



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

---

Number 152

1st Session

33rd Legislature

---

## HANSARD

Monday, May 5, 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>	Mountainview	<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
---------------------	---------------------------------------

## LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Floyd McCormick
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**  
**Monday, May 5, 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 with the Order Paper. Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of National Elizabeth Fry Week

**Ms. Moorcroft:** Mr. Speaker, “When thee builds a prison, thee had better build with the thought ever in thy mind that thee and thy children may occupy the cells.”

That is a quote from Elizabeth Fry who lived from 1780 to 1845, who was a prison reformer and the driving force behind new legislation to make the treatment of prisoners more humane. Elizabeth Fry enjoyed the support of her reigning monarch, Queen Victoria.

Each year, the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies celebrates National Elizabeth Fry Week during the week leading up to Mother’s Day. The goal is to enhance public awareness and education about victimized and criminalized women in Canada.

I rise to give the tribute today for National Elizabeth Fry Week on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Third Party.

The majority of women who are criminalized and imprisoned are mothers. Most of them were the sole supporters of their families at the time they were incarcerated. Here in Yukon, most of the women held at Whitehorse Correctional Centre are moms. When mothers are sentenced to prison, their children are sentenced to separation. Elizabeth Fry Societies draw attention to this reality by ending Elizabeth Fry Week on Mother’s Day each year. There are 24 Elizabeth Fry Societies across the country focusing on meeting women’s needs in the community, breaking down the negative stereotypes that exist about women who are imprisoned and institutionalized and encouraging productive and responsible community responses to criminal justice matters from coast to coast.

Elizabeth Fry Society of Yukon advocates for the rights of women who are held in corrections. As is done elsewhere in Canada, Elizabeth Fry Society of Yukon should be on the list of privileged phone calls so that women who are held in corrections can make a confidential call to request representation at internal disciplinary hearings, as is their legal right expressed in the *Yukon Corrections Adult Custody Policy Manual*.

The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies hopes that particularly in this time of fiscal restraint, their focus will encourage the development of and support for

community-based alternatives to costly incarceration that would benefit all members of society.

Elizabeth Fry Societies challenge Canadians to reach behind the walls and bring women into our communities so that they may take responsibility and account for their actions in ways that make sense to them and to us. Happy National Elizabeth Fry Week and happy Mother’s Day.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Speaker:** I would like to welcome our neighbours from the Alaska State House — Lance Purdy, accompanied by one of his sons. They are heading home to Anchorage but made a side trip. As you recall, the Skagway float is not working for the ferry, so they went up through Haines and turned the wrong way. They decided to come and partake of the facilities at the Canada Games Centre and also stop at the Legislature and meet as many of us as he is able to before he carries on. Thanks for joining us, Lance.

*Applause*

**Mr. Silver:** Please help me in welcoming today to the gallery members of the Yukon Home Educators Society. We have Helen Anne Girouard, Anick Girouard, Joel Girouard and Julianne Girouard.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** I ask the House to join me in welcoming three good friends. We have Hunter, Lee, and Tim Vincent, who have taken the year off of work and school and life to chase the sun. If you want to see their fantastic adventures, check out their website [www.chasingthesun.ca](http://www.chasingthesun.ca). Thank you for coming Hunter and doing your section of government with us.

*Applause*

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the State of Alaska to recognize the extremely poor outlook for the 2014 chinook salmon run in the Yukon River drainage and to take the necessary management actions to achieve the interim management escapement goal for chinook salmon based upon the Eagle sonar program near the Yukon-Alaska border, as agreed to by the U.S.-Canada Yukon River Panel.

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

THAT the membership of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, as established by Motion No. 6 of the First Session of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Legislative Assembly, and

amended by Motion No. 315 of the First Session of the Legislative Assembly, be amended by:

- (1) rescinding the appointment of the Hon. Scott Kent; and
- (2) appointing Darius Elias to the Committee.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT the membership of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, as established by Motion No. 7 of the First Session of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Legislative Assembly, and amended by Motion No. 304 of the First Session of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Legislative Assembly, be amended by:

- (1) rescinding the appointment of the Hon. Mike Nixon; and
- (2) appointing Darius Elias to the Committee.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to ensure that all Yukon citizens are afforded an opportunity to engage in a discussion on issues related to hydraulic fracturing by directing the Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing to hold public meetings in all Yukon communities identified as such on the government's Yukon communities profiles website — namely Beaver Creek, Burwash Landing, Carcross, Carmacks, Dawson City, Destruction Bay, Faro, Haines Junction, Mayo, Old Crow, Pelly Crossing, Ross River, Tagish, Teslin, Watson Lake, Whitehorse, Ibex Valley, Mount Lorne and Marsh Lake.

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

THAT this House condemn the federal government's refusal to, in spite of the recent reports from the RCMP that have identified over 1,100 cases of missing and murdered aboriginal women, call a national public inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Alaska Highway Community Society, the Alaska Highway Heritage Society — Yukon and Yukon First Nation governments along the Alaska Highway corridor to urge the Government of Canada to designate the Alaska Highway corridor as a national historic site by 2017, the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the construction of the Alaska Highway.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Environmental consultation

**Ms. Hanson:** This government has lost the trust of the public when it comes to protecting the environment. Over the past 12 years, Yukoners have unfortunately learned to be wary of the Yukon Party. This government has no one but

themselves to blame for the state of affairs. Their decision to unilaterally reject the publicly and democratically achieved Peel plan epitomizes their indifference to the will of Yukoners.

From day one, this government fostered a climate of mistrust and secrecy when it comes to plans for the environment.

The question is straightforward. When is this government going to do more than provide Yukoners with bland assurances that they do not view environmental protection as a mere irritant that needs to be removed at the first opportunity?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** I almost don't know where to begin in responding to that question. Throughout the Yukon government we take a number of actions to protect the environment in a number of different ways. One needs only to look at the record we've had over the last couple of years to see evidence of that. We've amended wildlife legislation like the *Animal Health Act* to ensure that the Yukon government has the tools to protect its domestic and wildlife animals.

We've made changes to a number of procedures and policies throughout the Department of Environment to protect the environment. As the member noted, we have adopted a land use plan for the Peel watershed region that creates vast new protected areas and, I think, puts Yukon at the forefront of Canada when it comes to environmental protection. As a result of that land use plan for the non-settlement land in the Peel region, Yukon now protects more of its land base than any other province or territory in the country. That is something we should be proud of and it's something that this government is very proud of. In terms of our record across the board, I'm very proud of the record of the Yukon government when it comes to the protection of the environment.

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

**Speaker:** Order please. You have to wait until you are recognized and I didn't get a chance to.

**Ms. Hanson:** I don't think that Brad Firth, or Caribou Legs, ran over 1,200 kilometres because he trusted that this government was actually respecting the Peel plan. The fact is that this government lost the trust of Yukoners long ago. They make deals in secret and refuse to listen to the views of the public. Whether it is orders-in-council granting ministerial authority to change land designations, to the legislation to authorize regulations for independent power production before the public has even seen the independent power production policy, the government's actions show their disregard for the public's input or the public's respect for the environment. To this government, consultation is an opportunity to ignore the concerns of the public.

This, coupled with their attempts at removing environmental protection, leads to the erosion of public trust and a climate of cynicism and scepticism when it comes to government decisions.

The question really is — and I'll say it again: What is this government going to do to improve transparency and clarity when it comes to environmental regulations?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** On just about every single initiative that the Yukon government undertakes, we seek the

input of the Yukon public and Yukon stakeholders throughout the territory. We appreciate the input we receive and take it into consideration whenever we make decisions.

As I said before, a number of examples of that include the *Animal Health Act* — the changes we made there — and changes we made to the energy policy in the territory and the drafting and creation of the *Climate Change Action Plan*. These are all examples of initiatives that have sought and received significant public input to very important government policies and programs. We remain committed to seeking input from the Yukon public on any number of these initiatives. We always take public input very seriously when we make our decisions.

Often the input received through these public comment periods turns into changes in government policy. We appreciate the continued interest of the Yukon public in the creation and implementation of environmental policies throughout the territory.

**Ms. Hanson:** It's increasingly clear that people are not fooled by this government's token gestures toward environmental protection or consultation.

This government's actions have created a climate of mistrust that runs so deep that even potentially good decisions will be opposed, simply due to the deception that Yukoners have received at the hands of this government.

As exhibited by those attending in the gallery, Yukoners want this government to meaningfully consult them when it comes to environmental protection. In the eyes of Yukoners, this government has lost all moral authority to make decisions that will affect the Yukon's environment. They want the government to be transparent, up front and honest when it comes to making decisions about the environment.

Again, what concrete measures can the government offer to Yukoners to show that they will take into account Yukoners' concerns about environmental protection in a meaningful and honest way?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** We will continue to take action to protect Yukon's environment through a number of different measures. I don't agree with the characterization that the NDP leader has suggested when she suggests that some of these actions are token gestures. When we look across the board at some of the initiatives that we have taken, it's plain to see that we've taken real action to protect our environment. Yukon now protects more of our land base than any other province or territory in the country. We have a greater percentage of our land base protected. Those are real protected areas that we have created over the last couple of years. These are vast new protected areas that prohibit the distribution of new mineral rights and prohibit oil and gas distribution of rights as well.

I also note that we will continue to engage the public in environmental policy. Another great example is the development of our water strategy. We have been seeking input from Yukon First Nations, Yukon municipalities and the Yukon public in the creation of that water strategy, and we make what we hear very public when we release *What We Heard* documents and reports of that nature.

I am convinced that the Yukon government is thoroughly engaged in discussions with the Yukon public about its policies and I remain committed to engaging all stakeholders in the Yukon, as well as the Yukon public, in the creation of new policies and strategies for the protection of our environment.

#### **Question re: Peel watershed claims staking**

**Mr. Tredger:** In January the Yukon Party government rejected seven years of consultations, rejected the views of most Yukoners, dismissed the Peel commission's final recommended plan and announced its own unilateral plan. More than 71 percent of the Peel is now open to new staking and resource extraction. The Yukon Party Peel plan is unbalanced and it is a contested plan, legally challenged before the courts.

When the Peel planning commission was four years into its good work, the government agreed to ban mineral staking in the watershed to prevent further speculative staking in the Peel. Now they are again encouraging speculative staking in the Peel region.

Does the government believe that encouraging industry investors to stake claims that could face years of litigation and uncertainty is a good way to develop Yukon's reputation among investors?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** I thank the member opposite for his question here this afternoon. When it comes to the modified land use plan that we introduced for the non-settlement lands in the Peel watershed, there are a number of new initiatives that we've also included in there, including the restricted-use wilderness area that encompasses the majority of the — it's the largest designation, pardon me, of the modifications we made to the plan.

I think it's important for Yukoners to know that, at any one time, only 0.2 percent of that area can be disturbed, so that's a new and innovative way that we can protect the environment in the Peel watershed, that we can ensure that we respect all sectors of the economy and continue to look after the environment in that area.

There have been decades and decades of mineral exploration in the Peel watershed, yet the area is still deemed pristine. I think that's something that those who are involved in the mining industry and the exploration industry can certainly hang their hat on as being good stewards of the environment as well.

We feel we came up with a plan that's fair and balanced for all Yukoners, no matter what sector of the economy they're engaged in, and it's something that protects the environment.

**Mr. Tredger:** In the business section of a recent edition of the *Globe and Mail* there was a notice to potential Yukon mining investors warning them not to expect compensation for claim staking in the Peel River watershed, noting it is "contested land". Under the Yukon Party watch, Yukon's reputation among investors is getting worse and the economic ramifications are obviously negative. Lawyers are the only beneficiaries of this lack of leadership. The *Umbrella*

*Final Agreement* and self-government agreements have shown us another way.

