.

The *Victims of Crime Strategy* and *Sharing Common Ground* have been key initiatives to improving collaboration between the Government of Yukon and non-governmental organizations. An example of continued collaboration is the funding of crisis phone line data collection. Recently, the Department of Justice provided \$20,000 to fund the collection of crisis phone line data from Kaushee's Place, Yukon Women's Transition Home Society here in Whitehorse and from Help and Hope for Families in Watson Lake. This three-month project will provide quantitative and qualitative data that may inform the role that Victim Services plays in future research and future considerations of 24-hour support for victims.

As you can see, the Government of Yukon is committed to continued support of collaborative efforts to improve services for victims of crime.

On April 16, Victim Services will be holding a victims forum at the Yukon Inn, during which victims of crime can connect and share their experiences with service providers with the goal to enhance responses.

I would also like to recognize two Yukon organizations that are holding events in support of National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. L'Association franco-yukonnaise is holding an interactive session with elders who have experienced abuse, and the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre is providing information support sessions for women who are victims of crime.

I would also like to remind all Yukoners that victims of crime or people who want to support a friend or family member who is a victim of crime can take action by contacting the Victim Services branch by phone at 667-8500, or toll-free at 1-800-661-0408, or at local 8500, or visit the website at [www.victimservicesyukon.ca](http://www.victimservicesyukon.ca).

I call on all the members of the Legislature to join to me and all Yukoners in pledging to support victims of crime in our communities.

If I could have the indulgence of the House in welcoming some guests to the Legislative Assembly today, we have with us Lindsay Roberts, who is a victim services worker and project Lynx coordinator; we have Annette King, who is the director of Victim Services, we have Lily Gontard, communications analyst with the Department of Justice, and a good friend, Tamara Horsey, who is a local victim advocate. Welcome to the Legislature.

*Applause*

**Ms. Moorcroft:** I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Third Party member to pay tribute to the National Victims of Crime Awareness Week 2014.

We believe it is overdue to bring a human rights lens to the needs of victims. This means that, at all times, our personal responses, our institutional responses and our

society's responses to people who report crimes must respect that person's dignity. This need is common to men and women, to non-aboriginal people and to First Nations and other racialized people who often experience racism and discrimination. As first responders, as friends or as colleagues, we need to be helpful to victims of crime and not apply labels or stereotypes to victims.

As in past years, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre has organized a series of taking action workshops during this week. This afternoon, from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., Elizabeth Fry Society Yukon, which does a lot of important work to support criminalized women who are often also victims, will present on advocacy strategies to stand up for yourself in the criminal justice system. This evening, I note that Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council speaks about its Sisters in Spirit and Brothers in Spirit projects.

Tomorrow afternoon, RCMP and Kaushee's Place representatives will talk about Together for Justice and the RCMP, Liard Aboriginal Women's Society and women's coalition actions. Thursday afternoon, Kaushee's will present on language in the courts and the media. Mr. Speaker, how we talk about victims matters.

Friday's guest speakers will discuss support groups for women and how to help a woman who has been sexually assaulted. I'm greatly looking forward to participating in the Saturday afternoon panel discussion on federal victim and criminal policy to be held at Yukon College lecture hall with our Member of Parliament and a former Member of Parliament for Yukon.

In recognizing National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, I will close by repeating that it all comes down to the importance of respecting people's dignity. I would like to thank all the health, social and justice system workers in government and in the non-government sector who do support victims of crime.

We also have room for improvement. Our justice, health and other systems must always remember to respond to victims of crime in a manner that is consistent with Yukon, national and international human rights laws and standards.

**Speaker:** Are there any visitors to be introduced?  
Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

### TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** I have a letter, dated April 8, 2014, to the MLA for Mayo-Tatchun regarding the water treatment at the Onek 400 adit in and near Keno City. During Question Period on April 3, 2014, the member raised a number of questions and concerns that were inaccurate, and this letter corrects those.

**Speaker:** Are there any further 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?  
Are there any 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 allow the import of bison by game farm operators subject to an import protocol developed by the chief veterinarian officer.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to launch a communication strategy to raise awareness amongst anglers and boat operators about aquatic invasive species.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Government of Canada to co-lead a project through the Arctic Council to develop a climate change adaptation information portal that will facilitate greater access to adaptation knowledge for all northerners.

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

THAT the Yukon government use its 2014-15 budget to remove the old Whitehorse Correctional Centre 10-foot high perimeter fencing topped with barbed wire that now surrounds the Takhini Haven group home.

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

### QUESTION PERIOD

#### Question re: Canada pension plan

**Ms. Hanson:** The Harper Conservatives' stubborn refusal to expand the Canada Pension Plan is an ideological decision, not an economic one. Unfortunately, the Yukon government is toeing the Ottawa line on this issue, but they're out of step with the needs of Yukoners. The numbers don't support their ideological position. The Harper Conservatives' vision for Canada's retirement income system is good for the mutual fund industry, but not for the average Canadian.

Will the Premier stop toeing Ottawa's line, put ideology aside and acknowledge what pension experts across the country are saying? An expanded CPP is good for Canada's seniors and it's good for Canada's economy.

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** I think our position has been articulated very well on this and certainly what we have seen across Canada with Finance ministers is that there is an agreement that we continue to need to look at and review all of the options that are available to us. As I had suggested yesterday, one of those vehicles for people is the pooled pension plan that is now available. Employees can now put money into a pooled plan, with or without the support of their employer, to ensure that they have that option to continue to save money for the future.

We need to continue to look at how we can look at the full scope of retirement and certainly, within that scope, we have identified that the middle income is an area we need to

study. I'm sure that we can look at options that will be successful; however, at the same time, will not create a burden on peoples' ability today to have money that they need to make the choices for their everyday lives.

**Ms. Hanson:** Clearly the Premier does not understand the difference between what he is talking about in terms of the pooled retirement savings plans and the public pension system. Less than 25 percent of those middle income Canadians he expresses concern for were able to contribute to an RRSP last year. Pooled registered retirement plans are clones of the RRSP system, which has failed middle income Yukoners and Canadians. The federal and territorial governments' proposed pooled registered pension plans are just more of the same.

Does the Premier really believe that a pooled pension plan will help 75 percent of Canadian workers who were not able to contribute to an RRSP last year?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** Another very important component of this — and certainly one that was strongly advocated by all the finance ministers — is to increase financial literacy, Mr. Speaker.

I think it is very important collectively in this country that we put in a better effort, starting right in the education system, to allow young adults and students to understand how credit cards work, what compound interest is and what happens when you borrow money and don't pay the entire balance of your credit card monthly. I think there is a lot of work that has been done and continues to need to be done. The *Canada Financial Literacy Leader Act* was passed in 2013. The act provides for the appointment of a financial literacy leader within the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada to strengthen the financial literacy of Canadians.

**Ms. Hanson:** Literacy is great, but if you don't have the money, you don't have the money. Canada doesn't need more voluntary tax-assisted retirement savings programs. What we do need is a public pension that provide everyone with a basic guarantee of adequate income to protect their standard of living in retirement.

The RRSP and pooled pension plans both deliver inferior performance at more than twice the cost of an expanded Canada Pension Plan. The Premier will try to tell me they are taxes. CPP is not a tax, they are savings and they are investments by workers and their employers into a pension plan that is safe and sound.

Will the Premier finally put Yukon's economy and Yukon citizens first and join most other premiers calling on Ottawa to strengthen the Canada Pension Plan?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** Putting Yukoners first is exactly what this government is doing — record capital budget with a projected surplus at this time of over \$70 million. This government has focused on Yukoners as the only party that is truly only a Yukon party.

The Opposition doesn't seem to understand that when you take money out of people's pockets and you take money out of businesses' pockets, that creates less money for people and businesses to have options to reinvest in their employees or in their businesses or in their community and less options

for working people to either put that money away or to spend that money on priorities for their family — those are options that are very important. When we talk about taking money out of people's pockets, that's exactly what this is — this is a payroll tax. It is important that we look at options to ensure the long-term success of our pension plans for all Yukoners and all Canadians. However, we need to make sure that we do this in a manner that will respect people's ability to make decisions and our economy today. We don't have the strongest economy at this time. We see it's growing, but at this time, it's probably not the best idea to increase the tax on payroll.

**Question re: Robert Campbell highway improvements**

**Ms. Moorcroft:** Mr. Speaker, the stretch of the Robert Campbell Highway between Faro and Ross River is in a sad state. After Faro, the road narrows and the surface significantly deteriorates. These conditions make travelling on the highway slow and often dangerous. This year, the Yukon Highways budget is the largest ever at \$48.17 million and once again, no new money has been allocated for the highway between Ross River and Faro.

How is it that the road between Ross River and Faro has never been deemed worthy of a major upgrade in the 12 years since this Yukon Party government has been in power?

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** As you know, Mr. Speaker, we do face significant challenges in developing and maintaining our network of roads that provide the very foundation of our territory.

That said, that huge challenges can be met by our department on a daily basis is a testament to the men and women who have devoted their careers to building, maintaining, monitoring and clearing our public roads, highways and bridges of the Yukon. I am proud of our team.

When it comes to that section of the road that the member opposite asked about, it is a section of the road that is actually near and dear to my heart. Some of the stuff that we're looking at, moving forward — I have asked the department to look at some new innovations and some different stuff. One of them that pops to mind is — and for Hansard I might have to repeat it twice — Rhino Snot. It's a new type of stuff that they are using in the industry that we can put on roads. I have asked the department to look for options on that. I have increased our maintenance budget for that so we can get on that road and blade that road more often.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** I find it hard to be encouraged by this minister saying that he has looked for options. Governments determine where budget funds are allocated. Mr. Speaker, 370 people live in Ross River and they rely on the Campbell Highway to get to and from their community. Not only that, many government employees and private sector workers use the highway to provide their services to the community. Their safety should be a top priority for this government.

Last year, the department said that Highways and Public Works were spending about \$10 million to improve conditions on the Campbell Highway. How much of the \$10 million to improve conditions on the Campbell Highway went to fixing

the narrow and bumpy section of the road between Faro and Ross River?

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** The member will be voting against any sort of money spent on any highway.

Reconstruction of this link is key to Watson Lake; it's key to the Yukon to get resources out. Road quality in the spring has always been an issue, but we're looking at getting out there as soon as we can. It looks like it's going to be a bit easier of a spring. We have our steamers up and ready, looking for anything we can get at right away, because we have a mine up there that needs to get ore out of there. We also have residents who like to access the community.

I'm confident in our department to get on those roads. We have a record amount invested in roads, so we have a great budget looking forward that, of course, the Opposition is not going to be voting for.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** I certainly have no vote of confidence in this minister's ability to see that there will be improvements on that stretch of road between Faro and Ross River. The people of Ross River find it discouraging that they're forgotten about every year when new funding is allocated for highway reconstruction. That section of road is substandard. I know it, residents of Ross River know it and the travelling public knows it.

Ross River is an important Yukon community and it deserves some meaningful infrastructure investment that would allow them to safely travel the Campbell Highway. How much of this year's highways maintenance budget will be committed to fixing the Robert Campbell Highway between Ross River and Faro, and when will the minister also bring in capital funds for reconstruction of the road between Faro and Ross River?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** This is, quite frankly, a line of questioning that shows an appalling lack of attention to what's in the budget. I would remind the members that, in addition to the funding for the Ross River bridge and taking a look at stabilizing it, if you look at the significant investments, which clearly the Leader of the NDP has no interest in, the investments in drinking water treatment is \$7 million with a building open last year; the investments in the new arena were \$6.5 million and again, opened last year in Ross River; in this current year, a \$1-million investment in waste-water treatment and a \$1-million investment in solid waste.

The fire truck is, I believe, of the 2009 era. The Yukon government has consistently, on an annual basis, invested in the community of Ross River and we will continue to do so. The NDP, every year, has stood up and voted against those investments.

**Question re: Whitehorse General Hospital renovations**

**Mr. Silver:** I have a question for the minister responsible for the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Last year the CEO of the corporation told the public that an upcoming expansion to the Whitehorse General Hospital would cost approximately \$60- to \$65 million. This is \$10- to \$15 million more than what Yukoners were told the project would cost

just three years previously, in 2010. The minister contradicted the CEO and said that in fact no budget had actually been set. He later conceded that the CEO was probably referring to a preliminary estimate but that no final budget had been set. The minister went on to say that he would have a firmer estimate in the spring. Spring is here. What is the cost of the upcoming hospital expansion?

**Hon. Mr. Graham:** We do not have a firm estimate because the complete extent of the renovations to the hospital emergency department is unknown at this time.

**Mr. Silver:** When the Auditor General examines the way the Yukon Party went about building hospitals in Watson Lake and Dawson City they found a host of problems. We learned, for example, that the decision to proceed was simply based on a verbal instruction from the former Premier. The auditor recommended that, before beginning further future capital projects, the corporation should carry out a needs assessment, a risk assessment and an options analysis including how the project will be funded.

Last year, the chair of the hospital board said a needs assessment had already been done. The CEO said a needs assessment would be done, and the minister said he didn't need one done. It is obvious that the same problems that resulted in huge cost overruns in the two rural hospitals have not been corrected.

So why is the government not following the advice from the Auditor General of Canada?