Will the government do the responsible thing and prevent more speculative staking in the Peel River watershed by issuing a staking withdrawal until all the legal issues are resolved?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** I've answered this question twice during this session — once during Question Period on a question from the Member for Takhini-Kopper King and again in debate on Energy, Mines and Resources on a question posed by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun — that we will not be renewing a staking ban on those lands that allow staking. Those are the restricted-use wilderness areas as well as many of the integrated management areas.

Of course, no new staking is allowed on the new protected areas that we created in the Peel watershed. The Minister of Environment — during Question Period today — mentioned that those new protected areas now make the Yukon the most protected jurisdiction in Canada when it comes to land set aside for parks and protected areas.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the investment climate, of course we take that very seriously. The Minister of Economic Development continues his work on attracting mining investment to the territory. When it comes to the modified plan that we introduced on the Peel watershed, we feel it's a plan that doesn't put us at risk for having to expropriate claims or compensate companies for their mineral claims. It's something that we feel would send shockwaves through the investment community if we were to expropriate or compensate as members opposite would have us do.

**Mr. Tredger:** The government knows very well that they have no obligation to pay companies compensation. It is the Government of Yukon's responsibility to determine whether and on what basis staked claims are compensated. With all of their talk of using taxpayers' dollars to pay hypothetical compensation for claims, the Yukon Party is clearly signalling that is exactly what they hope to do. They want to pay speculative resource companies large amounts of money from the public purse. The government could prevent nuisance staking, but instead, it is encouraging it.

Mr. Speaker, why is this government so intent on signalling to the industry that it will compensate for speculative staking in the Peel watershed when by law, it does not have to?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** Those are very alarming statements made by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun. Incredibly, he would have us expropriate claims in the Peel watershed — claims that have been staked. Many claims have been in good standing for 60 or 70 years.

Mr. Speaker, from the year 2000 to the year 2008, there was almost \$50 million spent in exploration in the Peel watershed. Those are real dollars spent by public companies. Many of their shareholders are Yukoners. Of course they would be looking for compensation if we were to expropriate their claims. It's something that we're not prepared to do.

We're not going to introduce a staking ban in the Peel watershed on those areas that aren't included as new protected

areas. Expropriation would send shockwaves through the investors in New York in Toronto and Europe. It's something that we're certainly not prepared to do and when it comes to the Peel watershed, we feel we've introduced a modified plan that not only protects the integrity of the environment but also respects all sectors of the economy, including those that are engaged in the mining and mineral exploration sectors that have a long and storied history of economic development here in the territory, which is indeed one of the cornerstones of our economy.

#### **Question re: First Nation participation in mining sector**

**Mr. Silver:** On Friday morning, the Premier held a private meeting with the Yukon First Nation chiefs to discuss changes to the class 1 mining thresholds. At the meeting, the Premier announced that new class 1 restrictions imposed in the Ross River traditional territory last year are going to be put in place in the traditional territories of both the White River and the Liard First Nations starting July 1 of this year. He also said that notification for class 1 activities would be introduced Yukon-wide sooner rather than later. These new class 1 thresholds are results of the Ross River Court of Appeal decision handed down last year. The Yukon Party has insisted, since the decision was released, that it only applied to Ross River and not to other First Nations. Now, on the eve of another exploration season, the government has now changed its mind. Why?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** Certainly this government meets with Yukon First Nations on a regular basis. We have our officials within departments who work with First Nations on a daily basis and in fact, I took the opportunity in the last session to talk extensively on just some of the things this government does to continue to work with Yukon First Nations, either collaboratively or on a bilateral basis.

As you know, Mr. Speaker and the members opposite are also aware, I also meet informally with Yukon First Nations leadership where we have a chance to talk about a lot of different issues and continue to have a chance to really understand our problems and opportunities that each of us face and how we can continue to work toward moving Yukon forward on many fronts — economically, socially and politically. This government will continue to do that.

**Mr. Silver:** Last fall, the government passed amendments to the Yukon *Quartz Mining Act* and *Placer Mining Act* to address the issues decided in the *Ross River Dena Council v. Yukon* government court case. These amendments required notification for all mining land use activities on claims, regardless of the environmental impact. At that time, the government assured prospectors that they would be consulting with First Nations to exempt activities with no significant environmental impact from these requirements. In December, industry associations were informed that new class 1 thresholds would be implemented in February, so that exploration companies would have a clear set of rules going forth into the summer exploration season.

To date, none of this has happened and the exploration season is about to start.

What is the government doing about that commitment that it made in December?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** I thank the member opposite for that question; it is extremely important. Obviously the class criteria or the thresholds that we want to adjust for the class 1 activities are something that is very important to the industry — to the prospectors and others — who are engaged in early stage or class 1 exploration activity, but it is also something of course that is important to the First Nations. To that end, we will be engaging with First Nations and industry in the coming months to establish what that class criteria — those new thresholds — will look like.

It's something that's important to both those groups going forward, and we're pleased to have both those groups being engaged in developing those thresholds for class 1 activity throughout the territory.

**Mr. Silver:** Last fall, officials from Energy, Mines and Resources told the mining industry officials that they would adopt and implement new thresholds proposed by the Yukon Prospectors' Association for class 1 mining land use activities.

Has the government consulted with First Nations concerning these proposed new thresholds for class 1 activity, as they committed to do last fall?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** Perhaps the Member for Klondike didn't hear my second answer, so I'll repeat it.

Last fall, during consultation on the amendments to the *Quartz Mining Act* and the *Placer Mining Act*, the Yukon Prospectors' Association put forward some potential amendments to the class criteria and the thresholds. It is something that we weren't able to consult on at the time and it's something, as I mentioned in my second answer, that we're happy to have industry and First Nations engaged on setting those thresholds going forward, and it's something that we're committed to and will be led, from a Yukon government perspective, through the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. I look forward to those discussions taking place very soon and coming up with thresholds that make sense for those who are engaged in the industry and also for First Nations that are users of the land and would be those that required notification for class 1 activities.

Again, I can commit to the House that those consultations will be getting underway very shortly and we look forward to a resolution at some time in the very near future.

#### **Question re: Forest fire management**

**Mr. Barr:** Mr. Speaker, forest fire season is starting up in the Yukon again. Over the past week, we have seen a couple of small fires in the territory and smoke and haze has blown in from B.C. and Alaska.

Forest fire lookout towers form a critical part of Yukon's Wildland Fire Management response system. The towers can spot fires before they can get going and direct fire suppression teams to the fire while they are still small. This government has been cutting back on the number of staffed fire towers in the Yukon. Can the minister tell us how many lookout towers

will be operating in the entirety of the Yukon for the coming season?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** What the member is not recognizing in this case is that, in fact, some of the steps that have been taken and changes made in Wildland Fire Management result from improvements in communications and fire detection technology that have allowed certain towers to only be staffed when the fire danger is high. Those are decisions that were made by staff at an operational level. I would also note to the member, as he should be well aware, that we've consistently increased the resources for Wildland Fire Management. Last year, in response to one of our highest fire seasons, we had very significant expenditures in this area. We will continue to respond to all areas of need within the Wildland Fire Management area and continue to work with staff in determining the most effective way of utilizing our dollars.

**Mr. Barr:** Mr. Speaker, the minister did not answer my question once again.

We've seen it before and we're seeing it now. This government is penny-pinching on the backs of Yukoners' safety. The Tagish fire lookout provides a valuable spotting service to Tagish's volunteer fire department and the wildland fire crews. However, spotters are only present in the tower during the week. They are not present on weekends, unless the conditions are extreme. The population of the Tagish area close to triples over the summer months, and this is without including the campground users and the day visitors who flood the area on nice weekends.

The Tagish fire chief has requested of this minister that the tower be staffed on weekends. Will the minister agree to this request, or does he think that the fire risk is somehow lessened during the weekends when the area sees the most activity?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** As I noted, some of the changes made to staffing of lookout towers were made, I'm advised, as a result of improvements to communications and fire detection technology and resulted in staff determining that three of the towers needed only to be in operation when the fire danger is high.

The current fire identification system includes lookout towers, satellite monitoring and fixed-wing aircraft monitoring and provides timely fire detection that Wildland Fire Management needs to keep Yukoners safe.

As the member should be aware, but may not be, other changes that have been made within Wildland Fire Management include changes to the type of planes that we use. We switched to planes that are faster and are capable of covering a wider area in a greater amount of time. So again, these changes have been made largely as a result of improved technology.

As the member may be aware, the satellite technology — while it only picks up fires of a certain size — allows for detection remotely overhead and throughout the Yukon.

I will continue to work with staff in determining where these resources are needed and take their advice on these matters. The member has referenced a supposed concern by

the fire chief of Tagish. I have not heard that concern directly but I would invite him to contact me.

**Mr. Barr:** This government's logic shows how disconnected they are with Yukon's communities. The minister opposite did receive a written request for this and I spoke with the fire chief just yesterday, wondering when he's going to hear a response and what is going to happen this summer.

Last week this government indicated that the community of Burwash Landing no longer needed a police presence when September rolls around, and today Yukoners are asked to believe that staffing fire lookout towers is useful on weekdays but not on weekends. The minister says that improved satellite technology and aerial patrolling reduces the need for lookout tower spotters, but the fact that these towers remain staffed shows that this government still values the services they provide.

Will the minister commit to staffing all fire lookout towers seven days a week for this coming summer?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** It's really quite unfortunate that the member is choosing to take the attitude he is in the questions. I would appreciate any perspectives from Yukoners.

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

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I hear the Leader of the NDP once again showing her dismissive attitude toward this important subject. Again, Mr. Speaker, if the member would stop making disrespectful noises for a moment, I would be pleased to point out that if the fire chief of Tagish has a concern that he has put in writing, I have not actually seen that at this point. If he has expressed a concern that we've not responded to, I would ask him to send that again because I have not seen that concern from him.

Members will understand that I don't take anything that comes from the NDP at face value, because they're more focused on having clever questions than on the facts.

I would again note that government has consistently increased resources for Wildland Fire Management and we will continue to do so, but as changes in technology and fire detection technology — that has not required the same level of staffing of fire towers. Again, it's unfortunate that the Leader of the NDP doesn't appreciate how important these matters are.

#### **Question re: Water management strategy**

**Ms. White:** Yukon surface waters, including streams and rivers, have different amounts of water flowing at different times of the year. Healthy freshwater ecosystems depend on that annual fluctuating cycle. The Yukon NDP wants government to commit to establishing and enforcing protection of minimum environmental flow patterns of our waterways. Too often, government puts the needs of industry ahead of the needs of water. To stay healthy, ecosystems have water needs too.

The Yukon Party draft water strategy put industry needs first, but sustainable water depends on keeping ecosystems healthy, and healthy ecosystems need adequate quality and

quantity of water. Will the Minister of Environment clarify what is more important to this Yukon Party government: the needs of industry to withdraw water from Yukon's waterways or the needs of Yukon's waterways to have minimum environmental flow?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** I disagree with the characterization from the NDP on this particular issue. Obviously it's not an either/or prospect.

We can provide information that is very valuable to the managers of Yukon's water, whether they are Yukon First Nations, municipal governments or the Yukon government, but we can also make sure that industry data is considered and taken into consideration as well when we compile this data and make it available to the public. Just because data comes from industry doesn't mean it is wrong. It doesn't mean that it is not correct. It means that that's another avenue where we can gather information and make it available to the public.

What I can commit to is that we will develop a Yukon water strategy that takes into consideration the viewpoints we receive through the public consultation that has taken course over the last year or so. We've had excellent engagement from other stakeholders, other levels of government and the public as well. I look forward to releasing that water strategy in due course, once it is approved, along with an implementation strategy that will provide the guidance for Yukon government in the collection of both water quantity and water quality data for the years to come.

**Ms. White:** I too look forward to that water strategy.

Although eventually there is to be a consultation on the independent power producers policy, with recent changes to the *Public Utilities Act*, the Yukon Party Cabinet already has the right to put in place the IPP policy they want. They will have no obligation to include the public's input, and Yukoners are used to this Yukon Party government's lip service to consultation.

Once an IPP policy is in place, the government will have the right to approve microhydro projects, for example, along the economic corridor between Whitehorse and Skagway when a run of river microhydro projects involve water withdrawals.

The question is: What amount and what timing of water withdrawals is sustainable over time? Will the government commit to first establishing the minimum environmental flow of waterways with power production potential prior to issuing water licences for independent power production from those waterways?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** This is a bizarre question, because the member knows that it's not the Yukon government that issues water licences. It's the independent, quasi-judicial Water Board that issues water licences. What we will continue to do is ensure that the Water Board has the data that it needs to make the decisions that it makes in the course of doing its work. That board plays a valuable role in the management of Yukon water in the territory and they are the ones that issue the water licences that are then the duty of the Department of Environment to enforce.



In the case of potential hydro projects like the one contemplated by the member opposite, of course we'll ensure that all the data that the Yukon Water Board needs to make a decision is provided to them. I'm not going to preclude what that information will be. I will leave that to the experts to tell me. What I can commit to is ensuring that we will continue to provide data to the Yukon Water Board to allow them to make the decisions that they make on behalf of all Yukoners in the issuance of water licences for these types of projects. Let me again commit to the development of a water strategy that will ensure that we have proper amounts of information on water throughout the territory and consider all views submitted to the Yukon government, whether from stakeholders and other levels of government or the public. They will be considered and will be taken into consideration in the development of that water strategy.

**Ms. White:** During debate on the *Public Utilities Act*, the Opposition asked how cumulative impacts of power generation, including IPPs, would be measured. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources said — and I quote: “When it comes to cumulative effects and impacts, those types of impacts are measured and assessed through the YESAA process.” After tabling a document, the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board states — and I quote: “...the Act does not provide a definition of cumulative effects...”

Mr. Speaker, if there is no definition of cumulative effects, they can hardly be measured. The water strategy is supposed to determine sustainable use of Yukon's water. How will cumulative impacts of industrial water use be measured?

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, I'm almost at a loss for words to describe exactly how to answer this question. What I can say is that the water strategy is intended to be a document that provides guidance for the Yukon government as well as other managers of Yukon water throughout the territory, including First Nation governments, municipal governments and other levels of government — all of which play an important role in the management of Yukon's water.

When we make decisions about where to deploy resources with regard to monitoring stations, we do so in consultation with First Nation governments and others, including the federal government, who often share the burden of deploying those resources. I can commit to continuing to ensure that the best available data is made available to all of those who need it, whether it be the public, whether it be the Water Board or whether it be other water managers throughout the territory. We've implemented a new Water Resources website that is an excellent resource for all those governments and all those in the public who are interested in Yukon water resources.

We are looking at finding ways to increase the amount of data that is put on-line and made available to the public.

I am hopeful that in the implementation of the water strategy, we will see a variety of new initiatives that will increase the knowledge and understanding that we have of Yukon's water resources and will increase the number of

monitoring stations throughout the territory from the current suite of monitoring stations.

I am committed to this water strategy and I look forward to tabling it as soon as it is available.

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

Member for Takhini-Kopper King — did you say you were tabling a document? Is that the entire document or is it a page from it?

**Ms. White:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker. It is the selection out of YESAB.

**Speaker:** You are required to table the entire document.

**Ms. White:** Okay.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

#### **Bill No. 74: Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act — Second Reading**

**Deputy Clerk:** Second reading, Bill No. 74, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Graham.

**Hon. Mr. Graham:** I move that Bill No. 74, entitled *Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act*, be now read a second time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister for Health and Social Services that Bill No. 74, entitled *Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act*, be now read a second time.

**Hon. Mr. Graham:** We are pleased to table amendments today — actually, we have already tabled the amendments to the *Vital Statistics Act*.

This issue is very complex in that various relationships that can be established in a child's life are at play here. Other Canadian jurisdictions have struggled with various approaches and differing levels of detail in order to try to accommodate many combinations and permutations of the parent-child relationship that exists in modern day society. After careful consideration of these various approaches, we have arrived at an approach we believe is as simple and as straightforward as possible at this point in time. It does not address every possible situation; however, the amendments will go a long way to reflect relationships where children are increasingly raised in blended families, by single parents or by same-sex partners.

The act will be modernized to recognize a person who is in a spousal relationship with the mother or father and who intends to parent the child, as they will be able to register as a parent, regardless if the spouse is male or female. This will allow same-sex couples to register as parents, and also will take into consideration some of the advances in assisted reproductive technology.

There has been increasing demand for re-creation of parental status in the recording of birth registry. The collection of birth registry information serves as an important part of Yukon's vital statistics. Birth registration is a foundation

document that establishes legal status of an individual from which citizenship and the right to participate in modern society flows. It enables access to basic public services, such as education, and to documents, such as a passport or social insurance number. It also provides societal markers of parentage. Its importance cannot be understated.

With these amendments, birth certificates and birth registration forms will be changed immediately on passage of the amendments to enable same-sex parents to register themselves as parent mother, father or other parent. Listing same-sex parents on a birth certificate will be able to be carried out retroactively once this bill is passed.

Updating birth certificates will reflect the role of parents who are committed to being responsible persons in the child's life. In today's society, there are new opportunities for parenthood as children are increasingly brought up in non-traditional family structures or are being born through assisted reproduction technology. Parenthood today crosses boundaries of strict biology and moves into an array of legal, moral and social relationships.

These legislative amendments go some distance in recognizing modern family structures for both same-sex and opposite-sex couples by recognizing other parents or spouses at the time of a child's birth who intend to participate in the upbringing of the child. This goes beyond simply recording biological relationships and recognizes the dual purpose of recording social parents of the child in vital statistics. It promotes clarity of the parent-child relationship at the earliest time in the child's life.

Article 3.1 on the Convention on the Rights of the Child states, "In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration."

We believe these amendments, which recognize the parents involved in the upbringing of a child, help achieve this principle. We are bringing forward these amendments at this time as we have recently had applications for same-sex registration on birth certificates. As a result, we are moving quickly on this issue. These amendments will acknowledge the right of same-sex partners and same-sex parents to be treated in a non-discriminatory manner in birth registration. The amendments we are proposing will define who is entitled to register as a parent of a child. This will include the mother who gives birth to the child and the father and/or other parents who are spouses of the mother or father.

The particulars of registration information are meant to reflect the important relationships that exist in a child's life at the time of birth. It is consistent with policy and legal analysis undertaken in other areas in Canada, and this broad approach promotes equality of treatment of couples and their children. It protects children and parents from discrimination by providing a registration process that is the same, regardless if the child was conceived by assisted or natural reproduction.

As part of these amendments, we are also changing the rules around surnames. This will allow parents to select the surname of a child as they may agree upon. This provides

more flexibility in naming a child and the opportunity to recognize surnames that are chosen for cultural, ethnic or religious purposes. The time in which a birth must be registered is also being extended from 30 days to 60 days and provides more time for the parents to sign the birth registry statement.

The registrar will also be given some additional powers under this legislation. The registrar will have powers to approve some forms that are more administrative in nature. The certificates and some forms will be prescribed in the regulations under the act. They will also have powers to refuse a surname that might reasonably cause mistake or confusion or that is sought for an improper purpose or on the grounds that the name is undesirable in the public interest. There is an appeal mechanism for such a refusal in this bill.

This bill also allows individuals who are eligible as parents under the act at the time of the child's birth to alter the birth certificate respecting adding parentage or changing the surname where there is agreement among all of the parties. This will help with retroactive registration of parents on the birth certificate prior to these amendments coming into effect.

Finally, there are some minor housekeeping amendments to clarify language and a number of transitional provisions necessary to ensure smooth implementation of this new legislation. We know that there is further work to do in achieving fully integrated legislation on this issue. While birth registry and vital statistics are evidence of certain facts, it is not the legislation that addresses the legal status of the parent-child relationship and the rights and obligations that flow from that legislation, as does the *Children's Law Act*. Other Yukon statutes that govern child law need to be reviewed and revised to reflect the best interests of the child. Further research and additional policy decisions need to be made to amend these pieces of legislation.

Some of this includes work on the rules around surrogacy and custody, estate administration, and family property and support. However, overall we are pleased to modernize the registration of a parent on the birth registry. We are committed to further advancing work on this issue in the future. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to table these amendments.

**Ms. Stick:** I would like to thank the department officials for their briefing this morning. They certainly were able to answer many of my questions and clarify some of these amendments. I want to thank the minister for bringing this forward in this sitting.

Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to see this come forward. The NDP Official Opposition will be supporting these amendments.

It has been over 10 years since the courts upheld same-sex marriage in the Yukon. We were the first jurisdiction in Canada and we were proud to lead the way. Since that time, all provinces and territories recognize this. What is unfortunate is that the Yukon government has not kept up in amending other legislation, including the act before us today. It was only when a family, faced with the daunting prospect of

registering the birth of their child and applying for a birth certificate to include both their names, brought this forward to the government that action was taken.

It is unfortunate that other families have had, up until this time, gone through a lengthy adoption process. Agreeing to pay for their legal costs was not an appropriate measure to address parents' needs when registering their new family members. In researching what other provinces and territories are doing, most have recognized that there are many ways that individuals are included on the birth registration and birth certificates. We recognize that there are many ways that couples and individuals can be parents.

One of the most interesting comments around birth certificates — when I was reading through comments in the paper and letters and whatnot, and talking to other people — was that the birth certificate, or registration, is not so much a record of the genetics, but it is a registration of who are the parents — who are the people that will be involved in the raising and the upbringing of this child throughout their life.

This legislation, most importantly, will allow up to four names to be listed both on the registration and the birth certificate. We know that the legislation as it stands now is unfair to parents of same-sex marriage. It requires them to go through a lengthy process of adoption for the other parent. This is an unfair process that created many difficulties for families, including a nine-month to one-year home study of the appropriateness of the parent, the hiring of lawyers, and legal and court costs.

It also meant for the parent whose name was not on the birth certificate that they were unable to apply for parental leave through federal programs, since proof of parentage was required through the production of a birth certificate with their name on it. An application for a Canadian passport on behalf of the child, with both parents' names, also required that a birth certificate show both parents' names.

This certainly could restrict travel for parents outside of this country if the parent's name that is not on the passport wanted to travel alone with their child out of the country. It also created problems if both parents were travelling with the child and one parent became ill and incapacitated and the other's name was not on the passport. It was a risk some families were not prepared to take.

The sections in the legislation to be amended prior to this certainly created unfair barriers to these families with parents of the same sex. It is important for everyone to understand this legislation and that more than two parents can be named on the registration and on the certificate. These could include the biological father, his partner, the birth mother and her partner. All have to agree to have their names included. Though not obvious through the wording, I was assured that this was here and I thank the officials for their explanation.

I am particularly pleased with the amendments in this legislation that allow for the registration of a birth on or after the coming into force of this amended act. This section will allow for parents to revisit birth certificates issued for their children and ensure that the changes they want are reflected in those. It also mentioned that fees may be waived with respect

to a birth that was registered before these amendments come into force. These are good amendments.