**Hon. Mr. Graham:** I have to feel a certain amount of compassion for the member from Dawson City because his complete lack of understanding is exceeded only by his inability to grasp concepts.

The reason that we do not yet have a budget is because we have not yet set a plan. We are doing exactly as the Auditor General requested we do. We are, first of all, doing needs assessment. We are setting a plan. Once the plan, the needs assessment and the functional plan have been determined, we will have a budget.

For me to stand here and say now that this is all being completed and we have a budget of X number of dollars is exactly what the member opposite would do. We don't have all of the necessary components in place yet. Until those components are in place, we won't have a budget.

**Mr. Silver:** Yukoners are understandably nervous when they see the Yukon Party beginning another major health-related capital project. The government's track record is poor and it seems that they have learned nothing from their mistakes in the past. The Auditor General says to do a needs assessment. The minister says we don't need to do one. The Auditor General also said to produce an options analysis so that people know how the project will be paid for. To date, there has been no indication whether the expansion will require borrowing new money or whether the government plans to pay up front.

Last fall, the minister said that there were a number of documents being prepared by the Hospital Corporation or by his department — and I quote: "In due course we will release all of these assessments."

When will the minister lift the veil of secrecy and allow Yukoners to see these documents?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** Mr. Speaker, what a great position this government is in where we can make that decision to pay up front for a hospital expansion or to borrow the money. A lot of times there are good reasons to borrow money and there are bad reasons to borrow money. We only have to go back to the last NDP and Liberal governments to see bad reasons for borrowing money when they actually had to borrow money to pay for wages.

An investment in a hospital will benefit Yukoners for generations, so there can be a good argument to have that mortgaged over time and have that hospital paid for by all of the people who will benefit from it. But of course, because of our financial management, we will also have the option to decide whether we want to pay up front for it — what a great position to be in in Yukon.

**Question re: Social inclusion and poverty reduction**

**Ms. Stick:** The government released its *Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Strategy* in 2012 and Yukoners thought that this meant a real plan to reduce poverty; however, last spring, the minister emphasized that, quote: "... it was a strategy to work within departments internally..."

Mr. Speaker, consensus is building across Canada that poverty has a negative impact on the whole community and that the cost of inaction is greater than the cost of acting.

On December 19, the minister said, "...the social inclusion assessment tool is due to be introduced in March of 2014..."

Mr. Speaker, is the assessment tool ready? Has the government set clear goals so it can measure progress in reducing poverty and increasing social inclusion?

**Hon. Mr. Graham:** I apologize that our assessment tool is not quite ready for public release at the present time. We have set clear goals. We have set a number of overarching goals that will improve access to services. It will reduce inequities by equipping individuals with the necessary tools, education skills and resources to access their potential. It will also strengthen community vitality.

We have also roughly 38 separate initiatives at this point. We are working out which departments will have responsibility for which of the initiatives. We will also be setting performance indicators so that each of the departments will be able to report on the performance under the *Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Strategy*.

**Ms. Stick:** Jurisdictions across Canada that set and monitor poverty indicators are making real progress that improves the lives of their citizens. Between 2002 and 2011, the Manitoba government decreased poverty for Manitobans by 5,000, including 3,000 children. They decreased the poverty for those individuals.

To create meaningful change in Manitoba, the government worked with communities and included 21

poverty and inclusion indicators in regulations and guidelines, and committed to annual reports on the progress made.

Yukoners want to know what the government's track record is on reducing poverty. Can the minister provide evidence that the number of Yukoners living in poverty is declining?

**Hon. Mr. Graham:** Once again, obviously the member opposite didn't listen to what I was saying the first time — that is that we have these indicators; we have a number of objectives that we intend to monitor over the next few years. But to begin monitoring prior to setting the actual performance indicators doesn't make any sense.

Once the measurement tools are established and we are able to proceed with the plan, I'll be happy to better illuminate the situation for the member opposite.

**Ms. Stick:** We have been listening to this government talk about poverty reduction and social inclusion for years. It is about time a strategy came out. It's not helping right now the one in three children in Yukon communities who are going to school hungry. One in seven Canadian children lives in poverty.

Last summer, the Canadian Medical Association came out with a report called *What Makes Us Sick* and it turns out poverty can make kids sick their whole lives. For example, poverty in childhood can lead to diabetes — not because of other behaviours, but because of poverty. Inaction on the root causes is unacceptable. Research demonstrates that effective early childhood development is the best opportunity to reduce inequities and improve health. It's a cost-saver.

What reduction actions will this government take to increase and improve early childhood development initiatives for Yukon's low-income families?

**Hon. Mr. Graham:** To listen to the member opposite, you'd think the government hadn't done anything at all in the last two and a half years since we were elected and nothing could be further from the truth. Mr. Speaker, you only have to take a look at the \$750,000 promised to the food bank to provide stability in their situation, in their building. You can take a look at the work being done by the Minister of Education to improve attendance in Yukon schools. You can look at the Yukon literary strategy. You can look at some of the things that Health and Social Services has done in terms of a walk-in clinic or Referred Care Clinic in Whitehorse.

We've improved the services for persons with disabilities; we have a community liaison coordinator — so there are a number of things this government has done already. We will continue doing that and we will have the strategy ready in due course. The Opposition seems to want us to leap into doing things without having done our homework. Once we have the homework done, we will make sure that it's done regardless of what the Leader of the Opposition has to say during Question Period.

**Question re: Old Crow winter road**

**Mr. Barr:** This year's winter road was the first time in 10 years that the community of Old Crow had road access. The winter road is an essential link to the community. It

allows residents to ship up big-ticket items and contractors to stage equipment for building projects and maintenance. It also allows for the removal of waste, as was seen this year. The government has given some indication that the construction of the winter road may become more regular.

What is the government's plan for the next Old Crow winter road?

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** In many of my conversations with the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin and conversations before he was on this side of the floor — we had a lot of conversations about the Old Crow winter road. Both he and I agree on what a great thing we did this year. I'm very proud of this government for putting that money forward. It was a great success. We managed to get a lot of stuff that was needed in the community — some of the stuff that the member worked hard for over many years — the proposals that he has worked with, with YG. Also, this is the only community we don't have a road link to, so it was important for us to go forward with this.

Moving forward, we don't have any plans for an Old Crow winter road next year or the year after. This is something that my fellow colleagues and I are going to have to work on in the future.

**Mr. Barr:** The winter road is an important link to the community of Old Crow. However, the approach that this government takes to building it does not make planning for the community easy. Companies and government need to plan around the construction of the winter road to accomplish projects in Old Crow that require heavy machinery, as do residents making large purchases. While the construction of the winter road is subject to the weather constraints, a commitment to a regularly scheduled winter road construction would help provide certainty to the community and to people of Old Crow. Will this government make a commitment to Old Crow to create a long-term plan for the construction of future winter roads that would provide certainty to the community?

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** What I can tell you is that we're definitely going to work with the MLA and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and evaluate this when it's required again. They have scheduled flights with Air North, getting products back and forth, which is a Yukon company with great success. We look forward to working with Vuntut Gwitchin and their MLA in the future.

#### **Question re: Mount Nansen mine site**

**Mr. Tredger:** When BYG Natural Resources shut down its Mount Nansen mine in 1999, the company left behind a toxic and expensive mess. Responsibility for the contaminated mine was taken over by the federal government. In 2003, the Yukon government took over care and maintenance of the mine and, since then, was supposed to lead the development and implementation of a long-term cleanup and closure plan.

The Canadian government continues responsibility for 100 percent of the cost for the cleanup and final closure. The benefits of completing the work at Mount Nansen are clear —

cleaning up a contaminated site only gets harder and more expensive over time. Ten years after the Yukon government took responsibility for the cleanup and final closure, what is the status of the contaminated mine site at Mount Nansen?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** With respect to the Mount Nansen project, the Yukon government, the Government of Canada and the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation reached an agreement on an option for remediation of the Mount Nansen mine site. YG, as the member opposite mentioned, is responsible for managing the project that is being funded by the Government of Canada as a type 2 site, and the Yukon government has procured an engineering team to prepare a remediation design for submission to YESAB in December of this year.

That's the status of the project. A 2014-15 Mount Nansen workplan has recently been submitted to the Government of Canada for approval, so there's a lot of work going on at that site to ensure that the site is remediated and cleaned up, as per the responsibilities of our government and the Government of Canada, which licensed the project in the first place.

**Mr. Tredger:** The government says it has implemented a water-treatment program to reduce the levels of cyanide and metals in the water at the site. Now according to the government, water treatment is no longer required at the Mount Nansen site. However, one would hope that cleaning up the contaminated mine site remains a priority.

Can the minister provide a timeline for when the Mount Nansen cleanup and final closure will be completed?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** As I mentioned in my previous answer, YG has procured an engineering team to prepare a remediation design for submission to the YESA Board in December of this year. The final remediation solution is expected to take four to five years to execute. That is the information I have at this time. Obviously, things change. We work closely with the Government of Canada and Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, so the information that I have right now is that we are anticipating four to five years to execute the final remediation of that type 2 site.

**Mr. Tredger:** When the Yukon government took over the care and maintenance of the Mount Nansen mine site, the tailings pond presented a risk to the local water systems. Yukonwater.ca is an initiative led by the Government of Yukon departments with input and data provided by federal, First Nation and community partners.

According to the website, 15 sites at the Mount Nansen mine are sampled every two weeks. Is — and where is — the sampling data for Mount Nansen available to the public?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** That is a level of detail that I don't have with me at this time. I would be happy to get back to the member opposite, perhaps in a letter such as the one I was able to table today with respect to the unfortunate information that he presented last week during Question Period about a different type 2 site and a proponent.

I could get back to him in a letter or I could get back to him in Energy, Mines and Resources line-by-line debate or departmental debate.



Again, as I mentioned, there is a submission going forward to YESAB in December 2014 and we're looking at four or five years to execute the project. As well, a workplan has recently been submitted to the Government of Canada. We're looking forward to cleaning up this site.

As I mentioned, this is a site that was permitted under the Government of Canada's watch. It is a type 2 site that we are now responsible for managing, funded by the Government of Canada. For new mines, Mr. Speaker, we hold security and of course those projects are subject to modern environmental practices and permitting.

Again, with respect to Mount Nansen, we look forward to seeing that site cleaned up.

**Speaker:** The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

### Notice of government private members' business

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(7), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the government private members to be called for debate on Wednesday, April 9, 2014.

They are Motion No. 612, standing in the name of the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin and Motion 624 standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Chair (Ms. McLeod):** Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Vote 12, Department of Finance, 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* — continued

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is Vote 12, Department of Finance, in Bill No. 14, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2014-15*.

#### Department of Finance

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** I would like to take this opportunity to provide the Committee with very few introductory remarks on the Department of Finance's 2014-15 budget. As you are all aware, Finance is a small department. It's comprised of 57.5 full-time equivalent positions. The 2014-15 estimates for the department total \$8.5 million and virtually all of this is for operation and maintenance; \$55,000 is allocated for capital expenditures.

The O&M budget is spread among two program areas, as follows. The largest program and the program to which all department staff are assigned is the Treasury program, at \$8.1 million. Salary costs account for approximately 80 percent, or \$6.5 million, of the Treasury budget. Banking services, supplies, telephone, travel, contracts and other support items at \$1.4 million account for another 17 percent of the program budget. The public utilities income tax transfer, in the amount of \$213,000, accounts for the remaining three percent.

The other program, the workers' compensation supplementary benefits program, in the amount of \$426,000, is legislated under an act of a similar name. It provides supplements to the benefits paid to workers who were insured by private insurers prior to Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board coming into existence. These supplements bring the benefits these workers receive up to the sums that would be paid had they been covered by the board.

As stated, the capital budget for the Department of Finance is \$55,000 and this is comprised of computer workstations and printers for \$14,000, a photocopier for \$16,000 and office renovations for \$25,000, totalling \$55,000.

On the revenue side of the ledger, growth is once again occurring. We all recognize that Canada continues to make an important and significant investment in Yukon. The mechanism of the territorial funding agreement has, as members opposite can see, increased the grant from Canada from \$816.6 million to \$851.3 million. This \$34.7-million increase is largely as a result of our increased population and an escalator in the grant formula that takes into account the change in provincial and local government expenditures.

Personal and corporate income taxes as well as all other tax revenues, as evident by the projected revenues, are expected to remain very strong and this is seen as a very good indicator of continued strong economic conditions in Yukon. I would like to take the opportunity again to point out that since this government has come into power we have seen in fact a 22-percent increase in population.

These economic conditions benefit all Yukoners. It is something this government has worked hard to achieve and it's something all Yukoners can, once again, be very proud of.

Madam Chair, I look forward to highlights and discussion on the Finance budget. I want to again take this opportunity to thank the deputy minister who is here beside me, but in fact, all members of the great team — the great staff — who comprise the Department of Finance. Thank you.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the Finance minister for his opening comments. I too would echo the thanks to the officials for their budget briefing that was provided to the members of the Opposition recently.