It is our understanding from the briefings that the departments throughout the government are now looking at other legislation that needs to be brought up to date. This is encouraging. Departments have been aware of the legislation's articles that need changing and we're happy to hear this will be coming forward

The opening of the *Vital Statistics Act* also provides an opportunity for this House to deliver on the commitment made by the unanimous support for the release of information regarding deaths that occurred at Yukon Indian residential schools, and that this information can be made available to the TRC. My colleague from Copperbelt South will speak to this important issue.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the NDP Official Opposition will be supporting this bill before us.

**Mr. Silver:** It's great to see this legislation making it to the floor of the House today. Too many laws on the Yukon books still make antiquated assumptions as to the makeup of a family, and it is good to find out from the briefing that we can expect more pieces of legislation to be tabled in the upcoming session.

As the 2011 census showed us just six years after the legalization of same-sex marriages, they have quickly become the fastest-growing family unit. There were 64,575 same-sex couples in Canada, both married and common law, counted in the census. Roughly 10 percent of same-sex couples have children at home and it is important that our laws reflect the reality of the modern family.

I believe that it is also important to remind members for the record that the Yukon Liberal Party advised the House that changes needed to be made earlier in this government's mandate. It was the Yukon Liberal Party that brought forth Motion No. 16 for debate on May 9, 2012, stating, "THAT this House urges the Minister of Justice to undertake a full review of the territory's family, child and property laws with a view to introducing amendments to this legislation by the fall of 2013; and that the review address the issues of: (1) custody and access; (2) property; (3) spousal support; (4) same-sex couples; and (5) the definition of a common-law relationship."

Unfortunately, the minister at the time dismissed the motion by stating that the sole purpose of the motion was for — and I quote: "Liberals attempting to set the government's legislative agenda." I guess the minister felt it best to wait for a human rights complaint to be filed before setting the legislative agenda for the Yukon Party instead of proceeding, and it ended up filibustering the day away and the motion never did make it to a vote.

I am glad to see the government changed its mind and it allows Yukon families to move forward. On behalf of the Liberal Party, I would once again encourage this government to undertake a full review of laws surrounding family, child and property to ensure that Yukon's laws are both inclusive and gender-neutral so that legislation is not being done in reaction to complaints to the Human Rights Commission.

I look forward to continuing the debate in Committee of the Whole and I will absolutely be supporting this.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** As the Health and Social Services critic has already said, the Official Opposition supports these important amendments acknowledging the rights of same-sex parents to be recognized as parents. We have certainly been calling on the government to do this for many years.

Another important matter related to births and deaths of children is the missing children research project of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established as part of the settlement of legal claims for those who were pursuing justice in the courts related to their incarcerations and what we refer to as Indian residential schools.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has undertaken a research project to learn the truth about all of the missing children. They already know that there were more than 4,100 children who died during the period of time that residential schools were operated by the church and by the state and aboriginal children were obliged to attend them.

I would like to know from the government what information they have been able to provide, because what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission wants to know is: How many children died at the residential schools? What did they die of? What were the causes of death? Where were they buried? In fact, Mr. Speaker, there are still family members in the Yukon who want this information.

On April 2, we debated the motion that was brought forward by my colleague, the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes — “THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to take all necessary measures to expedite the release of data requested by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission regarding the number and cause of deaths, illnesses and disappearances of First Nations residential school students in Yukon.”

Mr. Speaker, as you know, all members of this House unanimously agreed to support the motion. We had a strong presence in the public gallery during that debate from aboriginal members of our community and from others who want to see justice meted out in this matter.

Earlier today, the Official Opposition did give notice to the Yukon government and I would now like to put on the public record during this debate on second reading that we will bring forward an amendment to address the critical matter of the information being provided to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission about the children who died or disappeared. We believe it is a straightforward amendment to provide for certified copies of a registration of death or a registration or record of burial to be provided to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, notwithstanding the provision in the *Vital Statistics Act* that there is a 100-year limit on providing that information.

It is clearly in the public interest to do so and we know that Yukon First Nations support such a measure, so I will

encourage all members of this Assembly to support the amendment that we intend to bring forward.

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

**Hon. Mr. Graham:** I appreciate the comments from the members opposite. Not so much did I appreciate the Liberal leader's comments — that I had to wait for a human resources complaint before taking action — which I have said over and over in this Legislature is not true. If you want to look at the timelines, it is very clear that I had issued instructions to my department before I became aware that there was a human rights complaint in process. Then again the Member for Klondike said it was only in reaction to HR complaints that changes to legislation such as this take place.

I had hoped that we could get through this piece of legislation with cooperation shown by the members for Riverdale South and Copperbelt South, because it is a good piece of legislation. It's something that we recognized almost immediately had to be changed. It's unfortunate that governments before us didn't make that change, going back as many years as you would like to see us go back.

When we then begin discussions about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission — I appreciate the Member for Copperbelt South giving me a call today and it is unfortunate that we didn't have the time, in 55 minutes, to get all of the information together that she requested, because I think then she will see why we didn't go ahead with the change being suggested by the member opposite. This government has responded to the Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner's request for information and we did it to the best that we could under the bounds of current legislation.

We also received a letter from the Commission that it is satisfied with our efforts and that the information that Yukon provided enabled them to draw the conclusions that they needed in order to do the work. We also realize that the Member for Copperbelt South, as she has just stated, said that the one thing that could be changed is the 100 years to 25 years but we really, really don't know what changing that one small article would do in the broader interpretation of the law or what impact that one small change will have in other pieces of legislation.

We feel that, given the circumstances, we've worked with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in finding a way forward that will allow them to continue to do their work. The changes to the one section of the act being requested would really require due diligence in not only analyzing the policy implications of such a proposed option, but how most to effectively implement the new approach and what impact this would have on all Yukoners.

We just heard in Question Period today that the government was not consulting Yukoners on water usage. We were castigated for our lack of meaningful consultation or backroom consultation on the Peel. Now we get a request to amend a piece of legislation on the floor of this Legislature without any reference, without any consultation, without any

discussion with Yukoners, including First Nations. We haven't had that discussion with Yukon First Nations. With the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we've had that discussion; individual First Nations, we simply haven't had that discussion yet. It's an issue we might very well want to consult on to make sure we've done our homework, and to ensure that changes we're making here don't result in other changes throughout the system.

I know there are also a number of seniors groups in the territory that have an interest in changes to this legislation, such as the change that members opposite have talked about. We would also want to look at the transition and the implementation issues, if such a change was made in the *Vital Statistics Act*.

These are all things that have to be reinvestigated before we bring the legislation to this floor because, as we know from today's Question Period, the Opposition will be asking us the tough questions as is their job. I appreciate the Member for Copperbelt South's request; however, at this point it would appear that we are not going to — we will not support that request. I'm very happy to hear that members are pleased with the other changes made in the *Vital Statistics Act*, but I think that as a government, we have to carry out any changes we make to legislation in a very thoughtful, responsible manner. We have to be able to have the best possible information before us before we make changes in legislation that impact people's private lives.

Having said that, I appreciate the comments from members opposite and I look forward to looking at this bill in more detail. Thank you.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

### Bells

**Speaker:** Madam Deputy Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Graham:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Elias:** Agree.

**Ms. Hanson:** Agree.

**Ms. Stick:** Agree.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Mr. Tredger:** Agree.

**Mr. Barr:** Agree.

**Mr. Silver:** Agree.

**Deputy Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 17 yeas, nil nays.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

*Motion for second reading of Bill No. 74 agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Chair (Ms. McLeod):** I will now call Committee of the Whole to order. The matter before the Committee is Vote No. 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 14, *First Appropriation Act, 2014-15*.

Is it the wish of members to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Chair:** We will take a 15-minute break.

*Recess*

**Chair:** Order. 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 general debate in Vote 51, Department of Community Services in Bill No. 14, *First Appropriation Act, 2014-15*.

### Department of Community Services

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** It is a pleasure to be here this afternoon to introduce the budget for the Department of Community Services for 2014-15. The department's main estimates contained within this budget include \$48.8 million in capital expenditures and \$79.057 million in operation and maintenance expenditures.

The Department of Community Services continues to play a key role in helping this government achieve our vision of moving forward together by investing in programs and services that are important to the lives of Yukoners and to ensuring and continuing to ensure that we have vibrant, healthy and sustainable Yukon communities.

The 2014-15 budget for Community Services includes strategies to address key challenges and priorities important to Yukoner, as we strive to bring about long-term benefits for the territory and for its citizens. This budget reflects our continuing work across the territory on behalf of all Yukoners to achieve a better quality of life, grow a diversified economy, protect the environment and promote good government.

The 2014-15 main estimates for Community Services have highlights that promote a better quality of life for Yukoners in areas including \$15,101,000 for fire management. This includes \$995,000 for the FireSmart program, which last year funded 20 projects in 16 communities, helping to reduce the threat of wildfire and providing fall and winter employment for Yukoners. In addition to capital enhancements in structural fire protection, we have allocated \$1,748,000 for operational costs associated with structural fire protection under the Fire Marshal's Office. This is part of our commitment to increasing public safety across the territory and part of continuing forward with the increase that was made to the budget of this office back about a year and a half ago.

Approximately \$3.4 million is included in this budget for the construction of a new fire hall in Beaver Creek, which will better meet the needs of the local fire department, emergency medical services and search and rescue teams. We have also allocated \$393,000 toward planning and design costs for the replacement of the Carcross fire hall.

As members may know — as I believe I've indicated this previously in the House — we have also initiated discussions with the local advisory council and others about the intention of looking for an opportunity for this also to include community recreational space and a training room within this facility, as well as the fire hall — that is the name of the project — which is intended to include a bay in the design for Emergency Medical Services to house an ambulance.

This government's commitment to supporting Team Yukon and Yukon's youth and seniors at major games continues this year. We have allocated \$24,000 in support of the Special Olympics, \$25,000 for Yukoners to participate at this year's Canada Senior Games, \$150,000 for the 2015 Canada Winter Games, \$50,000 for the Western Canada Summer Games in 2015, and \$90,000 is earmarked for planning and for supporting the participation of Team Yukon in the North American Indigenous Games this summer. As well, there is \$100,000 provided to assist Softball Yukon in hosting the Junior Men's World Softball Championship that will be held in Whitehorse this July.

To increase participation and access to sport in the territory, we are continuing our sport bilateral agreement with the Government of Canada to support the efforts of local sport organizations and communities. The bilateral agreement is an extension of a sport funding program that has been in place since 2003. Through the sport bilateral agreements, approximately \$4 million in shared federal and territorial sport funding has helped to improve athlete, coach and official development and to increase participation by rural, aboriginal, youth, female and other populations in the Yukon sport system.

The sport bilateral agreement includes three years of funding in support of these goals, which began in the 2012-13 fiscal year. The total commitment includes \$933,825 from Yukon and \$755,175 from Sport Canada. This funding directly benefits organizations like the kids recreation fund, sport governing bodies and community sport and physical

activity leaders, all of which provide programs to support participants, coaches, officials and our young rural and aboriginal athletes.

The 2014-15 main estimates for Community Services also contain highlights that support our goal of promoting a diversified economy.

Community Services continues to play a significant role when it comes to improving and modernizing community-based infrastructure in Yukon. In all, over \$26,774,000 of Building Canada funding has been identified in the 2014-15 main estimates. Providing infrastructure that improves the quality of life for Yukoners and supports the growth of a diversified economy will help ensure that we are able to meet community needs as the Yukon continues to grow.