The minister correctly outlined that the budget for the Department of Finance in of itself is modest and appears to be clearly set out in terms of justification for the various spending elements. My focus today will be on the work that the Department of Finance does and, in particular, picking up on the Minister of Finance's remarks with respect to the role of the Treasury program within the Department of Finance. I have a number of questions that just come from the key functions that are identified on page 11-6 under Treasury. I wanted to speak to the Minister of Finance and engage with him in a discussion on a couple of those areas.

One of the tasks or functions of the Treasury branch is, "To develop and administer the taxation policies and programs of Yukon government, collect taxes and other revenues and manage the investment of public money."

With respect to the development and administration of tax policies and programs, I am particularly interested in one — but perhaps two things, depending on the time.

In 1999, the Yukon government established the Yukon small business investment tax credit. What I am curious about is how the scope of this tax credit, which is a personal tax credit that reduces Yukon income tax for eligible investors who invest in eligible business corporations that are making qualified investments. This is the necessary language to contain what is being provided for here.

It seems to me that here is a great opportunity — this small business investment tax credit — to allow Yukon businesses to do two things: one is to expand their business line and, secondly, to allow Yukon citizens who would like to invest in Yukon businesses to have that opportunity.

As I said, these credits became available to investors in 1999. The challenge for small businesses and for Yukon investors who would like to invest in small business in the Yukon is that there is a total of \$1 million in credits per year. "Credits will be issued on a first come first served basis"— I am reading this from the website, so I am not making this up — "until such time as the program is fully subscribed, after which it will be unavailable to additional investors until the new calendar year."

We have a bit of a challenge here. It seems to be a bit of a contradiction in terms because, in fact, what we have and what we're trying to do is encourage Yukon businesses to encourage Yukoners to invest in it. So, if there is a limit — a cap of \$1 million — how does that fulfill the objective of the small business investment tax credit?

When was the last time that that \$1-million envelope was reviewed by the tax policy and programs function of Treasury? What thought has been given to increasing the \$1-million annual cap? What would be the stimulus that would spur the Minister of Finance and the Treasury program — and I understand it is administered by Economic Development. I'm talking about a tax policy that is created by Treasury. This is the responsibility of the Minister of Finance, so I'm looking for the Minister of Finance to explain how placing a \$1-million cap achieves the objectives of this tax credit — and when it was last reviewed and when we might see it being reviewed again so that it can be used to achieve the mutual

benefit to individuals as Yukon citizens who want to invest in their local businesses and also those businesses that, rather than having to go to the Outside markets to borrow money, could actually achieve the same objective — being able to raise money locally from local Yukoners, as opposed to having to go to Outside money markets and paying more money in terms of borrowing that money than they would if they were actually able to provide this opportunity — because it is an opportunity.

I look forward to the response on that particular question.

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** A tax filer who invests in an approved private corporation or cooperative may claim this credit. The credit is equal to 25 percent of the amount invested, up to a maximum of \$25,000 per year. Corporations are eligible for approval if they have less than \$25 million in assets, have a permanent establishment in Yukon and have at least 50 percent of the assets and payroll in Yukon.

Total amount of securities that may be authorized under this program in a year is \$4 million, with no particular corporation being authorized to issue securities in excess of \$800,000 per year. The tax credit is equal to 25 percent of eligible investments, to a maximum annual credit of \$25,000. Credit is non-refundable, but unused amounts may be carried back for three taxation years, or carried forward for seven taxation years.

This program is actually administered by the Department of Economic Development. During department debate with Economic Development, I'm confident that the minister responsible will be able to provide, or will be willing to provide, more description. Essentially this program was targeted for small businesses. Of course, if it was ever at a point where we were looking at it being oversubscribed, we would certainly look at it and reassess whether the \$1-million limit in fact needs to be reviewed.

I don't think that would require any sort of a formal review, but we would ensure that we have an ongoing evaluation of this program. If there is an identified need or we see that we are reaching that cap, then I think that's something that the minister would consider.

**Ms. Hanson:** The reason I asked it of the Minister of Finance is that the Minister of Finance is responsible for the development and administration of taxation policies and programs. The way it would work would be the Minister of Economic Development would come to him and seek his support and authority. But it's a policy — a finance policy — that we're talking about here. It's a program that's administered once that policy is established, administered by the Minister of Economic Development. I too can read how the program is administered and the limits and the thresholds. What I was asking the Minister of Finance was: When was it last reviewed, and what will trigger the willingness of this government to increase the threshold — the \$1-million cap, as he just reiterated — and issue a total of \$1 million in tax credits? When was it last reviewed and what would it take? Have there been Yukon businesses that have approached this government to see that \$1 million in credit limits be lifted? There are three questions.

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** Unfortunately, apparently the Leader of the Official Opposition wasn't listening to the answer because I did answer the question.

I said that to this date, we have not reached the \$1 million amount and I think this requires ongoing evaluation. If there appears to be a time when we need to look at it again, of course we will then look at it as well.

I won't talk about the names of specific businesses, because that is confidential information, so that will not be divulged here. I will also take this opportunity to remind Yukoners that this is the party that continues to speak on behalf of business by again reducing the small business tax credit in this credit. We reduced it from six percent to four percent not long ago and we are now reducing it a further 25 percent — from four percent to three percent. We also have twice increased the maximum allowable under the small business tax, going from, I believe, \$300,000 to \$400,000 and subsequently to \$500,000 a year.

As I have said, this small business investment tax credit has been really targeted for small businesses. We have an ongoing review — looking at the program, of course — if opportunities exist. The minister, and in fact this government, is always open to listening to and talking to businesses and looking at their opportunities. If warranted, this is certainly something that we would assess and make changes if in fact it is required.

**Ms. Hanson:** I would just remind the Minister of Finance that the Yukon small business investment tax credit was established under an NDP government, because they knew it was good for Yukoners and good for Yukon businesses.

I will come back to the Minister of Finance at a later date. I am aware of at least one business that has approached this government with respect to this threshold, but I will come back at a later date.

I have just a question in terms of — as we're going through this, I think it's an educational process on all sides in terms of understanding how and where things are depicted in these budget documents. I was just wondering if the minister can explain — when I look at page 11-10, it has the — we list certain transfers through the tax system, which are financial benefits provided or determined through the tax system and those two listed are the research and development tax credit and the Yukon child benefit.

I'm just wondering if that's the case, why the Yukon's small businesses investment tax credit is not also contained in the budget document that we're provided?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** Under the accounting standards, the ones that need to be listed are the ones that are refundable tax credits and that is in fact the reason why you see the research and development tax credit and the Yukon child benefit listed here. I guess I will use this opportunity to also acknowledge that when it comes to taxes such as the manufacturing and processing tax credit, it is by far the lowest rate in the country.

**Ms. Hanson:** I appreciate the clarification; that is helpful information.

Another function of the Treasury program of the Department of Finance is to negotiate and coordinate the implementation of financial arrangements with the federal government and other jurisdictions, including special financial arrangements with the private sector. My comment is that when I look at the Public Accounts for 2011-12 and 2012-13, the minister has reflected in the past that we have seen a growth of revenues of nine percent. The Public Accounts are clear that the vast preponderance of that are federal transfers.

My question to the Minister of Finance is: What assurances, other than the indices — because the assumption is that growth population will continue at the same rate and if we have a slump in the economy, it will have a negative effect on the transfer of the territorial formula financing arrangement. What confidence does he have going forward and what other factors — in terms of mitigation around the growth we have seen and the government has been prepared to spend and the amount of money that it gets.

I am concerned that we make sure that we have some level of confidence in the revenues being transferred from Canada. This is with respect to the transfers from federal government.

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** I think the record speaks for itself in terms of this Yukon Party government's record at achieving just what we talked about — increasing our own-source revenues — which is in stark contrast from previous Liberal and NDP governments, where we had double-digit inflation, we had dramatic decreases in population and an exodus of our prime working base of people from 25-40 years of age, who left because they couldn't find work.

Through the diligence and policies that have been created by this government, we have seen tremendous growth in the past 10 years, with most years exceeding the real GDP growth of the average of the country and, as I have mentioned, over a 22-percent increase in population. When you continue to see growth in the population, you'll see continued growth in the number of businesses, so you'll have more businesses that are paying taxes. You'll have more people living here who are working and paying taxes — as I mentioned, a 22-percent increase in population — where we still continue to have a low unemployment rate as well. So our own-source revenues continue to grow.

What has been the focus of this government is to continue to work with the private sector in many areas to continue to foster that growth in the private sector economy. We don't have any guarantees when it comes to what will happen if the federal government decides they want to support the territories to a lesser extent. The classic example is, of course, with the Liberals through the 1990s and to the beginning of the early 2000s, where the Martin/Chrétien government balanced the books in Canada completely on the backs of the provinces and the territories.

The impact to this territory over those 10 years was that \$2 billion was taken away in terms of changing the territorial formula financing — the primary author of that formula was former Member of Parliament, Erik Nielsen, during his years as representing us in Canada's Parliament — and not only to

the benefit of Yukon, but certainly to the benefit of all the territories.

We get that, Madam Chair. Our focus is truly to become net contributors to this nation. That is what our focus is and we will work toward that. I know that is not necessarily the objective of the other two parties, but we believe that, as good responsible citizens of this Confederation, that needs to be our goal — to work toward becoming net contributors.

As I have spoken in the past, we have to also be cognizant of what those transfers are. It is a very complex formula — the territorial formula financing. It is comprised of many different components, as I mentioned. One is population, but it's also based on calculations on expenditures by provincial and municipal governments in the country, and it's also a rolling average over two years. So, changes that occur in the country — there's a delayed response in terms of the impact on our territorial formula financing. We must always be vigilant of that, and we need to ensure, as this government has, that we continue to invest in what are, in fact, priorities for this government and for this territory — continuing to ensure that we deliver programs and services that Yukoners feel are very important, and we do so in a manner that ensures that we maintain our fiscal superiority, if we can call it that.

This is simply because we are one of only two jurisdictions that have no net debt. Our assets and capital exceed our liabilities, including our environmental liabilities.

As I have said, this is a record budget. This is a record capital budget. This is a record investment in our highways and bridges, and we're doing this while still maintaining a sizable surplus that allows us the opportunity to be able to respond when necessary or when opportunities arise.

We are very proud of talking about some of the great investments we are making in the Yukon this year. For example, moving forward with investing to ensure that all the communities in the territory will be able to have 4G, that their smartphones will work in those communities. It's disappointing that the members from Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes or from Mayo-Tatchun will vote against that.

We're moving forward to create another option to be able to have a second fibre optic cable into Yukon, which will produce the redundancy to give us that reliability we need, as well as to increase our capacity and hopefully address some of the affordability issues to allow Yukon businesses to grow and be competitive.

All private, public, non-governmental organizations are all using technology today, and I think there are a lot of opportunities for other businesses to relocate here because of the great quality of life that living in the Yukon offers.

We're talking about the money to be invested in a new hydro project, and the money that we're going to be investing in new Big Toys for schools across the territory over the next two years. Sadly, all the members opposite will vote against that. We're going to be investing in new campgrounds. We're going to be investing in building a new RCMP detachment in Faro. We're going to be starting to move forward with planning money for a new fire hall in Carcross, and I'm sure

that the citizens of Carcross will be disappointed when their representative votes against that as well.

As well, I think the citizens of Mayo will be disappointed when their member votes against the new seniors complex that we planned to move ahead. As well, I think that the citizens of Dawson City will be disappointed when their member votes against such things as the hospital, the new McDonald Lodge that will go forward. I am sure they will be disappointed. I know that he will try to take credit for that, but clearly the record will speak for itself.

We will continue to invest in training for Yukoners through investment in the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining and through the mobile trades training trailer as well, which is another investment that is currently sitting in the riding of Klondike — again, something that the Member for Klondike voted against.

We're going to continue to invest and use the money in the northern housing trust to leverage money from the private sector over the next two years. We're looking at \$13.5 million to be leveraged to a minimum of \$27 million, which will continue to enhance our housing continuum by providing affordable rentals for citizens, not just for Whitehorse, but other communities as well.

Of course, the MRI — I just couldn't miss talking about the MRI and the lack of understanding with regard to that — and certainly the pride that we have in moving forward with meeting yet another commitment that we've made to Yukon citizens, ensuring that we are able to use that MRI as quickly as possible and utilizing the space created as part of the greater scheme for the future development of the hospital, which we have also created.

I think that Yukoners have seen what we are doing moving forward and they're very excited about it — as are we — and we will continue to work for the benefit of all Yukoners.

**Ms. Hanson:** I guess I pushed the soapbox button as opposed to the answer button, but I'll try again.

The Government of Yukon operates under the authority of the *Yukon Act* and all disbursements for operations and loans are authorized by this Legislative Assembly — in this case, by the majority government because they're the ones who put it through.

In that vein, from the Minister of Finance — when we keep in mind that all disbursements for operations and loans are authorized, I notice in the Public Accounts 2013 that the Yukon Energy Corporation commenced a project of replacing two diesel-fired generators — this was as of March 31, 2013 — at the Whitehorse Rapids generating system with modular reciprocating natural gas-fired engines and related infrastructure. The project is scheduled to be complete by the end of 2014 at an estimated cost of \$34.4 million. So I ask the Minister of Finance if he could show or tell this side of the House where in the authorized disbursements of the Yukon Legislative Assembly that \$34.4 million shows.

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** I assume that the member opposite is aware of the fact that what we do in fact debate here in the House are those appropriations that are under the jurisdiction

of this House. Certainly we also have a number of Crown corporations that are in existence and as corporations their disbursements are not an obligation to be published under our unconsolidated reports. What is important is that we ensure that all borrowing that occurs by the government and its Crown corporations does not exceed our borrowing limit.

Again, I am proud to report that we are well below our borrowing limit, in fact, as a result of what was done by Canada and at the request of the other territories, our borrowing limit was increased from \$300 million to \$400 million. However, we currently sit, in our total borrowing, at under \$200 million. I believe I gave the total to the member opposite not long ago.

We are in a solid position. Certainly when comparing debt limits with the other two territories, ours is minuscule in terms of the debt limit that we do have. That will speak to the results of this government and the work that it has done. We are all using the same formula in terms of territorial formula financing, and we are proud to report that we have been able to grow this economy strongly and continue to invest in program services, but also in capital infrastructure and priorities for Yukoners.

We have always done so, while being able to maintain a modest surplus in almost every year and also continue to see a very healthy amount of net financial resources in the bank.

**Ms. Hanson:** I think the member opposite has confused the question. It was not a question of borrowing; it was a question essentially of the propriety of the Yukon Energy Corporation making an acquisition without having those disbursements for operations and this House or loans to that entity — having it authorized.

Where in the budget of this government in any recent year was there an authorization for the Yukon Energy Corporation to spend \$34.4 million on the LNG plant in advance of YESAA — in advance of any regulatory approval? They made the announcement they've spent the money; it's in the Public Accounts for March 31, 2013. When did this Legislative Assembly provide that authority?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** Madam Chair, as I have reiterated already, the corporations are not debated because those appropriations are not done through the non-consolidated. What we have debated in this House is the money that we are in fact appropriating. So what we have in past in fact — there was the opportunity to debate the money that was borrowed to YDC in last year's supplementary. I believe we can confirm that it was number one.

If we look at page 19-4 in the current 2014-15 operation and maintenance and capital expenditures, you will note under financial summary, amounts to be appropriated, operation and maintenance infrastructure loans for 2014-15, there is an estimate of \$21,200,000.

**Ms. Hanson:** I'm aware of that. That number is not the same as \$34.4 million.

I remind the Minister of Finance that government has guaranteed repayment of loans payable to the Yukon Energy Corporation. The point that's important — and I take this from the consolidated financial statements of the Government

of Yukon, so it's the Minister of Finance's document — is that, while the government has not issued guarantees for any of the instruments, as the Yukon Development Corporation is an agent of the government, lenders may have recourse to the government.

If this government is lending money to an entity that spent money on a project that may or may not be approved, what kind of good business sense is it to have the expenditure of Yukon citizens' money in advance of the regulatory approvals? Does the Minister of Finance — I'm curious — have any sense that there may be some impropriety to that?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** Of course we are well aware of the situation as described by the member opposite. That's why the process involves going through Management Board. Through Management Board, expenditures to the hospital fall under the authority of the Minister of Health and Social Services, expenditures to the Yukon Development Corporation will come to the responsibility of the minister who is who is responsible and who is also the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

To imply that there is no control is completely false. We have to and we do ensure that we maintain control over the spending that the government has. It is important that we remain underneath our debt limit. As I have described to you on different occasions, we certainly are well below our debt limit and are in a position where we actually have no net debt. We have net financial resources — one of only two jurisdictions in the country that can say that.

**Ms. Hanson:** I won't rise to the bait. I'm not lying. When he avows that I'm putting forward something that is false, I'm not. I'm simply asking him. It's got nothing to do with borrowing limits. It has everything to do with the parliamentary system that we operate under, which is that expenditures are subject to the approval to the Legislative Assembly. I simply asked the Minister of Finance to show where that expenditure of \$34.4 million was authorized by the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** I will say that we don't debate the expenditures of the corporations. What we do is control their borrowing. We don't authorize their expenditures, we control their borrowing. Because they are corporations, they do have a board and they do have bylaws and an act under which they rely. That is the authority of the board — to authorize those expenditures. It is the responsibility of the government to ensure that we have control over the borrowing.

**Ms. Hanson:** So it's the responsibility to ensure that they have the control over the board and the board has apparently made an expenditure of \$34.4 million in advance of regulatory and environmental approval. Very interesting — I think that we're not going to get anywhere on that. It's just interesting for the record.

The Minister of Finance is correct that, on April 1, he did outline the outstanding debts of the various corporations. I just wanted to get him to clarify for this side of the House — if he would — with respect to the Yukon Hospital Corporation, he outlined approximately \$49 million. I'd just like him to explain what the total debt is of the Hospital Corporation,

because when I look at the Public Accounts, the principal prepayment requirements on the next five years on the outstanding borrowing for the Hospital Corporation is actually \$81.35 million. So Yukon taxpayers are really not on the hook for \$49 million, if I am correct — and I stand to be corrected — but on page 46 of Public Accounts for March 31, 2013, the figure for the five-year outstanding borrowings is \$81,350,000.

Could the Minister of Finance just clarify that please?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** I think I'll begin by just a final comment on the last question in terms of the \$34 million that she has implied to YDC. I think most Yukoners understand that, if this project were in fact not to go forward, that doesn't mean that they have \$34 million for them to do whatever they choose with. Of course, I believe that people who look at this from a common-sense perspective will truly understand that.

With regard to the debt, as we have articulated — updated March 21, 2014 — Yukon Housing Corporation, Watson Lake hospital \$17, 972,101; Dawson City, \$17 million; Crocus Ridge, just over \$14 million, as we have stated. The debt is at \$49,003,006. Really the difference between what she's looking at in Public Accounts is that, of course, this government, through sound fiscal management, did repay some of that loan, to the tune of \$27 million.

**Ms. Hanson:** The Minister of Finance is correct on the last paragraph there. In fact, it does say in March 2013, they announced their commitment to provide \$27 million. My question was not with respect to that. It was with respect to the outstanding amount of \$81,350,000.

Rather than belabour the point, I guess I would yield the floor to the member of the Third Party.

**Mr. Silver:** I just want to go right into the finishing of this. I would say, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3 — unless there is anybody else from the Official Opposition who wants to bring up any issues at this time — I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 12, Department of Finance, cleared or carried, as required. I don't know if we can do that now or if we have to wait for the official call from Madam Chair.

**Chair:** Prior to entertaining the request from the Member for Klondike, Mr. Silver, I am going to ask if there is any further general debate on Vote 12. There is none, so yes, I will entertain that request.

### **Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 12, Department of Finance, cleared or carried**

**Chair:** Mr. Silver has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 12, Department of Finance, cleared or carried, as required. Is there unanimous consent?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agree.

**Some Hon. Members:** Disagree.

**Chair:** Unanimous consent has not been granted.

We will proceed with line-by-line discussion, Vote 12, starting on page 11-6.

### **On Treasury**

**Chair:** Is there any general debate?

**Ms. Hanson:** I might as well. There seems to be such an appetite on the government side to go into great detail. Could the minister please provide a breakdown with respect to the 57.5 FTEs he outlined at the outset — the number of positions that are management positions and those that are not?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** There are approximately 18 positions in Finance that are management positions.

I would also like to take the opportunity while I'm up to again, just for the record, point out that the Leader for the Liberal Party had no questions in fact for the Minister of Finance with the budget, and again I express my disappointment that the Liberal leader, the Member for Klondike, voted against the \$27-million repayment of money towards the hospital debt. In fact, I'm speaking to the strong management of this government to have money available to be able to pay debt down as required if it makes financial sense to do so as we have done. I was looking forward to some questions other than from the NDP, but again we find that there are no questions from the Liberal caucus.

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

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** Yes, I guess you'd have to take a position on something.

Madam Chair, I think maybe because it might be the next question I'll answer it for the member opposite — there are no communication positions in the Department of Finance.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the Minister of Finance. His officials very carefully provided that information to us in the briefing with respect to the number or lack of communications functions performed there.

This is just a matter of clarification to have a better understanding. I understand that the *Public Utilities Income Tax Transfer Act* is authorized by the Minister of Finance federally. But I would like the Minister of Finance to explain what this actually means, and why it is set at sort of a static rate of \$213,000.

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** The federal government used to refund our provinces and territories 95 percent of the income tax they collected from private utility companies. This program was terminated by the federal government in April 1995 in their 1995-96 budget.

Provinces and territories were free to do as they wished with this money, but the idea behind the refund was to permit the province or territory to, in turn, refund the money to private utilities to reduce power rates and thereby put their customers on the same basis as tax-exempt public utilities whose customers do not have corporate income tax built into their electrical rates.

Yukon government also refunded territorial income tax received and continues to refund a portion despite the termination of the federal portion of this program. In effect, the Yukon government has continued to do that, and we do see this refund every month when you get your utility bill. It is reflected on there as a portion of this \$213,000.

**Chair:** Is there any further debate on Treasury?

***On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures****On Administration**Administration in the amount of \$920,000 agreed to**On Financial Operations and Revenue Services**Financial Operations and Revenue Services in the amount of \$3,868,000 agreed to**On Fiscal Relations**Fiscal Relations in the amount of \$186,000 agreed to**On Management Board Secretariat**Management Board Secretariat in the amount of \$1,875,000 agreed to**On Banking Services**Banking Services in the amount of \$1,015,000 agreed to**On Public Utilities Income Tax Transfer**Public Utilities Income Tax Transfer in the amount of \$213,000 agreed to****Treasury Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$8,077,000 agreed to******On Capital Expenditures****On Office Furniture and Equipment**Office Furniture and Equipment in the amount of \$16,000 agreed to**On Information Technology Equipment and Systems**Information Technology Equipment and Systems in the amount of \$14,000 agreed to**On Building Maintenance, Renovations and Space**Building Maintenance, Renovations and Space in the amount of \$25,000 agreed to****Treasury Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$55,000 agreed to******Treasury Total Expenditures in the amount of \$8,132,000 agreed to******On Workers' Compensation Supplementary Benefits******On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures****On Supplementary Pensions**Supplementary Pensions in the amount of \$426,000 agreed to****Workers' Compensation Supplementary Benefits Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$426,000 agreed to******Workers' Compensation Supplementary Benefits Total Expenditures in the amount of \$426,000 agreed*****Chair:** We're going to start over on page 11-9.*On Revenues***Ms. Hanson:** Just a clarification from the Minister of Finance, if I may. The minister has spoken at great length about the importance of the other sources of revenue aside from the grants from Canada. I'm curious as to the explanation for the decrease in actual and forecast personal income tax, as well as corporate tax.**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** If we're looking at page 11-9, from what I'm reading from the forecast for 2013-14, there's an increase in personal income tax. It sees an increase in corporate tax on both of those. In fact, there's a slight decline in fuel oil tax, a slight decline in the tobacco tax and an increase in the insurance premium tax when comparing estimates for the 2014-15 fiscal year and the forecast for the

current fiscal year that ends at the end of March 31, which we just finished.

So the way that I see that, Madam Chair, is I see increases almost across the board.

**Ms. Hanson:** I'm not trying to belabour the point; I'm just saying that the actual amounts that we have — the actuals for 2012, not the forecast — is \$72.7 million and \$72.294 million in 2014 — your estimates. So I'm just asking why we would be projecting or forecasting lower personal income tax than we had according to the actuals in 2012-13 and, similarly, a \$3-million decrease. I believe from the briefing that this doesn't correspond to the one percent.

Anyway, when I asked what the offset was or what the decrease was as a result of the one-percent change in business tax, it wasn't going to be \$3 million. So I'm curious as to what the attribution is for the decrease — not significant; it's \$500,000, but I'm sure there's an explanation. I'm just looking for it.

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** The numbers that we have provided for taxation revenue — personal income tax and corporate income tax — are numbers that are actually supplied by CRA. They are not actual numbers, which of course we won't be able to accurately project until much later in the fiscal year.

We're just in the first couple weeks of the year, so those are numbers that have been extrapolated by Canada. Really what we need to talk about is the fact that it is very difficult to compare one year to the next when it comes to estimating taxation growth. Certainly there are a lot of things that are involved in that from macroeconomic trends, but also certainly the whole intriguing world of accrual accounting as well. So I think that you cannot really look at a two-year window and be able to make an assessment. I think a very good friend of mine made a comment saying, the trend is our friend. If you were to look at the trend in tax revenues, own-source revenues, since the Yukon Party came into government, they truly are very, very positive numbers if I can underwhelm my description of that.

A couple examples would be our overall tax revenue levels between the first budget in 2002-03 compared to 2014-15 — our overall tax revenue has increased 154 percent. Corporate tax revenues have increased 480 percent. Personal income tax revenues have increased 125 percent. Insurance premium tax and property tax revenues are up 159 percent and 151 percent respectively. What you see in the trend is a significant increase in own-source revenues and we will continue to keep focused on moving forward with those areas where we can continue to foster that growth in private sector economic development and growth in our population, which together will ensure that we can move closer to our goal as I have said again today, which is ensuring that this proud territory can one day really become a net contributor to this country.

*Revenues cleared**On Government Transfers**Government Transfers cleared**On Changes in Tangible Capital Assets and Amortization*

*Changes in Tangible Capital Assets and Amortization cleared*

**Department of Finance agreed to**

**Chair:** We are going to proceed with the Department of Education, but Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes while we await officials.