Last year's infrastructure investments saw the conclusion and completion of the Whitehorse and Carcross waterfront projects that have brought about revitalization of each community's downtown core and waterfront. The Whitehorse waterfront project also won a prestigious Canadian Urban Institute Brownie Award for excellence in project development on a neighbourhood scale.

As has been noted before by a number of people, it was not that long ago when there were decades of debate over what might one day be done on the Whitehorse waterfront. I'm very pleased that I and my colleagues in this government have been key players in coming together with other levels of government, with the City of Whitehorse, the Government of Canada and the two First Nation governments that are involved — those being the Kwanlin Dun First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council — to develop the Whitehorse waterfront in a way that, through specific actions, had been identified through community involvement and community planning. The project saw over \$40 million in funding that has included the waterfront trails, the wharf development, the Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre — a major contribution by that First Nation as well as by the Government of Yukon in partnership to enable the construction of that facility and the location of the library in that building.

These actions, together with actions by the City of Whitehorse, to develop Shipyards Park, among other initiatives, have taken an area that for many decades was poorly utilized — and, as long-time Yukoners will recall, for quite some period of time, the waterfront was an area that a lot of people really didn't really want to go. It was not that accessible, it was not that clean and at times it was not considered that safe. Working together in partnership with the various levels of government, we have seen the investment of over \$40 million that has made the Whitehorse waterfront project truly the heart and centre of the City of Whitehorse.

Yukon's ongoing work with Canada, municipalities and First Nations is helping us to build and foster healthy and sustainable communities in Yukon. Predictable and sustainable long-term infrastructure support is essential for us to continue to build momentum into the future. We have benefited from our joint funding agreements with Canada and look forward to building upon the success.

The Department of Community Services continues to work with the City of Whitehorse to make land available in Whitehorse. For the first time in years, we now have a healthy inventory of land for sale. This has addressed and responded to the significant increase in the Yukon population that occurred as a result of growth in the Yukon economy and saw Yukon's population grow from 28,500 in the tail-end of 2002 to roughly 36,000 here today.

The investments in development of land also help address issues of affordability and availability as more homes come on to the market. With phase 2 of Whistle Bend now complete, we have an inventory of over 200 residential and multi-family lots for sale. I should also note that the Government of Yukon has, through efforts that have been taken throughout the territory, made it so that most Yukon communities now do have lots available for sale over the counter. As a result of work done under the leadership of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in cooperation with local advisory councils and with citizens in rural areas not represented by LACs, we have made a number of changes that have been supported by citizens in the area to increase the opportunity for private subdivision within rural areas, both within my riding and to the south side of town.

Sustained efforts in the future by government collectively will help us meet our challenges with respect to making land available. An increasing supply will result in more housing options down the road as contractors and individuals build and develop growing subdivisions and the citizens take advantage of the opportunity to do private subdivisions in areas where that is permitted.

In the area of promoting good governance, the 2014-15 main estimates for Community Services also contain highlights that support that objective. For example, the Yukon government has increased municipal grant funding for this fiscal year based on the new five-year comprehensive municipal grant formula. This year, \$18,183,000 is earmarked for transfers that go directly to Yukon's eight municipal governments so they can continue to provide a range of programs and services directly for their residents.

Community Services continues to invest in Yukon communities and Yukon people and the department's 2014-15 budget reinforces our commitment through the many projects that we have underway. This budget represents significant contributions toward improvements in community infrastructure, drinking water, wastewater, solid waste and sport and recreation to name but a few areas. It is a budget that also ensures public safety programs and services and maintains our commitment to emergency response and to the protection of life and property.

Community Services fosters strong local governments, protects consumers, regulates corporate services, provides for building safety, provides access to public libraries and contributes to healthy, active communities. We are contributing to a better quality of life and building even more vibrant healthy and sustainable Yukon communities and building upon community infrastructure.

In the Protective Services division, Community Services supports communities in a variety of ways, from infrastructure development to our commitment to public safety and emergency response through Protective Services in the areas of the delivery of emergency medical services, delivery of wildland fire management services, support through the Fire Marshal's Office for our volunteer fire departments in rural areas, through the Emergency Measures Organization area and through structural fire protection services — as I noted under the Fire Marshal's Office — as well as in the areas of building safety and animal protection. Throughout all those areas, we continue to deliver programs and support Yukoners and Yukon communities.

In the area of wildland fire management — with the 2014 fire season upon us, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge our Wildland Fire Management team, which is starting to prepare for the season ahead and have dealt with the first fires of the season. To support their work, we've allocated \$15,101,000 in operation and maintenance for training, fire suppression activities and other operations to manage this important public safety program in the Yukon. That funding includes salaries for wages, repairs and maintenance, fuel cost, training and other supports that enable the team to protect our communities from the potentially disastrous effects of wildland fire.

As part of a five-year contract, this year we will again have two full turbine air tanker groups for the fire season. These turbine aircraft are significantly improving the response times, carry heavier payloads and meet the current North American standards for air tankers.

Wildland Fire Management's capital budget includes \$997,000 for: vehicle and equipment replacement; a cold storage building in Dawson City; improvements to air tanker bases for Dawson City and Carmacks; decommissioning the air tanker base in Ross River, which is no longer needed because of the switch to the more modern aircraft and turbine as opposed to the previous piston engines; upgrades of fuel and retardant systems throughout the territory to accommodate the newer aircraft; construction of fire camp staging areas; upgrades to communication technology; weather station replacements; and improvements and storage tank systems to support air operations.

As I mentioned earlier, \$995,000 is also allocated for the FireSmart program in 2014-15. This continues to be a valuable program that is helping reduce the risk of wildfire around communities. FireSmart continues to provide an effective way for non-profit organizations, community associations and municipal and First Nation governments to access funding and Wildland Fire Management's expertise in support of safeguarding communities and reducing flammable materials that can create a risk in those areas.

Over the past 15 years, more than \$12 million has been invested in 337 FireSmart projects, helping to reduce the risk of wildfire while providing employment opportunities for Yukoners in the fall and winter. Managing fires in Yukon's boreal forest environment is always challenging, but I believe that we have the right people, equipment and protections in

place to assist with safeguarding Yukon communities and rural citizens.

While forest fires are managed by the wildland fire program, the Yukon Fire Marshal's Office oversees and supports volunteer fire departments in rural Yukon and provides support to municipal fire departments for structural fire protection in those communities. This budget identifies \$1.748 million for operations of the Fire Marshal's Office, which includes \$265,000 for honoraria for volunteers who provide services in Yukon communities. The capital budget for the Fire Marshal's Office this year is \$4.754 million, and that includes an amount of \$993,000 for fire protection, which includes fleet fire truck replacements, volunteer fire department equipment and upgrades including fleet repairs, new turnout gear, equipment, fire cause investigation equipment and more.

As an example of how this money is put to use, I recently attended the official transfer of a new pumper truck to the Ibex Valley Fire Department. The pumper truck for Tagish is, I believe, en route and will soon be handed over to that fire department. In recent years, some of the investments have included the purchase of new pumper tanker trucks for volunteer fire departments in the Whitehorse periphery, including Hootalinqua, Ibex and Golden Horn.

There is \$393,000 allocated for the planning and design to replace the Carcross fire hall in this fiscal year. The tendering process is underway for the construction this year of the new Beaver Creek fire hall.

\$3.4 million is included in this budget to support that project. That new fire hall in Beaver Creek will house the fire department, search and rescue and the emergency medical services vehicle for the community. In that building will be three bays that will house two fire trucks and one ambulance. It will also include a training room, self-contained breathing apparatus, filling station room, utility rooms and more.

Madam Chair, I believe you are signalling me that I have run out of time for reading my introductory speech into the record so I will sit down.

**Mr. Barr:** I would like to thank the minister for his opening remarks. I may be assuming too much, but maybe the minister has more opening remarks coming. I would also like to particularly thank the department staff who have come to help us today and let them know that they help provide clarity and their hard work is appreciated by all. It's a very large department and it covers so much.

Regarding the questions that I have today, some are based on some of my observations and some are just requests for clarity or updates and others have come from constituents.

Seeing that it is such a large department — I know there will be questions from others that we'll be having — I'm going to jump right into some questions. Seeing that the minister was speaking about fire trucks at this time, can I get an update on the pumper truck that is coming to Tagish? I'm glad to hear that Ibex has received theirs.

There was concern for a couple of years now that, when we are purchasing new equipment, the standard — for example, one pumper truck to the next pumper truck — had

different fittings so there had to be the water pumped into a pool — say, if Marsh Lake was helping Tagish or Carcross or vice versa, these new trucks have the same fittings so that time is saved in response to a fire situation. I'll just start with that question.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** With regard to the specific question of the member, I don't have a lot of information to respond to that specific question. I know in the past that there have been some issues with equipment needing to be fitted out to ensure that the same fittings and connections were being used. I'm not sure of the current status of that. I do know that is something the fire marshal and his staff are very much aware of. My understanding is that, in all of the new equipment we're purchasing, the issue of interoperability is something that is being focused on and they are trying to ensure that all of the equipment can work together. I will certainly raise that issue and ask for information on that and I would be happy to get back to the member with any information I find out from that. To the best of my knowledge, I think that the fire marshal has been on top of those issues and focused on using the budget for addressing any of those issues of lack of interoperability.

One of things that — when the member is referring to equipment, or tankers filling bladders or portable tanks — it may have been used for the reason that the member was referencing, but that is not the only reason that portable tanks are sometimes used. Portable tanks are used by our volunteer fire departments and also by the City of Whitehorse, which is an important partner in the mutual aid agreements that are in effect within Whitehorse and the surrounding area. One of the reasons that tanks would be used in areas that are not on Whitehorse's fire hydrant system can be simply to transport as much water to an area as they can at the start and the tanker might be running to get additional water, while another vehicle or vehicles are on-site to action fire directly.

Again, I am not saying that it has not been used for the reason the member thought it was. I also do know that it is and continues to be used in areas to help get larger amounts of water on the scene quickly, while allowing a tanker truck to proceed back to the water source and to get more water on location as quickly as possible.

I should also note that the new fire trucks that have been purchased and deployed — the Ibex Valley and Tagish trucks — I believe the total amount for them was \$636,000. What I should also note as far as the status of the Tagish tanker — I don't have the exact delivery date. My understanding is the last date I heard is that it was expected to be delivered later this month. I don't have the exact date at this point, but I know that it is something that is arriving soon. Once that is there, we look forward to giving that pumper truck to the Tagish fire department so that they can continue to do the good work that they do in providing fire protection to that community.

The member is correct; I do have a few other introductory remarks that I will read in the interest of providing information to the members and hopefully forestalling the need for specific questions about certain areas. In the area of



the Emergency Measures Organization, we have \$490,000 in operation and maintenance funding identified for EMO to manage its operations. This includes allocations for personnel, training, communications equipment and contributions for the marine radio distress systems and search and rescue support.

I should also note, in case members are not aware, that in the area of Wildland Fire Management, the government budgets for operations based on typical-year fire situations. In the event that we have a much higher year of need, such as we saw last year with one of the worst forest fire seasons we've seen in the past 20 years — in a year such as that, we then address it through increased allocations and increasing the budget for that area.

The additional budget for that for last year's requirements in Wildland Fire Management was roughly \$7.5 million. Once there are significant requirements for staff time and for air tanker and helicopter time, those are all very expensive services, but we also believe it is very important that when fires threaten Yukon communities the government responds, as we did by increasing the budget accordingly to account for that unanticipated higher volume of need.