*Recess*

**Chair:** Committee of the Whole will now come to order. We're going to begin general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education.

**Department of Education**

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I'm very pleased to be able to present the 2014-15 budget for the Department of Education.

I am pleased to say that with this budget our government continues to deliver educational programs and services that prepare students for their lives and careers in the territory and beyond, through 21<sup>st</sup> century learning focus, based on building our students' core competencies in communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity, which are all very important, transferrable skills for the jobs of tomorrow.

A student's success can be supported by providing positive, inclusive and flexible learning environments that encourage the development of these key skills and literacies, which prepare our students to participate in their communities and future careers.

The Department of Education strives to build meaningful partnerships with our stakeholders by working with families, staff and communities and by engaging them to become more involved in the education of our students. Getting parents involved in their children's education and having greater public participation yields new ideas and develops programs that better meet the intellectual, social, physical and cultural needs of our students in our schools.

We are pleased to continue to move forward on these objectives through the comprehensive strategic plan, our commitment to New Horizons, which focuses on success for every learner through improving literacy, numeracy, preserving culture and encouraging educational achievements in Yukon.

The total budget for the Department of Education this year is \$189,910,000. Before speaking about the numbers behind this particular budget, I would like to acknowledge all Yukoners for their continuing commitment to building an excellent education system for all students.

Education develops leaders, community members and a workforce for tomorrow, building stronger communities and economies throughout our territory.

We coordinate with partners and stakeholders to create and deliver accessible and quality programs to our students that prepare them to contribute to our communities, labour market and our economy.

Our vision is to foster a strong commitment to our communities and a lifelong love of learning among all

Yukoners and to provide the knowledge, training and skills development that our students will need to succeed in their future endeavours. This vision informs our programs and is reflected in this budget.

I would like to begin by addressing the capital portion of this year's budget. The capital budget contains many expenditures, and the single largest component of this particular budget is just over \$27 million in support of the F.H. Collins Secondary School replacement. As members are very astutely aware, back in the middle of February we announced that the Yukon government had signed a letter of intent to Clark Builders for the F.H. Collins Secondary School replacement project. The new school building will be designed with leadership in energy and environmental design principles. It will have a capacity of up to 750 students in a variety of learning spaces — from the central gym to the First Nation elders space and beyond.

Contained in this budget also is \$750,000 requested to replace the running track and soccer field at F.H. Collins.

For general site improvement, recreation development and soccer field repairs throughout Yukon schools, approximately \$1.7 million is requested. This funding will increase safety and continue to improve our playgrounds and sport spaces.

Last fall, Yukon Education had contracted a company, Suncorp Valuations to inspect our playground equipment and, as recommended in that report, we'll be replacing equipment at a number of schools over the next two years.

For this year, \$800,000 is requested to begin that process. A further \$528,000 is requested to upgrade the parking lot of Elijah Smith Elementary School. Funding for other capital projects is also being sought in this budget in order to help maintain other public school facilities.

We are also requesting \$350,000 for renovating the basement of the school in Beaver Creek to facilitate the move of the Beaver Creek library into that particular space.

The capital budget also includes dollars for routine projects, such as school-initiated renovations, various school facilities renovations, capital maintenance repairs, and for that we are requesting just over \$1.7 million.

\$1.9 million is requested to support school-based information technology program. This funding will be used to purchase computer hardware, software, network infrastructure upgrades and associated curriculum software upgrades for various schools; \$435,000 is requested for the site-based budgets under the control of individual schools to meet their programming needs; and \$40,000 is requested to continue support for distance education.

This government, of course, is also making efforts to address the current labour market challenges and drawing on the economic potential of all of our respective industries in the territory.

The Yukon College's Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining or CNIM, for example, was developed for this very purpose. In order to assist Yukon College with the capital costs associated with this project, the Yukon government and CanNor are pleased to be able to provide funding through



matching contributions and \$976,000 is being requested for this fiscal year for CNIM. A further \$617,000 is requested to also assist Yukon College with other renovations and other capital projects.

The 2014-15 operation and maintenance budget also provides continuing support for a number of initiatives and labour market activities in the territory. Our most important work at the Department of Education is to ensure that all Yukoners can be prepared with the skills that they need to support their families and to fully participate in our communities and our workplaces. \$152,892,000 is dedicated to this year's operation and maintenance budget in support of Yukoners in their journey of lifelong learning.

Yukon Education is responsible for 28 schools, busing, post-secondary education, labour market programs and immigration. As part of this budget, \$3.13 million is being requested to continue offering busing services for our students. In Advanced Education, we are also continuing to work with Canada to deliver education training and skill development initiatives in support of Yukoners and meeting Yukoners labour market needs.

Included in the budget, as was announced earlier this year with the federal minister, is a new labour market agreement for persons with disabilities, which was signed on February 19 earlier this year with the Government of Canada. It will provide \$1.2 million for the fiscal year. This new agreement will span the next four years and is intended to improve the employment prospects of persons with disabilities, while meeting the labour needs of Yukon businesses.

Yukon employers will benefit from these agreements, as much as our learners and our workers. Agreements such as this emphasize training that is responsive to the changing demands of the economy and local employers and is targeted to address issues, such as skilled labour shortages.

We are very pleased again to be able to continue to implement our labour market framework, which began three years ago and will continue throughout this coming year. We are requesting a total of \$188,000, with \$91,000 of this amount provided through the community development trust, again in support of delivering on the labour market framework and a number of strategies identified within the framework with our many partners.

Yukon Education programs, like the student training and employment program — best known as the STEP program — and the summer career placement program, bridge students' transitions from the classroom to the workplace. Participating students are paid a wage in a summer position where they also gain professional experience they need to enter the workforce. The Department of Education is requesting \$25 million to continue supporting Advanced Education through Yukon College for this fiscal year.

Looking to the long-term health of our economy, our department, Yukon College and Yukon employers continue to work together to encourage students to pursue a career in the skilled trades with skilled trades training opportunities in the workplace and educational facilities for apprentices at the college.

Yukon College is the leading educator in the trades in the territory and offers a number of certificate and diploma programs. We are able to deliver degree programs through articulation agreements with other post-secondary institutions in Canada and in Alaska.

Just over \$18 million, or just shy of \$19 million, is requested to support Yukon College for their base operational funding. This increase supports their request to address day-to-day interests as well as the collective agreement impact. \$474,000 is requested for Yukon College to continue the operation of the School of Visual Arts in Dawson City. \$478,000 is requested for the licensed practical nurse program.

The Government of Canada also recently announced in its budget a three-year extension of the targeted initiative for older workers, which provides an opportunity for workers between the ages of 55 and 64 to develop skills to find and retain employment. \$240,000 is requested to continue this initiative for this fiscal year. Again, this amount is fully recoverable from the Government of Canada.

Just over \$1 million is being requested to support the Yukon Research Centre at the college — again, a home for research programs that address climate change challenges and opportunities in the north, and coordinates northern, national, and international experts on local and global issues. \$453,000 is requested to continue its support for the successful Northern Institute of Social Justice.

We are very pleased to be able to provide funding in support of this program to deliver needed professional training and education to Yukoners in a wide variety of social justice fields on issues such as First Nation history and culture, dealing with grief, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, arbitration, legislation and more.

\$1.2 million is requested to support the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining. As we have talked about at great length in this Assembly, Yukon College has created a five-year program plan for the development of the centre to integrate and house mining exploration relevant and industrial trades training programs within the territory. I'd like to thank Yukon College for delivering a wide range of quality, post-secondary programming to Yukoners and for continuing its important work to expand these great new initiatives.

This year's budget also includes support for public schools programming and, of course, I'm pleased to say that this year's budget will continue to support all public school initiatives introduced by our government during its previous mandates. Our school leaders are critical to school improvement and systems accountability.

We are requesting new funding of just under \$400,000 to continue implementing the rural equity action plan, or REAP. The plan responds to data illustrating a gap in terms of rural student achievement, staffing, program opportunity, demographics and vulnerability. REAP, the rural equity action plan, will include enhanced distance learning opportunities, sharing of resources, specialization of teachers, supports for arts, trades or other specialties, and enhanced opportunities for

students to come together in larger groups for program opportunities.

The rural experiential model in Dawson City that was introduced last fall was a fantastic example of delivering fine arts and applied skills education to students from rural Yukon. Eighty-six secondary students from seven different communities were able to attend week-long sessions from digital art to guitar playing to food and service training.

Through our partnership with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, we are also developing an alternate learning model to support vulnerable learners and are creating new curriculum.

A resource book addressing the story and legacy of residential schools — called *Finding Our Way Home* — has been produced with residential school survivors. This book will be part of a residential school unit that is being developed with Yukon First Nations and grade 10 social studies teachers that will be piloted later on this spring at the Robert Service School in social studies 10. Pilots of this residential schools unit will continue in this fiscal year with participation of as many schools as possible as well as professional development for teachers in the fall.

To continue support for the school growth process, which encourages and monitors school improvements aimed at individual student success and system accountability, Yukon Education requests \$416,000. It's an important venue for First Nations, school councils and community members to get involved in identifying and addressing school priorities. This funding, \$90,000, will support the leaders in education/innovation fund and capacity building to support student learning.

The Department of Education will continue to encourage regular attendance in schools, which is vital for the development of our students' academic, social and emotional skills.

Also contained in this budget is \$50,000 for school-based programs directed at improving attendance across the territory through the Victoria Gold Student Encouragement Society. As I mentioned before, regular attendance is a key factor that contributes to student success. We are very pleased to be able to deliver several programs that address aspects of successful learning, such as this.

Programs like the full-day kindergarten and home tutors, as well as the Individual Learning Centre, will continue to be supported under this year's budget. The Individual Learning Centre has been successfully engaging learners in their studies by providing a flexible learning environment with more students staying in school than in the past.

We are very pleased to provide students with support for their learning success, based on their learning strengths and challenges. We work with teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators — in collaboration with our students in areas where they require interventions — and adapt the regular curriculum to meet their needs.

I see my time is growing short here, so I'm trying to sum up as much as I can.

We continue to work toward improving learning experiences and outcomes for First Nation students, a priority

for the Department of Education and the Yukon government. We are pleased to provide continued support of our partner, the Council of Yukon First Nations, in their delivery of education support services.

In this budget is contained \$405,000 to cover the operating costs of the Yukon Native Language Centre and \$170,000 will support education initiatives.

This year, we are also requesting approximately \$1.6 million in funding to support services of the First Nation Programs and Partnerships unit of Yukon Education. Examples of such very important work — the development of appropriate First Nation curriculum and related materials — include the First Peoples English — 10 courses at F.H. Collins, J.V. Clark and Porter Creek Secondary schools and early primary readers reflecting Yukon First Nations. Through these resources, our students are learning about the history, cultural traditions and the important role of First Nations in our territory.

Madam Chair, seeing the time — and I have a lot more to reflect on within this budget, but to be sure, we will have lots of time in the coming days to reflect on additional details in this year's budget. Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to thank our officials for joining us here in the Assembly today in support of debate. I would also like to extend my many thanks to the Department of Education officials for their hard work, their professionalism and their expertise when it comes to the delivery of quality education in our territory.

With that, I look forward to entertaining any and all questions as we get into line-by-line, but also in general debate to be sure. Thank you.

**Mr. Tredger:** Madam Chair, I, too would like to thank the officials for their attendance and the Department of Education staff for the work they've done to bring us this budget and the work they do each and every day on behalf of the students and parents in our schools and community.

I would like to thank the Minister of Education for her efforts on behalf of the students and all the people of the Yukon. It is much appreciated. Her hard work is recognized and I thank her for that.

I think the important thing we have in education is personnel and the people who are involved in education — the students, the teachers, the parents, the department staff and the community members. We have recruited and work with the best. I am proud of the people who work and serve in education each and every day, who meet the challenges cooperatively and collaboratively.

I am proud of our students and their parents, as they manage their way through early childhood, kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and on. It is a lot of work. There are a lot of challenges, there are a lot of successes and there are some failures, but we work together each and every day to improve. I believe, as an educator, in the education system.

I believe that the key to the education system in the Yukon and its strength is the relationships that we develop to support our students and the student-teacher relationship, which is at the crux of the matter. It is that relationship that

makes or breaks our success. I commend all those who put their time and effort into supporting that relationship.

Our relationships in education are based on respect and a shared responsibility — respect and a shared responsibility. Our relationships are built on community involvement. We have some tremendous success stories: the francophone community and the success of l'École Émilie Tremblay and the francophone system, and French immersion schools and the parent involvement there. Also the parents involved and the community involved in Old Crow, Dawson City, Haines Junction — I could go on.

What we need to do is distill how and why we arrived at those successes and how, why and in what manner can we sustain them, so that we can speak the same for all our schools and for all our children and be responsive to the needs of all the children, whether they are in Dawson City, Pelly Crossing, Whitehorse or Watson Lake.

Our rural and First Nation success rate, by any metric, remains an area of crisis, an area of concern and an area of challenge to each and every Yukoner, not just those involved in education, but everyone in the Yukon. It's a rather well-worn statement that it takes a community to raise a child. We need to examine that statement in detail and see what it means.