Moving back to the Emergency Measures Organization, Yukon EMO continues to lead a review of the government's internal emergency coordination plans so that it is prepared in the event of an emergency. EMO was also a key player in last summer's successful Operation Nanook 13, which was a joint Yukon government, Canadian Armed Forces and whole of government emergency exercise, which also involved the City of Whitehorse and other partners in responding to the mock crisis.

This year, mapping of Yukon's communities at risk of floods will continue. Started in 2012, this four-year project is studying community flood risk areas in conjunction with Yukon government's Climate Change Secretariat.

Through detailed mapping of flood-prone areas in and near Yukon communities, planners, land developers and emergency managers will be better able to plan, build and prepare for future flood risks, including those which may result from predicted outcomes of climate change.

In the area of emergency medical services, the Yukon government continues to support and enhance Yukon's EMS. The skilled men and women in the service do an excellent job of protecting Yukoners and Yukon communities. The 2014-15 budget identifies \$8,955,000 in support of EMS operations both based out of Whitehorse and in Yukon communities. This includes honoraria for EMS volunteers, wages, repairs and maintenance of ambulances and stations, upgrades to communication equipment, training and more.

The EMS capital budget for this year includes \$494,000, which includes money for the purchase of two brand new ambulances. This is in addition to the two ambulances that were recently purchased and delivered to the new emergency response centre in February. It also includes operations equipment for Whitehorse and rural Yukon and clinical operations equipment.

Community Services is committed to providing emergency responders with the facilities, infrastructure,

equipment and training they need to do their jobs to the best of their ability and provide care for Yukoners.

In the building and life safety area, the Building Safety and Fire and Life Safety branches are responsible for helping to keep Yukoners safe in their homes and in the buildings they use for work, recreation and daily business. The branches accomplish this through developing, interpreting, administering and enforcing building, plumbing, electrical and mechanical standards in unincorporated communities, rural municipalities and rural areas of the Yukon.

To further improve oil-burner and fuel-fired heating system safety, the branch has hired a qualified oil burner mechanic to serve as an oil-fired appliance and heating systems inspector. Building Safety has also provided heating system inspector training for Yukon government and for City of Whitehorse building inspectors. In 2014-15, \$2,144,000 is identified to support branch operations for Building Safety and Fire and Life Safety branches.

In the area of animal protection, the animal protection program is also managed under this budget through the director of Fire and Life Safety at the Fire Marshal's Office and this program works with Yukon's Agriculture branch, Health and Social Services, Environmental Health branch, the RCMP, First Nations and municipal governments and is responsible for encouraging the humane treatment of animals and preventing animal abuse. I would note that this program and the officer provided in this area are in support of action — that this government keep updating our *Animal Protection Act* and increasing resources for this program and the modernized legislation that had been put into place.

In addition, a total of \$100,000 in operational contributions is budgeted for the Mae Bachur Shelter, which receives \$80,000, and the Dawson City Humane Society, which receives \$20,000. I would also note from a constituency perspective that the request for the Yukon government to provide a contribution to the Mae Bachur Shelter for cooperation was something that had come forward to me from constituents during the first term I was elected.

The first time I was elected, I wrote to the then Minister of Community Services, Glen Hart, to request that funding be provided for the Mae Bachur Animal Shelter. I am pleased and thankful that he agreed to that and that this government has continued to support the Mae Bachur Animal Shelter's operations since that time. Also \$20,000 in that area is also provided for the Dawson City Humane Society to support their operations.

Madam Chair, in the area of Community Development, the budget also reflects significant investments in enhancing capacity of local governments to provide programs and services. We recognize that municipalities make a major contribution in improving Yukoners' quality of life. In this area, this budget allocates \$25,405,000 to directly support local governance. This includes the \$18,183,000 that I referenced in the comprehensive municipal grants, which again is an increase to its previous level under the new formula. We are also providing \$72,000 to support local

advisory councils and support the work that they provide on behalf of citizens in local advisory areas.

In addition, more than \$6,161,000 for grants-in-lieu of taxes are also payable to Yukon's eight municipal governments and \$100,000 is identified as a contribution to support the operations in the Association of Yukon Communities.

Community Services promotes good governance and sustainable and healthy communities and is an important part of the government's overall efforts in supporting and working with Yukon municipalities.

In the area of Sport and Recreation, Community Services supports Sport and Recreation through measures including support for athletes and ambassadors in major games at the local level. This includes \$3, 831,000 for sport and recreation operation and maintenance funding for recreation groups. It includes community recreation grant funding, sport governing bodies funding, Sport Yukon core funding; support for Special Olympics Yukon; support for the Canada Senior Games; Canada Summer Games; elite athlete and coach grants and continuation of the renewed active living strategy and more.

Included in this year's budget is \$285,000 for the renewed active living strategy and we are investing in active living programs that boost physical activity levels among Yukoners of all ages and help combat childhood obesity. As part of the national strategy, the focus is on increased physical activity during after-school time periods and aims to increase physical activity by 20 percent by 2015.

A further \$50,000 in this year's budget is in support of the Friends of Mount Sima, as part of the second year of a three-year funding agreement to support winter operations at the hill. This one-time, time-limited funding is contingent upon the group receiving third-party donations and sponsorships to assist with opening the ski hill for 2014-15 and is matching dollars for those contributions.

Additionally, \$1,291,000 is allocated under capital for sport and recreation for various repairs and upgrades to unincorporated recreational facilities in rural Yukon. Of this, we recently announced — in partnership with Yukon Soccer Association — that \$250,000 is set aside in this year's budget to assist the Yukon Soccer Association in the next steps toward developing a new soccer and outdoor sports complex in Whitehorse. Once a potential site is selected and finalized, the funding will be used for geotechnical work, surveying, preliminary and final designs and planning related to the complex.

I should note that the work that is ongoing right now with regard to selection also includes the City of Whitehorse as an important step in considering and determining an appropriate site, as this development also requires their support through zoning and so working with them is an important part of the work that is going on at the moment.

The Yukon government believes in providing support to development operations and active living and recreation in the Yukon. Our investment in sport and recreation makes a difference to the lives of Yukon citizens and Yukon communities.

In the area of public libraries, \$2,086,000 in operation and maintenance funding is budgeted to provide public library service in Yukon communities. This includes funding to operate the Whitehorse Public Library and \$349,000 for staffing of community libraries. Our libraries play an important social role in our communities and foster connections between people with programs for all ages. Nearly 200,000 physical items including books, DVDs and CDs and some 5,000 e-books and publications were borrowed in 2013-14. Also, \$20,000 has been identified in the Public Libraries capital budget this year for minor repairs and to replace equipment at the Whitehorse and community libraries.

In the area of Community Operations, \$6,016,000 is allocated for operation and maintenance funding and is marked for community operations to manage public drinking water facilities, solid waste, waste-water disposal and other services to benefit unincorporated Yukon communities.

This includes \$80,000 for the recycling fund, \$157,000 to develop landfill agreements with Yukon municipalities, and \$792,000 through a planned contribution agreement with the City of Dawson to provide interim assistance for plant operation and training for its operators to maintain a required level 2 certification to operate their new waste-water facility.

The capital budget for Community Operations includes \$3,076,000 for upgrades to water and sewer services in unincorporated communities, road and street upgrades in rural communities. This includes \$200,000 budgeted to install remote monitoring systems in various communities to monitor their water treatment plants.

In Yukon, the federal gas tax fund provides long-term, predictable and stable funding for municipalities, First Nations and unincorporated communities to undertake infrastructure projects that enhance community sustainability. Some \$2,982,000 of gas tax funding is being allocated in 2014-15. Solid-waste facility improvements are currently underway in several unincorporated communities, including Ross River. As well, waste-water projects, such as upgrades to the sewage lagoons in Carcross and Burwash Landing, are budgeted for this year at a cost of \$450,000 each.

Madam Chair, in the area of infrastructure development — they're signalling me my time is running out so I will again sit down.

**Mr. Barr:** I'll stay with wildland fire and the area of volunteer fire departments at this point of the questions. I understand that we still have some opening remarks from the minister, but that's all good.

I would like to mention the great work that all of those in our volunteer sector — whether it's fire or EMO or search and rescue that they do — play an invaluable service, not only in this greater populated area but in rural Yukon. So many people depend on it. Often the pool of those volunteers is very stretched in our communities to cover all those different areas that I spoke of and they have families to look after. I just commend them for all the work that they do — all our volunteers out there.

Back to training — and I'm happy that the Tagish pumper truck is coming. I would mention that I'm aware that the pools

are used for — as the minister was saying earlier — to just get lots of water there to utilize. I was speaking specifically to the rural areas where the connectivity to the interchangeable fittings is the issue that I was speaking to — just to clarify that. I look forward to hearing the response — or more clarity — about the new equipment in those areas and that those trucks are interchangeable. I look forward to getting that information at a later date.

I'll go back to what we were speaking about earlier today in Question Period and hopefully I will get some more clarity there. Considering that the fire season is upon us again and we are particularly seeing dry weather — we haven't seen much rain this spring — already, if you're walking in the bush, it is tinder. It's dry out there.

Can the minister explain the rationale for only having these towers open and staffed on the weekdays? The fact that satellite monitoring and aerial patrols are sufficient for the weekends seems to be contradictory in the statement that there's possibly less of a risk on the weekends. If it is possible to cover those weekends with aerial surveillance and also with satellites, and if it's effective, then why are we not just covering the full weekdays with this new technology? I'll just leave it at that for the moment.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I don't have any additional information for the member on that specific area that he raised a concern about during Question Period. I haven't had any new information since what I had during Question Period, but I will undertake to look into it for the member opposite — what the status of that situation is. As I noted to him earlier, the decisions about staffing levels and when staffing of those fire towers is required is something made at an operational level, not at the ministerial level, but I will certainly convey the concern he has raised.

I am not sure that he is correct in his understanding of when it is being staffed and when it is being operated, but I certainly will check into that. The information I have is that that three of the fire towers are only operated now during times of high fire season. But with the member's specific characterization that certain towers were not staffed on weekends — that is not information that I have at my fingertips. I will look into whether that has been correct in the past and what the plan is for this current year.

One area that I certainly agree with the member on is in appreciating the work that is done by our volunteer firefighters. I would like to note and acknowledge, specifically within my own riding, the Hootalinqua and Ibex volunteer fire departments. Although there are some relatively new members on both of those volunteer fire department units — and, of course, the new members are very much appreciated as well — I do note and recognize that the chiefs of both of those fire departments, Dan Nickason and Bob Atkinson, have both been there quite a long time and have given a considerable part of their lives toward dedicating their services to support their communities.

I would also like to acknowledge in both cases that a number of the volunteer firefighters in both units have also been very long-serving volunteers, supporting their fellow

citizens and responding at all hours of the day and night, in what I consider to be an amazing response time, to help their fellow citizens.

Though I am not as familiar with all of the people in the fire departments on the south side of town, I know that many of those people have been long-time volunteers and the same, I believe, is the case in many Yukon communities.

It is something that should be recognized, not only by MLAs, but by all Yukoners who are within areas that are served by the people who are volunteer firefighters and who take that time out of their lives to commit to that. While they get some compensation through honoraria, that certainly does not and cannot fully acknowledge the personal commitment that they make, dedication of their lives and preparedness and willingness to get up in the middle of the night, leave their families and rush off to help their fellow Yukoners — it is something that can only be properly acknowledged through gratitude. The financial support we provide is a token indication, but can never fully respond to what they have taken out of their lives to respond to the needs of their fellow Yukon citizens. I very much appreciate the work that they provide and the same holds true for our rural emergency medical services volunteers.

In many cases in Yukon communities, there are a number of people who are both volunteer firefighters and volunteer paramedics. Truly, the contribution of their time and their efforts and their willingness to stand at the ready to respond to emergencies is something that I appreciate — that this government appreciates. Hopefully their fellow citizens in all of those areas take some time to think about what is being done by their fellow citizens and also hopefully become interested in the opportunity to join them in participating in providing that important service which, without their dedication, simply would not be available in those areas.

In the area of fire response, what I would note to the member with his specific question about the interoperability of equipment and certain fittings that in the past did not work with each other, one of the issues that I know that relates to is that the Yukon for quite a number of years had not had regular or significant investment in upgrading its fleet of pumpers and tankers.

If you look throughout Yukon communities, you'll see that a lot of fire halls, especially in areas with heavy volumes that have trucks that are either brand-new or only a few years old — and this is a stark change; I know when I was first elected in 2002, one of the issues that was raised to me by both of the fire halls within my riding was the age of the equipment they were dealing with. One of them had a tanker that was their primary tanker and, if memory serves, was older than I am. This was in one of the areas that had one of the heaviest response areas of any of our volunteer fire halls.

So through this significant investment, we've seen, as I mentioned earlier, the situation where our fire halls within the Whitehorse area that are responding to heavy volumes and have large populations outside municipalities and participate in Whitehorse and in those other areas under mutual aid agreements — most of that equipment is very recent. They

have fire trucks that are state-of-the-art in a number of these facilities, and that is an investment we're committed to continuing to make.

As well, within rural areas — although I can't list off the age of all equipment in all Yukon communities, I know — to name a few examples — that the Klondike Valley fire hall had a new truck that was delivered last year or the year before. I believe that specific vehicle was not brand new, but is very recent. In the case of Ross River, it's another area where I know their pumper truck is of 2009 vintage — just a few specific examples of the age of equipment. Again, the investments that have been made in last year's budget and in this year's allow the provision of brand new equipment to some of our highest volume areas.

Their equipment, which was more recent than in certain other rural areas, has resulted in trucks going to Old Crow and will result in trucks going to Burwash Landing and to Mendenhall to get them much more modern equipment. Again, we remain committed to investing in annual investments in the fleet, which includes the dollars that I mentioned during my remarks earlier toward continuing to upgrade Yukon's fleet of fire trucks as well as purchasing new ambulances.

Madam chair, in the area of infrastructure development, which continues to be a priority for the Department of Community Services and the Yukon government, in this year's budget there is \$26,774,000 allocated for administration and new and ongoing Building Canada projects. In 2014-15, work will continue on a number of Building Canada funded projects, including Beaver Creek road upgrades, \$200,000; Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation administration building energy refits, \$450,000; Carmacks waste-water plant upgrades, \$400,000; Faro pumphouse, \$1.1 million budgeted; Dawson City water system upgrades, \$750,000 budgeted; Haines Junction water reservoir and pump system, \$1,833,000; \$2,575,000 for upgrading, repair and replacement of water and sewer lines as well as improved road resurfacing and drainage in Mayo; completion of planning, analysis and design work for a new community well in Mayo, for which \$475,000 has been allocated; and \$2,060,000 for water distribution upgrades, including a second well to increase water supply and extension to the water distribution system in Mayo on Fourth Avenue into the Na Cho Nyäk Dun residential area.

As well, for repairs and upgrades to roads in Pelly Crossing, there is \$726,000, and for site cleanup of the former Ross River public works building now that the new building is operational, there is \$350,000. By the way, that new building cost roughly \$7 million and provides water treatment and is a space for the fire hall and fire truck.

As well, for the Tagish Taku subdivision, engineering design and construction of a water supply pumphouse and fill point, there is \$1,454,000; Teslin waste-water system upgrades for \$2 million; final construction and chipsealing of the Teslin Tlingit Council road upgrades for \$187,000; and funding for phase 4 of the multi-year Watson Lake water and

sewer pipe replacement and wet well, budgeted at \$1.5 million.

Construction of the Deep Creek water treatment plant is scheduled to begin this year as well, with \$1,447,000 allocated. Water and sewer upgrades in the Whitehorse Marwell district, including upgrading roads and improving water and sewer services, have \$576,000 allocated for them in this budget. For local road upgrades throughout the Yukon, we have \$1 million allocated. For a number of upgrades including waste reduction systems at landfills and transfer stations throughout the territory, 1,264,000 is allocated.

Funding is also included to support the City of Whitehorse with road construction and improvement in Whitehorse including \$100,000 to complete upgrades to Hospital Road and Lewes Boulevard, \$1,175,000 for bridge widening of the Robert Campbell Bridge, and \$745,000 for upgrades along Range Road.

The Building Canada plan has provided important infrastructure funding for Yukon since its inception in 2008. To date, some 76 projects have been approved in the territory, with eligible costs totalling over \$265 million. With this 75/25 funding arrangement, Yukon will have helped fund nearly \$57 million in infrastructure benefits directly matched with the support of federal government through the 75-percent funding formula.

Sustainable and predictable long-term infrastructure support is essential to developing and maintaining infrastructure in the Yukon and in Yukon communities. The current Building Canada fund runs to 2015 and we're looking forward to signing a new agreement with Canada that will extend the program for another 10 years. Programs like the Building Canada plan and the gas tax fund have helped us to address some of the challenges we in the Yukon and other northern territories must address.

The partnership between Canada and Yukon has had significant positive impacts and we look forward to building on past successes as we look toward the future. Together with our northern counterparts, we look forward to working with the Government of Canada on a long-term sustainable plan that supports local decision-making and achieves the greatest possible benefits for Yukon citizens and for municipalities, First Nations and unincorporated communities.

Sustainable and predictable infrastructure funding enables strategic investment that maximizes economic benefits, creates new and lasting jobs in Yukon communities, increases competitiveness and improves services for Yukoners and their families.

As I noted, we have a supply of lots available in the City of Whitehorse that are now available for sale over the counter, and this is a significant accomplishment. Together with the City of Whitehorse, we have worked hard to catch up with the supply of land to address the recent spike in demand. The planned investment under the 2014-15 budget, together with recent efforts, will help us to address the wider issues of supply and affordability in housing.

Providing an adequate supply and a range of land options is a high priority for government and something we

committed to in the 2011 election, which has seen significant focus both within the city and rural Yukon, as well as through the consultation that has occurred with Yukoners in zoning areas that has led to, in a couple of cases, reductions of minimum lot size — those being within the area of the Mayo Road, where residents supported a reduction of minimum lot size, and in the Mount Lorne area, where residents supported a reduction of minimum lot size for rural residential. We have also conducted consultations in the area of Mendenhall, where residents did not favour a reduction in minimum lot size and so that did not proceed further. Consultation is currently underway, led by the Land Planning branch of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in the Takhini Hot Springs Road area to consider whether residents in that area support or do not support a change to the minimum lot size for rural residential.

In the area of Professional Licensing and Regulatory Affairs under the Corporate Policy and Consumer Affairs division, Community Services continues to provide leadership, including \$771,000 allocated to support Professional Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, which last year licensed over 4,000 professionals, 53 health profession corporations, 57 agencies and 179 insurance companies. As well, the branch issued 162 bingo, raffle and casino licences for 61 charitable and religious groups in the Yukon.

In the area of Corporate Affairs, \$745,000 is allocated this year to support their efforts to ensure orderly and responsible commercial activity, including \$130,000 for costs associated with implementing a computerized personal property system that is another step in modernizing Yukon's business environment and helping to ensure that Yukon investors and consumers enjoy similar opportunities and protections to other Canadian jurisdictions.

In the Employment Standards and Residential Tenancy Office, the new *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* provides a clear legal framework for Yukon tenants and landlords and works to promote a healthy private rental market that is in line with best practices from across Canada. Over the early part of 2014, we saw public comment on the proposed regulations to accompany the act. Once these regulations have been developed, the director and new staff with the Residential Tenancy Office will begin operations, which are likely to occur later this fall. The total allocation for this area is \$876,000, including personnel, program materials and operations as well as for public education material development.

**Mr. Barr:** I thank the minister for his response. I will just seek a little more clarity on the fire towers themselves. How many are there in the territory? How many will be staffed? What are the criteria for those that are staffed — for example, extreme or moderate? If the minister doesn't have the information, please direct staff to get that information to me at a later date — giving a clear indication for the communities out there that are asking what will be going on in their specific communities and I can get back to them.

We have heard — and it is great news — that Air North and Holland America will be increasing the flights into the

airport in the Klondike, but we also know that airplane fires are different and that the great work of the Klondike Valley volunteer fire department — the fire department itself is going to be seeing a huge increase in flights and they haven't received the training that would be necessary for airplane fires.

I would like to ask the minister if he could also comment on what the strategy is going to be for that — are you looking at training for these volunteers in the areas of airline fires, and when will that be — taking their safety and the safety of people who would be flying into account?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** First of all, in the area of wildland fire lookouts, Wildland Fire Management currently has nine operational fire towers, three of which are not planned to be staffed during the 2014 fire season. Due to improvements in communications and fire detection technology, Wildland Fire Management determined two years ago that the Transport tower in Watson Lake, the Ptarmigan tower in Carmacks, and the Paint Mountain tower in Haines Junction should be staffed only when the fire danger is high. The six other lookout towers will continue to operate on a regular basis for 2014. The current fire identification system, including lookout towers, satellite monitoring and fixed-wing aircraft monitoring, provides the time in fire detection that Wildland Fire Management needs to keep Yukoners safe.

Historically, Wildland Fire Management had a total of 12 towers, three of which have been closed for over 20 years. Wildland Fire Management closed three more in 2012, leaving six towers open and operational for the fire season. In addition to the three that I mentioned, they are staffed during times of high fire risk. The operational cost for the nine towers prior to the 2012 closures was approximately \$250,000 annually. Capital replacement costs were estimated at over \$1 million. At one time, the lookout towers were an essential part of fire management, but improved communication systems and detection systems have reduced the need for that.

With regard to the Tagish tower, which I assume the member was asking about, what I have in my notes doesn't indicate it being only staffed on certain days, as the member mentioned. I will certainly look into the member's concern and get back to him, but I don't directly deal with those issues of staffing and operational needs. As I noted, I'm certainly happy to check into it and get back with information. I understand that if the member is hearing from constituents, they undoubtedly have a concern with what is being done or with what they currently understand is being done. I'm certainly happy to find out what is in the plan and also if there are any gaps in those areas, I'm certainly prepared to consider them.

Moving to another area which, for the member and others listening, it is important to note is a different part of Community Services — the Fire Marshal's Office and Wildland Fire Management are separate entities and the Fire Marshal's Office deals with the areas around the training levels that are required for our volunteer firefighters and that includes the member's specific question about the Dawson City Airport and the potential increase to volumes. First of all,

it's my understanding that some parts of that are still in the development stage. I know that the fire marshal is aware of the potential increase that is being talked about and I have confidence that's being evaluated.

As far as any concerns that may exist by the Klondike Valley Fire Department or the City of Dawson Fire Department, I would encourage them to first of all talk to the fire marshals regarding their specific views on any additional training that they feel may be necessary, which would allow those professionals to talk about those needs and hopefully come to an agreement. They can also certainly feel free to contact me directly with any concerns they have in that area, but I would note to the member that in that area — as far as specific training needs — I will likely defer to and rely on the advice of the fire marshal to determine what is necessary in those areas.