This is a primary partnership built on respect and shared responsibility. Research has shown us that a successful school has the support of its community.

It's a challenge for us to support schools with an extensive wrap-around system that coordinates with other public sectors' support for people, children and their families — public sectors like social services, health care and the RCMP to help with the transition between schools and between communities — and cooperation and collaboration with First Nations and their respective departments.

Too often, that has been a hit-and-miss occurrence in our community schools and indeed in our city schools as well. My question for the minister is: Have our schools and other departments been directed to hold regular inter-agency meetings so they can coordinate the provisions of service to their community? If it has not been done, will the minister consider it? Is it on the agenda? I know we've talked in the past about silos and the differentiation between departments, but we're a small enough community and it's time to move on. I'd like to hear the minister's comments on this and whether or not she will consider directing this to happen.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I just want to thank the member opposite for his opening comments and his perspective and reflections as a former educator in our territory over a course of many years. As I have stated on the floor of the Assembly in the past number of months, it has been a few months since I have assumed this role and it has been one of the more challenging portfolios because of the diversity of the content in the department — inclusive of Public Schools, to Advanced Education, to certain elements of immigration as well. Compared to other jurisdictions — they have those separately, among three individual ministers. I also always view that as an opportunity that we are able to really integrate those

services and to be able to work under one umbrella to really strengthen our programs and services for the benefit of Yukoners by having it within one shop.

It is a very large portfolio. There are 28-some schools and of course every school community, as the member opposite knows, is very distinct and unique unto itself. I have had the opportunity, over the last couple of months — ever since I assumed this file in early August — to visit the lion's share of schools, but to be sure I am still making my way through schools as well. I am taking the time to meet with the school councils, to meet with First Nation governments, to meet with students, to meet with the actual administration in the schools themselves and to be able to have school-led tours.

Student-led tours have really enabled me to hear the pride of place and the pride of school communities among those students and I'm able to see a different perspective through their eyes, perhaps as I would through other eyes. Those school community visits are priceless in terms of my time and in terms of our department's time. Rest assured that it's not just me travelling to the schools — there are also our superintendents, many consultants within the Department of Education, and many support services working within the department working on behalf of school communities.

I can say that there are some really exciting initiatives going on in the territory in our communities. In large part, they're being driven by our school communities and are leading to great degrees of success in at least some of the initial results that we're seeing. I've spoken to this, but I can't say it enough — and I know we'll be speaking to it at greater length tomorrow when we talk about it — yes, there are many challenges in the territory to be sure. There are many challenges that are not easily resolved overnight, but again, by being able to work collaboratively with our school communities, our many stakeholders and partners in education, we're able to seize tremendous progress on many different fronts, empowering and engaging students and making curriculum more relevant, interesting and inspiring to students — and also by empowering our teaching professionals, who I cannot say enough about.

I've had the opportunity to meet many individuals over the course of the last number of months — but also as a parent. My son is in grade 3, so I have been also to see his success over the past four years in the schools and see first-hand some of the challenges and opportunities.

I can say that we are very fortunate here in the Yukon to have some really tremendous teaching professionals in the territory. We're very fortunate to have a lot of expertise and experience in our department as well. We have had some teaching professionals who have chosen to come within the Department of Education to be able to lend their expertise to other schools throughout the territory, travelling in a coaching and mentoring capacity and sharing their expertise in, for example, literacy in early learning. They are able to expand their expertise to other schools when it comes to digital literacy, and the tremendous opportunities are significant.

My son was in school, in his class, and they were tasked to come up with a story line, and be able to execute that story

line and produce, by way of an iMovie using iPad minis and be able to combine that technology with their imaginations and be able to articulate that through literacy skills and numeracy skills. It is something that is completely new to many of us here in the Legislative Assembly. We didn't have that opportunity but, to be sure, technology has changed, and so we too have to also change with that.

I'm seeing that with our teaching professionals working specifically with partners outside of education to make those very unique experiences come alive. In turn, for an individual like my son, who is a very busy boy and needs to be fully engaged on many different levels and fronts, it's one example of how we are reaching out, engaging and empowering students — to be able to see their strengths and their weaknesses, to be able to address those through interventions throughout the course of their learning process.

Yes, in response to the member opposite's question — he spoke about student-teacher relationships being key, and how they make or break a student's success based on collaboration and respect for each other. Those are all traits that we promote in our schools and promote throughout the lifelong learning curve, whether it's early education or throughout public schools and beyond — it's very key.

It's key to have successful relationships with our communities. You know, in our communities, there are many examples — in Haines Junction, St. Elias school, or when it comes to the schools in the community of Carmacks, Watson Lake, Teslin. They work seamlessly with their respective local governments — First Nation governments — and it is that successful collaboration that builds strength in our communities as well, because we're able to share resources and, in addition to those other governments, we're able to share resources among other agencies.

The member opposite made reference to inter-agency collaboration with our schools. There are many different examples of ways that we are engaging with many different agencies, whether it be the RCMP, health providers, the Council of Yukon First Nations, or, as I mentioned, individual First Nation governments, the youth association groups, through women's organizations — collaboration through the Women's Directorate.

There are a number of different initiatives that are going on right now as we speak when it comes to addressing bullying and violence in our schools. We have been able to convene a very active inter-agency group built on a number of different providers that are outside of the education domain but include the RCMP, youth associations, representation from many different departments, First Nations.

Another example is early learning as well — again, working with a whole host of different stakeholders to fully develop, to see where the gaps are, to see where the opportunities are for filling in those gaps, to see where it is that we wish to go when it comes to early learning opportunities.

We work with the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Teachers Association, for example, on classroom composition — there is an actual structure

committee for that. As we mentioned, working with Yukon College, there is continued collaboration in all the respective community campuses so we work seamlessly with them as well.

There are many different initiatives underway that are required and being led by the school communities in terms of inter-agency collaboration. There are many specific examples that I could provide — I have shared some — but it is absolutely critical to be able to be inclusive and to provide that whole government approach. We talked about anti-poverty and social inclusion and schools are tremendous examples of the work that they are doing. Social justice clubs, for example, in our schools — Vanier Secondary School has a very active social justice club and they work in collaboration with the Anti-Poverty Coalition. They work with a number of advocacy organizations in support of zero waste. We were able to see that at the all-community garage sale here in Whitehorse not long ago at the Canada Games Centre.

There are many different initiatives fully underway — a number of different structured committees. Some are not necessarily structured committees, but there is work going on.

I continue to learn more and more about the extensive nature of the work going on by sitting down and listening to the principal and hearing from our school council members and hearing directly from First Nation governments on the amount of work that I wasn't even aware of that was going on by those specific schools. To be sure, every school is very much engaged on many different levels and in many different ways.

**Mr. Tredger:** I thank the minister for that answer. I would agree that we have many, many success stories. In fact, whenever I hear of collaboration and inter-agency work, it's usually around a success story. I agree with the minister's statement that it is critical that we provide a whole government approach.

My question again is: Will the minister direct, or has the minister already directed, schools and other departments to hold regular inter-agency meetings so that they can coordinate provisions of service to the community and ensure that there is time for school staff, in particular administrators, to participate in that?

Each community will have a unique response and a unique way of doing it, but it is not happening in all communities.

It is proven, research-wise and success-wise, to be very important. So let's make it happen.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I suppose it's a bit of a redundant question when, as I just tried to articulate for the member opposite, schools are doing a lot of this work. They have initiated many specific initiatives that are conducive to their specific communities, which we support. Far be it for me or our department to direct a community to do something that may not be relevant or specific to their community needs. Rather, we would like to hear from those specific communities the importance, so I'm not entirely sure what the member opposite is getting at. Again, there are many different examples of school-based initiatives that are territory-wide of

work being undertaken right now that require and have the full voluntary participation of many different stakeholders at the table. We'll continue to support that. We'll continue to support every school community that wishes to undertake specific work at the community level that is important to their school community.

I'm not entirely sure what the member opposite is referring to. Again, it is important to have the support of communities. It is important to engage a variety of different stakeholders when it comes to school-based priorities. We support that work, and I have had that opportunity to see that first-hand and to hear that first-hand from many different school administrations and school councils, whether on sport specific initiatives — I mean one takes a look at the F.H. Collins sport school, which is a great example of collaboration being undertaken. That was driven by the school — something that we support, not something that I'm going to direct. Likewise, in the Porter Creek Secondary School, there is another similar initiative that's built on leadership and built on athletic excellence as well, but it was tailor-made for their school and it was driven by their school. We support that, and in turn they have engaged many other stakeholders outside the Department of Education and outside of the school community — Sport Yukon and many others.

We'll continue to support those initiatives. As I mentioned, another interdepartmental committee that we have schools providing participation and input for is the anti-bullying initiative that is really reaching out to the Department of Justice, I believe. Also we have the Department of Health and Social Services, the RCMP, the Women's Directorate, Community Services, Yukon Teachers Association and the Council of Yukon First Nations — what I'm trying to say is that there are a number of different stakeholders on that particular interdepartmental committee and we are seeking feedback from all schools as well.

Hopefully that helps further clarify our intent with respect to supporting our communities and our schools and continuing to do the very good work. But if there is a specific example that the member opposite wants to bring to light or wants to raise with me by way of a letter or by way of a discussion afterwards, I certainly welcome that.

**Mr. Tredger:** It is working and working very well in some schools. It's not working well in all schools and a direction from the department would enable new principals, new administrators and new school councils to begin the discussions in an inter-agency manner to begin to meet some of the local challenges. But we'll go on.

Research has shown that one effective way to spend in support of teachers is to support their work with sufficient numbers of qualified educational assistants. Has the department examined the role of educational assistants and the duties that they perform? Has that position — not the individuals, but that position — been evaluated and refined to make their role more effective? Is there ongoing training for educational assistants? I am especially thinking of rural communities, where we often depend on people who have not gone through the school system but are solid community

members to work in our schools. Is there a program or a way in place that would bring that training to rural communities?

Finally, can I get a count on the number of educational assistants and how it is determined what school or what student or where they are deployed — and if possible the numbers over the last five years, if the minister has them?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I would like to thank the member opposite for his question. As I understand it, what is under review right now are hiring guidelines for educational assistants. So that process is currently underway. We have been continuing to engage with the Yukon Teachers Association at all stages regarding this particular review.

As the member opposite would be familiar with, educational assistant resources are allocated to schools based on student needs. We continue to work with the school-based team and each of the school communities. When it comes to the member opposite's first question about the hiring protocol or guidelines, those are currently under review.

What I can say, when it comes to educational assistants, is that since 2002, base allocations for educational assistants have nearly doubled, if not doubled. We know that enrollment has also decreased by about 10 percent or so. I just got a note here. We have just over 133 FTEs when it comes to educational assistants, as I understand it. That's the information that has been presented to me.

We have been able to increase those allocations over the last number of years — the last 10-plus years. I know that, under the previous minister, there was a significant complement of educational assistants who were being cash-managed year to year. We brought some certainly to those particular positions by making them full-time equivalents.

We continue to work on other supports in the classrooms in support of our student population.

I should just clarify — it was just brought to my attention here — that in addition to the 133.65 FTEs that make up the educational assistants, we also have 33.23 remedial tutors as part of that complement. We have a number of educational assistants as I mentioned.

The government has increased resources, almost doubling it — if we haven't doubled it — since 2002, since we were first elected. In addition to that, we have also come up with other means and programming and support services to assist our student population in the classrooms.

Of course, some of those who we have talked about — self-regulation for example. We had met with the Takhini Elementary School, for example. That is one of the schools that has really shown leadership in terms of the self-regulation program that really started off as a pilot program — and, of course, the Village of Teslin as well. Teslin School has also taken it upon itself to really provide leadership in terms of rolling out the self-regulation initiative. Some of the school community have chosen to keep that within the student population. Other communities have chosen to expand that initiative into the community as well, based on the school priorities that have been identified and designated by those respective school communities.

There are a number of various initiatives that are showing leadership by a number of schools. We are taking those successes and being able to then showcase and share those with other schools. Whitehorse Elementary School is another example of a school that has taken it upon itself to take the MindUP program, for example, and also implemented certain elements of the self-regulation initiative.

We know that students, for many different reasons, are encountering increasing amounts of stress in their lives — particularly students from more vulnerable environments, whether they be in rural Yukon or here in Whitehorse. We have been working on these initiatives, and what we call these first wave schools — Takhini Elementary, the Teslin School, and in the community of Carcross.

Over the next three years, starting with this year, all the schools in the Yukon will be involved in the self-regulation initiative. As I mentioned, there are dollars allotted in this year's budget for that particular initiative. As I also mentioned, there are other schools that have undertaken to roll out certain elements of this particular initiative and are doing a great job of that.

It's not a cookie-cutter approach, but it is an initiative that can be tailored to the specific needs of their community for the purposes of improving our outcomes for all of our learners in the schools, providing training, working with individual students and school staff in the use of the self-regulation framework, and, through this framework, identifying children for more focused interventions within the classrooms. In turn, through the work of these three particular school communities, this initiative has really generated a lot of interest in the community — in the broader public as well — which is helping to sustain the work of that — its sticking power — not just among the student population, but also into the community, into the homes and beyond.

There is a lot of work being undertaken in our communities. It's a very important issue — a very important initiative that we continue to work on, providing a more focused framework on providing student support services in our classrooms. I thank the department for their expertise and for being able to provide services.

There is actually a parent handbook on student support services that is available on the Department of Education website as well. It's quite a comprehensive handbook.

I was going through it not long ago — everything from speech and language consultants to communication, school psychologists, school-based teams, educational assistants, remedial tutors, learning assistants and teachers to building relationships between our school administration and those particular professionals, teachers included. It is but one tool available for parents and stakeholders to take a look at. We continue to work each and every day to improve those particular support services, as delivered by the department.

**Chair:** Order please. Would members like to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

### *Recess*

**Chair:** Committee of the Whole will now come to order, continuing general debate in Vote 3.

**Mr. Tredger:** I thank the minister for her answer.

What is the department's plan for delivering training and upgrading to rural educational assistants, given the importance they play in the school community and the need to bring them into the school system?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Actually, in this year's budget we do have dollars — as a transfer payment — in support of Yukon College and their ability to deliver the educational assistant certificate program. It has been designed to integrate practice with teaching principles, providing support to individuals with those specific needs in support of our schools. There is \$50,000 identified for this particular program.

When it comes to rural Yukon — and I know that we did get a couple of questions raised in one of our community visits earlier in January pertaining to this issue. Through Yukon College, whether through the campus committees or, if not specifically provided at a community campus, there are distance learning opportunities available through Yukon College for the delivery of that specific initiative, which is very important.

In addition to that, we provide in-service programs within our schools. As we mentioned — I think in last fall's debate — our educational assistants are also engaged on many other fronts, including our summer academy for our teaching professionals. It will be held later on this fall as well.

**Mr. Tredger:** I am wondering whether a needs assessment has been done, whether the educational assistants in our communities have been consulted and determined what they would like, what the department would like them to be capable of, whether there have been programs designed, and whether the Yukon College program will be available in communities — perhaps some assessment of what programs are available in communities, as maybe some are available in some and not others — so a needs assessment and a matching of those needs to training, and if that could then be relayed to the educational assistants and their school communities and how it would be done?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** When it comes to educational assistants, as I mentioned, there is work underway currently on this particular issue, as it pertains to hiring guidelines for educational assistants. To be sure, Yukon College will be very much engaged if there are any revisions required to the current educational assistant program that I was just speaking about, if there are widespread changes or if there are just some minor revisions required.

With respect to that, that will help guide our complement of educational assistants in terms of professional development opportunities available for them when these guidelines have been fully completed and revised or not revised, but they are currently under review, so that will help inform any future

changes that may or may not be required to the certificate program that's currently provided through Yukon College.

**Mr. Tredger:** So the minister, if I have it right, has allocated \$50,000 to Yukon College for the delivery of educational assistants programming. In how many communities is it available?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I don't have that information available, but as I mentioned, if there is a demand or if there is an uptake — as I understand, individual community campuses would work through the main Yukon College campus here in Whitehorse to see how that could be delivered, whether that was through distance or, if there were enough individuals, an actual instructor in the classroom in that particular community. I don't have that information at my fingertips, but certainly Yukon College is very good. They're very flexible in terms of making those resources available, so there are dollars allotted for the continuation of that educational assistant program certificate that is for those individuals who are interested in subscribing to that.

**Mr. Tredger:** Have educational assistants in rural communities been informed that that training is available, I assume upon request, and of the process for making that request?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** With respect to information being distributed, again I don't have that information at my fingertips. I haven't seen a recent bulletin that has been issued to our educational assistants, but I do know that through the Yukon Teachers Association there are funds available through the professional development fund for educational assistants to subscribe to that.

Like I said, I do know that we have visited a couple of different campus committees associated with the communities and again this was raised as an issue of importance. Of course, we do know that some education is being made available in some communities where it has been deemed as an issue of importance for EAs to subscribe to it as well. Likewise, through the summer academy, to which EAs are also invited, they have the opportunity to participate in information. I'm not entirely sure if it was on the agenda or if it was distributed at that particular time, but we can certainly endeavour to work with the Department of Education to ensure that that information is distributed.

**Mr. Tredger:** I commend the minister and the department for their efforts to bring training to rural communities for educational assistants. This has been a challenge and it is a struggle. There are quite a few barriers to the delivery of programming in the communities, and it is good to hear that we are beginning to think about meeting some of those challenges.

I would encourage the department and Yukon College to work together to ensure that we can address some of the barriers and that educational assistants in communities do have the opportunity to further their education and become more effective members of the staff, working with their children.

I recently heard about the decision that the Minister of Education made to convert our remedial tutors to educational

assistants. Can I get an explanation as to why this would be happening and what the process is?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** As I understand it, there has been some work within the Department of Education for remedial tutors and educational assistants to be classified as one in the same. Remedial tutors would, of course, retain their employment status. There would be no change to their pay or salary administration.

I understand that it was basically an administrative decision to provide flexibility for schools to be able to deploy resources where they saw fit — so providing that additional flexibility or latitude for each of the respective school councils or schools to make available those particular resources.

Since then, I understand, there was some discussion and, based on that input that was received by the Department of Education, the Department of Education is now continuing to go back and redress this particular issue. No decisions have been made. It is a review that is underway by the department, but based on the very valuable feedback that was received by, specifically, these paraprofessionals, we are now undertaking additional feedback and input and working with those particular professionals to reflect those specific interests and priorities.

**Mr. Tredger:** I'm glad to hear that no decision has been made.

Remedial tutors were originally brought into the system through an agreement with First Nations and the Department of Education. There was concern that there was no necessary local involvement, so they were brought in to the schools. I believe the pilot project was in Ross River and perhaps Old Crow. It was very successful and then it expanded to other schools. The First Nations were quite on-board with that.

The original criteria included that they were nominated by the First Nation community. They were designed to help students as a guide, as a tutor, a community link. They were over and above the educational assistant allotment. They were separate to it, and that was an important point.

The other part was that often a very outstanding community member might not meet the qualifications of an educational assistant, yet they were well-respected within the community and especially the First Nation community. I know in several cases that elders were employed in remedial tutor positions because of the benefits to the schools. I would encourage the department, if they are considering this, to certainly consult with First Nations on that and to revisit what remedial tutors were originally intended to provide and to ensure that role in the school is met some way.

Recently I read in the paper that the Department of Education signed a memorandum of understanding with the Council of Yukon First Nations. I read a summary of it in the newspaper. I am wondering if the minister will table the document and if she could share some of the highlights from that. It is concerning to me and it is concerning to many of my constituents — First Nations included — who wonder how, indeed, it differs from the requirements and obligations of the *Education Act*.

We've had a number of years of inaction. We've had reform projects. We had New Horizons. We have numerous reports, and it seems that the memorandum of understanding, on first glance, finally recognizes the importance of meaningful partnerships and shared governance with First Nations.

My question is: How does this differ from the requirements set out in the *Education Act* that we are already mandated to follow, and how will government ensure that this time it will be different? How can we trust — in the words of one of my constituents — the government to make this a priority and get it done?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** The First Nation joint education action plan was really initiated from the 2012 tripartite memorandum of understanding on education partnerships between the Government of Yukon, Yukon First Nations under the umbrella of the Council of Yukon First Nations and Canada. This particular agreement commits the parties to create and implement a joint education action plan primarily designed to produce successful results for First Nation students. It aims to improve First Nation education and student outcomes through collaboration between the Council of Yukon First Nations and Yukon Education and to provide a better focus for identifying where those gaps are, where we require further research, and where we require further action.

I also want to be very clear that it builds upon the work that has happened and continues to be undertaken. The member opposite referred to work done in the past, or plans, strategies and blueprints put forth by this government and by previous governments, and it builds on all of that.

There are a number of elements — when you look at the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, for example, in their final agreement, they have provisions with respect to education. From there, there was a bilateral agreement that was signed off between our Premier, the Minister of Education of the day and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation chief and council last summer. That has led the way — they have shown leadership — to interest among other self-governing First Nations in the territory interested in doing a very similar agreement pertinent to their priorities in their school community.

Selkirk First Nation has done a significant amount of work and we're working with them to be able to amend their self-governing agreement to reflect similar provisions as well. It does comprise the agreement of Canada as well, so we're working through that, through the Executive Council Office.

There is that work undergoing. There are a number of intergovernmental accords also being undertaken with a number of First Nations, whether it's Kluane First Nation or Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation — again sharing, building on the practices of long-term education planning, alternative educational learning practices or, with respect to the Vuntut Gwitchin Government, it's primarily based on the focus of having to do with land-based experiential learning, alternative learning programming and experiences. We are working with those specific First Nations as well.

This agreement really builds on all of that work and it does provide added direction. It provides a long-term strategic

plan for the First Nation lifelong learning process, with priority on everything from early learning right through to public schools from kindergarten to grade 12, but also recognizes others, including post-secondary and adult education. There is a great amount of work being done by all respective parties. The member opposite alluded before to the importance of being inclusive and being able to generate results — deliverable results.

I do know that there have been 12 separate Yukon First Nation governments that have signed on to the MOU as of December of last year, and they are all working in partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations, as well, to provide leadership to this particular joint education action plan. I know that they're providing expertise and they're providing their particular resources to each of the individual First Nation governments, in particular these 12 First Nation governments that have signed on to the MOU as of last December. So we are working in partnership with all of them.

Where we go from there — I just wanted to also add that I do commend the Council of Yukon First Nations on the amount of work that has gone into this. I also want to commend our department officials, who have worked really hard with CYFN over the past number of months, ever since that MOU was signed off — that tripartite agreement. It does go back. There have been a number of different initiatives — workshops — that have been undertaken at the request of and by the leadership of the Council of Yukon First Nations, which included the education summit on First Nation education that was held about a year ago, and then inclusive of the three different workshops that were held earlier this year — all of which I had the opportunity to attend — the First Nation literacy framework workshop, the Yukon First Nation student success workshop and, again, the education summit that they held just recently here in Whitehorse.

There was a tremendous amount of participation among First Nation citizens, whether it was through activities or presentations during each of those workshops that were presented from elders, educators and youth, as well as experts in education, on a variety of different topics. Again, they were talking about the history and the current situation for First Nation students, affirming our First Nation priorities in Education, best practices in First Nation education for achievement and advancement, and looking to other jurisdictions' First Nation student achievement information — again, perspectives of First Nations and their priorities for education, literacy and achievement.

There has been a whole host of different documents, key reports and research that has helped provide direction and helped inform this joint education action plan, all of which is very important work. Each one of those documents helps inform and leads the path further.

From here, there has been a senior officials group that has been developed, comprised of representation from our department, the Government of Canada and CYFN. We will be working together within that senior working group to oversee the development and implementation of the action plan, as we go forward. It does focus on everything from



culture, language and responsibility for education. It makes reference to supports, success and sustainability of education for our First Nation students and closing that academic achievement gap between First Nation students and non-First Nation students in the territory.

It has been a long-standing priority for First Nation people throughout the territory, but it is very much a priority for this government as well, as it is with respect to closing the gaps between rural students and non-rural students.

I do commend the good work of our officials, working in collaboration with CYFN, working with all First Nation governments and individuals, school councils and so forth. As I mentioned, there have been a number of great successes that have been delivered and we continue to work on them with specific First Nation governments, CYFN and within our department as well.

I talked about the First Nations Programs and Partnerships unit that was developed a number of years ago within the Department of Education — a very busy shop indeed. They have been able to work collectively with First Nations on culturally relevant programming curriculum and now, more recently, a residential schools curriculum. Again, we are working with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, but also in collaboration with all First Nations, on rolling out a pilot and to be able to extend that to other schools — as many schools as we are able to — within this fiscal year.

Of course, it builds upon specific agreements — I'm not going to go into all the specific agreements or specific initiatives being undertaken, but there are many.

Even when we look to Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, they have their bicultural program based on Southern Tutchone learning practices. That is yet another example of another program being delivered in collaboration with our government and self-governing First Nations on developing those specific priorities that are important to their school.

We have a number of different funding mechanisms in our budget and programs that really help promote the development of cultural inclusion initiatives, which involves schools, school councils and First Nation communities working to enhance and improve those programs and projects. There are many different examples. Currently and in the past, we have funded activities like bison hunts and first moose hunts that they do in Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, for example — the bison hunts — and cultural project materials for the classroom and for the cultural camps as well. The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, for example, is conducting their annual series of spring culture camps, which are being delivered in collaboration with the government, in the school itself and our department.

I also want to make a reference that just recently there were other schools, like Vanier Secondary and Whitehorse Elementary School, which just kicked off its First Nation Education Awareness Week. I was very privileged to attend it and help kick it off. It is another example of schools taking it upon themselves to initiate programming that is relevant, but engaging, and empowers the students to learn more about

Yukon's very important history and the culture and traditions that are so important to our students' success.

This week at Whitehorse Elementary, they've been able to engage with a number of different elders and instructors. Daniel Tlen is one who was once with Whitehorse Elementary School and is helping show leadership in terms of putting programs together all week long.

Vanier Catholic, to their credit, put 50 different, specific units throughout the week that were just chocked full of activities pertinent to Yukon First Nation culture, the history of self-government agreements, land claim agreements — very informative, very engaging — and we've heard nothing but great feedback from those particular schools.

It is catching on in more schools, and that's where our First Nations Programs and Partnerships unit is really showing leadership. We have some fantastic people in that unit and they are working very hard, collaboratively, with schools that wish to engage more in that very important part of our history.

I could go on at great length about all the many initiatives going on, and perhaps I'll have a little bit more time to do that later on.

In addition to that — I think that the previous Minister of Education has alluded to this as well — we are continuing to work at the national level with our provincial and territorial counterparts and also with the Council of Ministers of Education, CMEC, on working to share those best practices but being able to find creative ways to really eliminate that achievement gap between First Nation students and non-First Nation students.

Perhaps I'll just sit down, but I do have a lot more to say about this particular area.

**Mr. Tredger:** I thank the minister for that answer. I know that individually and schools — there are many very, very promising initiatives being taken. My concern is many of them are not system-wide and they're on an ad hoc basis.

Recently we had a discussion in the House on residential schools and residential school training. Alberta took the initiative and announced mandatory residential school sensitization for grades K to 12. Manitoba also has mandatory curriculum in it. Our partners in the north — Northwest Territories and Nunavut — for three years now have been running courses on residential schools. We have a pilot project currently going on in Dawson.

With the plan to deliver the curriculum across Yukon in the fall, I'm wondering for what grade levels that curriculum will be developed and put forward to. Will it be mandatory across the Yukon? Are we looking at maybe doing it in several grade levels?

The minister mentioned that a number of teachers were involved last summer in a course. How many teachers were involved? What are the plans to train or involve teachers in training so that they are able to deliver this course?

I guess the other part to that is if there is a general commitment to ensure that all our teachers and staff have training in residential schools, in our land claim agreements. We can be proud of these. They serve all Yukoners. We're leading the country in this, and it's critically important that we

linger no longer, that this becomes an integral part of our school systems. I know members in the House last week debated this and, to a person, looked forward to that. So I'm wondering what the plans are from the Department of Education? When can we expect mandatory curriculum in residential schools, land claims and First Nation culture?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I commend all those other governments that have taken it upon themselves to make this part of their core delivery of curriculum in their schools. What I will say, though, is that Yukon is different from Alberta.

Yukon is different from Alberta, just as we're different from the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. We have to respect those differences. As I said, we are working the national front, we're working with the Northwest Territories and Nunavut to glean their experiences — the positive and the less than positive — when they rolled out their curriculum.

To be sure, those experiences are different from Yukon's. We do have a different set of stories; we have a different experience and it needs to reflect that. It needs to be sensitive to those differences; it needs to reflect an accurate picture of what happened here in the territory, and it needs to be articulated by Yukon citizens.

As I said the other day, this is a very critical and key part of education. We recognize the importance of tailoring our curriculum to include those locally developed materials, which include the story of residential schools in this territory and their legacy in the Yukon.

As I have mentioned, we the department have and continue to work with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and work with other First Nation governments and officials to develop a grade 10 social studies unit. That unit is using the book, *Finding Our Way Home*, produced by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, with the intent of being piloted later in spring of this year.

Like I said, we have been engaging with other First Nations to ensure that it's reflective of all First Nations, not just specific to Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in alone. But Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in has taken leadership and we have been working alongside with them with their government and their government officials on coming up with a pilot to be rolled out. So we will be piloting with as many schools as possible, as I mentioned. Instead of making it mandatory, we're working with every school community to really launch this program as far as we can, based on the level of comfort — the level of readiness, perhaps is the better word — of each of the school communities and that is very important.

I do know that there has been a tremendous amount of work and, as I mentioned, for several years plus, our Programs and Partnerships unit in the department has been working on the development and resources on residential schools. We have been working on the national level, as the member opposite referred. We did in fact partner with the Northern Institute of Social Justice through the Yukon College to host a panel of survivors from residential schools.

I was able to be present for a portion of that presentation. It was showcased at the summer academy held last August for the first time ever and it was tremendous. It introduced the

issue of residential schools in a very high-profile way, speaking from first-hand stories and personal experiences with residential schools from a panel of speakers who really covered all aspects of their experiences with residential schools. Of course that was made available to all educators and all stakeholders in the Department of Education. I think there were well over 500 individuals in that room. We plan to repeat that and, in fact, be able to respond to that in order to strengthen that delivery. So I thank the Northern Institute of Social Justice for their continued collaboration, their engagement and their partnerships with Yukon First Nations.

We have also hired an additional First Nation curriculum consultant, who continues to work on the residential schools curriculum as well as other First Nation curriculum.

The member opposite made reference to the teachings of land claim agreements and the evolution of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* — agreed — and in fact as of this current school year, in grade five it has been made mandatory. Every student in grade five across the territory is taking that particular course across the board. That is a first for the territory.

With respect to the specific pilot project, we've been working on a teacher's guide for a 10-lesson unit on the residential schools, using the knowledge and the experience that has been gained by the Northwest Territories and the Nunavut experience as well. We have hosted a working group workshop to provide feedback on the unit and to develop more lessons, comprised of high school teachers, First Nation representatives and also staff from our own Public Schools branch — they also participated. We continue to work with that information and we have also been working with a First Nation curriculum working group, another separate working group as well.

As I mentioned, when it comes to Northwest Territories and Nunavut, according to the department, they are undergoing some changes to their own programming to address the outcomes observed during its first year of implementation. So we are learning from those shared practices and what didn't necessarily work and what has worked in being able to glean those practices and being able to strengthen the work that is underway right now.

As I mentioned, in addition to working with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and First Nation governments to develop this pilot, we are also working on teacher professional development that will also be launched later on this fall.

We have also contracted with an individual to provide that added research of the residential school timeline, which will be part of the school package. We've also been working with communities to come up with a speakers list of school survivors — so we're creating that. We have conducted a number of surveys in a number of communities, including Carcross, Old Crow, Ross River and Whitehorse. We have a very comprehensive list of well over 80 speakers at this particular time. The programs and partnerships unit has several digital recordings of school survivors, which will also be part of the available resources. We're working with a group of individuals to create and expand those local digital stories

to be able to be showcased, based on the specific community they're in.

There's a tremendous amount of work. We have also been having a lot of dialogue — a lot of communication — through the Yukon First Nation Education Advisory Committee, working with CELCs, and we were also able to share some of the ongoing work with Yukon First Nations Health Commission.

As I mentioned the other day, we also recognize the need to have supports in place for a community during and after a residential school unit is taught, so a lot of thoughtful deliberations are being given to that right now, as we speak, within the classroom setting, but also beyond.

We've been working with a number of different organizations — CAIRS, Health Canada, Yukon First Nation community health resolution support workers — to determine what support can be established at the school and beyond the school at the community level as well.

There has been a lot of work undertaken and I certainly commend the department and I commend Yukon First Nations for doing this work and getting it right and being able to deliver it in a responsive, but also a very relevant and a very respectful, way.

**Mr. Tredger:** Madam Chair, last year, the Legislature debated introduction of JJ Van Bibber's book, *I was born under a spruce tree* into the Yukon school system. At that time, the minister mentioned that they would develop a curriculum and that it would be incorporated into our school system.

I'm wondering — has that been done and how many classes or schools have used and are currently using the book?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Actually the MLA for Klondike had raised this question last fall and I thank him for his questions with respect to that. It was actually the MLA for Klondike who put forth this motion and we debated it significantly. I think that I did my best to address this question last fall.

As I mentioned, there have been well over 150 books purchased, and they have been well distributed throughout Yukon schools. Every school received a copy of the book, but some more than others.

Through the Department of Education, we have been reviewing the book. It was recommended at the elementary level and for grades 8 and 9 as a resource for the teaching of First Nation perspectives, which include supporting staff in delivering the required First Nation grade 5 materials, as I referenced earlier.

It is also available for professional development purposes as a follow-up to the summer academy presentations on residential schools, as I referenced earlier, and will be repeating again this fall. I know that the staff in the Public Schools branch have been working on exploring ways in which the actual book can be used in the development of the residential school pilot program — the grade 10 residential school unit, to be exact. We are also finding ways that we can connect it to a number of other courses that are currently

underway, including First Peoples English 10, 11 and 12 and B.C. First Nations Studies 12 as well.

There is a significant amount of work that has transpired since that motion was first debated and that is the most current update that I have.

**Mr. Tredger:** Madam Chair, the education leadership program is to be funded for another year. Does the minister have an evaluation or report for previous years and could she give us an update on the number of administrators or potential administrators who have completed the program and the number who have obtained positions in our schools?

I speak from a rural perspective. There are at least three administrative positions coming open in the rural schools, and we have often had difficulty filling those positions with teachers from the Yukon. Most, if not all, are recruited from out of territory. Has the education leadership program made a difference and in what way? Can we expect our rural positions to be filled by local teachers, or are they going to be filled from out-of-territory teachers?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I am familiar with a number of administrator positions coming open. When we were in Watson Lake at the Johnson Elementary School back in January, there is creative thinking being provided by the local school community in Watson Lake on how to fill that particular important position in Watson Lake, for example.

A hiring panel will be convened in the case of Watson Lake. They've had the opportunity of — it's not of benefit — but they've had the latitude of knowing that they would be able to have early recruitment, so to speak, for their administrator position. They were hoping to get out the door sooner rather than later this spring. That will work certainly to their benefit as well, in terms of recruiting for an administrator for the Johnson Elementary School. There will be representation from the school council — they will be providing great leadership in terms of that — and other representatives from the community of Watson Lake as well, as I understand. That's just one example of a school that I know has been providing a lot of thoughtful deliberations as to how they can really find the right individual for their school environment and be able to work to address some of their challenges but also work to strengthen their school community as well.

I don't have any particular information at my fingertips, nor do my officials here at this particular time, on the education leadership program in terms of being implemented and how it has contributed to the fulfillment of vacancies within our schools, but I can certainly look to see what we can come up with.

**Mr. Tredger:** Last year, the majority of our administrative positions were filled by people from Outside and were recruited from Outside. Was there any attempt to interview or determine with the graduates of our Yukon education leadership program why they did not apply? What were the barriers to them applying? Why did we again have to fall back on recruiting administrators from Outside?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** As I mentioned before, each of those specific vacancies in our communities — when it comes

to administrator positions, school councils do take a significant amount of leadership in providing that direction in terms of participating in the overall hiring, knowing full well that those particular applicants are fully qualified, that they meet all the required credentials and staffing requirements for that particular position. They are ultimately the ones to provide that direction as to who the best candidate would be for their appropriate school community.

I just gave the example of Watson Lake. I could not give the member opposite any more specific information because that is a hiring decision, of course, and it would not be very appropriate for me to comment on specifics of hiring decisions. But again, our school councils — it is very important to have that leadership in the school community and to be able to have the latitude, to have the sufficient time to advertise, and have the benefit of the expertise on their school council as well as administration representation to be able to help determine the direction of the overall school community and to be able to choose the appropriate person who will help fulfill their school-growth plan and their school priorities as identified by their school community.

As it pertains to the education leadership program, I do not have that information at my fingertips, but, to be sure, we'll look into it, keeping in mind that school councils do play a pivotal role when it comes to the hiring of specific individuals and finding the right candidate that suits their respective needs, whether that be a local individual from the Yukon, from their community, or whether it be outside of the territory itself.

**Mr. Tredger:** I brought this issue before the House before. Substitute teachers play an integral part of our teaching community. They are a valued resource. They're in our schools each and every day. Our system couldn't run without them. Their status continues to be unresolved. This is an ongoing issue. It has been many, many years that we've been trying to deal with it. They are still not recognized as employees. They still have no benefits. They still have no security, and they still have no formal recognition. Last time I brought it before the House, the minister agreed to work with the Yukon Teachers Association to continue to look into this issue. From what I hear from the YTA, information that is necessary is not being shared with them. They are making it very difficult to contact the substitute teachers so that they can ascertain just how best to proceed with getting them representation.

Can the minister give us an update and any recent conversations she has had with the Yukon Teachers Association? When can we expect a resolution to this issue?

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** This would require, as I understand it, an amendment to the *Education Labour Relations Act*. It is a statute that is under the purview of the Public Service Commission. I do know that the Public Service Commission has been looking at this issue as well as the Department of Education.

We have had some discussions with the Yukon Teachers Association — I know I have and the previous Minister of Education also had this discussion. In looking at other

jurisdictions' experiences, I know I've had some discussions with my ministerial counterparts in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, seeing the changes that were made or how they implement their system — so really providing that background information.

Rest assured that substitute personnel are a very integral part of our education system and we rely heavily upon them over the years on any given day in any given school community. We are very familiar that this is an issue of importance to the Yukon Teachers Association. We've had some discussions regarding that. Right now, we have been acquiring more information, providing that added research from all the respective jurisdictions in terms of practices pertaining to substitute personnel, how they're employed and how they're able to be utilized, with or without the respective credentials.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### Chair's report

**Ms. McLeod:** 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 p.m.*

**The following document was filed April 8, 2014:**

33-1-78

Water Treatment at the Onek 400 Adit, letter re (dated April 8, 2014) from Hon. Scott Kent, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to Jim Tredger, Member for Mayo-Tatchun (Kent)