I would note to members as well that, with planes landing at remote airfields, there are Transport Canada regulations that apply. The determination of when the volume requires a change in fire equipment or fire training — I am not personally intimately familiar with the operational details in that area, but I do know that there are a number of airfields, not only within the Yukon but throughout Canada, that do see some landing of planes and have not significantly increased fire protection in those areas.

At a certain point, of course, the risk assessment results in a decision being made to increase the resources at those areas — or near them — and of course in airports such as the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport within Whitehorse and within other major domestic and international airports. At a certain point they ensure that there is an on-site fire hall, fire truck and fire personnel staffing available, somewhat similar to the provision of services within Yukon communities and by municipalities themselves.

I think the member's specific concern relates to the flammability of jet fuel, but something that should be noted is that, within all communities and along all highways throughout the entire country, wherever there is the travel of flammable materials there is some risk. The Yukon is not the only jurisdiction — in fact, all Canadian jurisdictions and all jurisdictions around the world have to make a decision at some point about how much of a risk exists and whether the cost and logistics of providing increased fire suppression capabilities are warranted in that situation, or if the costs are not required due to the risk assessment in that situation.

Again, in conclusion, with the Klondike Valley Fire Department and the perceived need that has been raised in this House by members about their view that there may be an increased need for training, I would encourage the fire chief of the Klondike Valley Fire Department to contact the fire marshal if he shares those concerns, and would hope that the two of them would be able to come to a shared conclusion about what is necessary and what is not necessary.

The same applies to the fire chief for the City of Dawson and either of those individuals can also feel free to contact me directly. But I would hope that the professional firefighters would be able to come to an agreement about training

requirements and risk assessment and operational issues related to them.

Just moving on to a few other areas, in the area of Property Assessment and Taxation, \$4,729 million in operation and maintenance funding is allocated for Property Assessment and Taxation. This includes \$3.708 million in transfer payments to Yukon homeowners via the homeowners grant, which has increased by \$208,000 with the territory's current population.

There is \$1.4 million allocated to continue to offer both the rural electrical and telephone program to assist rural property owners with installation of power and telephone services in rural areas and the domestic water well program which, as members know, is near and dear to my heart. It was an idea that was proposed to me by constituents and is something that I was very proud — and am proud — to have worked for as an MLA to get put into place. The rural well program is also continued and supported through this year's budget. Both of those programs — as members may know — are in fact virtually identical in their structure in that they provide capital funding to assist with the costs of putting in electrification or a well and require the owner to pay that back through a specified agreement period and levy a local improvement charge to ensure that there is certainty for the government and for other taxpayers that the amount will be paid back and will not be defaulted on.

Both of those programs have been very successful in helping people invest in personal infrastructure outside communities and helping extend our electrical grid.

With that, I look forward to further questions from the member.

**Mr. Barr:** I thank the minister for his answers. I'm also looking forward to the information that may not be available to him at this moment. I think the minister raised an important question in one of his responses regarding the legalities of how many flights it takes before there is a legal requirement for increased training or on-site fire suppression. If the minister could look into that — as I think back to his response, he was a little uncertain himself as to when that line is crossed — and just be clear for this side of the House and maybe provide clarity about if there's a line and when that line is crossed, as he mentioned in his answer.

I'll just ask another question about our volunteer sector. It has to do with the search and rescue folks who also provide, as all the volunteers do, a great service. I'm happy to hear that here, in this more populated area, there has been movement to search and rescue — the equipment is housed in a central area now and that had been asked for. I'm sure that they are appreciative of this advancement. I brought this up, I believe, about a year and a half ago. At that time I also brought forward that, as we do see with our volunteers, EMS is the one that does receive honoraria, for example. Some other volunteers receive their gear. The volunteer fire departments receive the gear that they need. However, as I have stated and asked in this House before, for search and rescue — for someone choosing to volunteer in that capacity, the onus is on them to put out approximately \$1,000 per person from their

own pocket just to get geared up to volunteer. I would ask the minister if, in this year's budget, there is or has been an acknowledgement of this. Is there going to be any financial support particularly to the search and rescue volunteer area — that they'll receive some financial support in their gear necessary to follow through with their volunteerism.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** First of all, one of the benefits to members having agreed a couple of years ago to allow the use of the BlackBerry and other electronic devices in the Chamber is that I can actually provide the member with more information about the fire towers that I did not previously have.

The answer that I have for the member, hot off the press, is that there are six fire lookout towers planned to be operating for the 2014 fire season. These are: Ferry Hill, Mayo-Stewart Crossing; Dome, which is Dawson; Carmacks, which is, surprisingly, Carmacks; Tom Creek, which is Watson Lake; Tagish, in the Southern Lakes district; and Haeckel Hill in Whitehorse. What I have been advised by staff of Wildland Fire Management is that the towers are regularly staffed, regardless of fire danger, on a five-day-on, two-day-off schedule, with roadside towers having their five-day schedule run over the weekend to cover increased weekend traffic — meaning that the two days they are not staffed would be during the week, not on the weekend.

When the fire danger is high or above, the towers are staffed seven days a week and for longer hours to match the increased risk of wildland fires occurring.

That is what I have there. I anticipate, based on the member's current or previous concerns, that he might question why they are not staffed seven days a week all of time. I don't have additional information beyond what I have provided, but I note that, as with all of these areas and even with the significant increased resources we provided to program areas including this, there always has to be some assessment by staff of where resources can be used the best, of what the risk is and what the best way is to respond to it, and where financial resources are most effective and most needed. The simple answer to the member's question is that some of the roadside towers are, according to the information presented to me, planned for his summer season to be operated five days on, two days off when the fire risk is moderate or lower, and when it is high or extremely high, they would be staffed seven days a week.

Another part I should note to the member is that in areas closest to people, it's very important to recognize that through improved communication technology, including cellphone service being provided in Yukon communities — which was not the case 10 years ago — and through the expansion of land line services — which also doesn't go back that long ago — there were many people, my family and myself included, who were relying on the old 2M series of the two-way radio phones operating on a single shared channel, which meant that the accessibility of someone being able to call in firefighters or other emergencies was dependent sometimes on who was using the channel. In an emergency — I recall listening to a

few cases where someone called in and the person agreed to hang up so they could make an emergency call.

With the provision of cell service to rural communities, with the expansion of land line service and with a number of people also having satellite phones, which were certainly close to unheard of 10 or 20 years ago, that has also resulted in how, when a fire happens near habitation, we have a lot more eyes who now have the ability to call in and report 24 hours a day to Wildland Fire Management. I know from personal experience that I have called in fire sightings and note that, on a few of those occasions, there had been at least one other call received prior — family members having seen it — and called in to the 1-800 number. That is an important safety element that should not be underrated.

If Yukoners do see evidence of something that appears to them to be a wildfire or a lightning strike having occurred and it looks like it has resulted in smoke, they are encouraged to call the Wildland Fire Management and report it. That is especially important when those strikes are close to peoples' places of residence. The closer it is to people, the more it is treated as an urgent item and staff will respond with available resources to address and put out the fire.

In the area of search and rescue that the member asked about — and this is another area that it's important to note that we are comparing the requirement for resources, not for a moment minimizing the importance of search and rescue or the volunteers who provide the service. It should also be noted that those who provide services as volunteer firefighters and as volunteer paramedics do have a higher number of calls that they have to respond to within a year than typically do search and rescue. So the amount of times we are calling upon people is an important thing to consider. It's also about the gear that the member was referring to for someone doing search and rescue. To me, his costing allocations make the assumption that people don't have that equipment themselves, which within Yukon is something that is not necessarily an accurate assumption.

We have received federal funding for initiatives including reviewing and enhancing our search and rescue program of \$492,000. We've had funding for temporary storage capabilities in five communities as well as outfitting a mobile command post and telecommunications unit, which is \$500,000.

I should note, as the member may have seen the press release or heard on the radio, we're recognizing that this is Emergency Preparedness Week and a very important part of our message, and indeed messages in other Canadian jurisdictions, is regarding the importance of people having a personal emergency kit and being prepared to be self-sufficient for at least 72 hours in the event of an emergency situation. The list is on-line and the press release we sent out earlier today. It is a list that includes things like water, flashlights, clothing, drinking water, a first aid kit — and an important part of that is also encouraging people to not simply rely on a recommended list, but to make a personal determination of what is appropriate for their family and what is appropriate in their area. In an emergency, this can include

everything from wildfire, flood, a potential earthquake situation to even more minor things, such as a disruption of the ability to drive from a snowstorm, interruption of power services due to a windstorm and, as we've seen recently, the interruption of highway service into the Yukon. This was a reminder for many people of the importance of having food on hand and not assuming that you will necessarily always be able to get to a grocery store.

It's very important that people do take some time to think about what is appropriate for them and their family, just as the fire marshal will recommend and encourage people to think about home evacuation in the event of a fire.

All of these emergencies are unlikely and rare occurrences, but they do happen. As we see tragedies such as tornadoes occurring in the southern United States recently, the significant problems around floods that happened in Alberta last year or in Manitoba and Saskatchewan last year and in previous years, it's important to remember that in the event of a natural disaster or emergency created by natural events, that the ability of government to respond is not always immediate. The more people are prepared to take care of themselves and their families the better, a minimum of 72 hours being the recommendation. It's important for people to think about that.

In fact, the government and I would encourage people to regard 72 hours as a minimum, not a maximum, and think about having things on hand to take care of yourself and ensure, in the event of an unanticipated emergency event, that emergency responders can focus on those most in need, rather than focusing on a broader part of the population due to a general lack of personal preparedness. Being ready for an emergency, just as with being ready for a fire at your home — while we all hope that day never comes, it is incumbent on each and every one of us to take personal responsibility for ourselves and for our families.

Madam Chair, jumping back specifically to search and rescue, ground and inland water search and rescue is an operational responsibility of the RCMP. Parks Canada is responsible for search and rescue in national parks. The Yukon government has purchased and maintains major equipment that is assigned to search and rescue teams, which includes vehicles, boats, radios, et cetera. Government covers the cost of all formal certified training for search and rescue volunteers, which meets the national guidelines for search and rescue. As a part of the review and enhancement project, a search and rescue coordinator and a search and rescue administrator and finance clerk were hired in March 2012. The project was established to examine the search and rescue governance structure in the Yukon, to standardize operational procedures, develop OH&S and training standards to deliver search and rescue training, review the Yukon search and rescue program and identified options to enhance in the future, and to fund the acquisition of laptops, portable printers, digital maps and instant management software programs and volunteer-focused Yukon search and rescue website.

It's also important to note that search and rescue volunteers — while they do operate on a pure volunteer model with no remuneration — do attend when available — and that

is different from the expectations that are placed particularly on our EMS volunteers and on fire volunteers. There is more of an expectation for them that it not be dependent on their availability, but rather, when a call comes, they will jump out of bed, leave work, et cetera, when they've agreed to be on call, and they will provide those services.

I don't for a moment minimize the importance of search and rescue or those who provide services in those areas. I know people, including friends, who, because of their passion for that area, also put out significant expense well beyond the \$1,000 that the member is mentioning to prepare for potential search and rescue, including purchasing dogs and training them. It really is an element of personal passion as well.

The contributions of all those people who do that are very much appreciated. In the event of a search and rescue, it is very much necessary. The specific suggestion that the member has is not provided for in this year's budget. We will continue to work with search and rescue, including associations representing them, and with other partners, including the RCMP, to assess the needs in search and rescue and determine the needs, both for capital purchases and support to volunteers and others who respond in those situations.

**Chair:** Prior to going into another question, would members like to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

**Chair:** Committee of the Whole will now come to order, resuming general debate in Vote 51, Department of Community Services.

**Mr. Barr:** I thank the minister for his responses. I want to move into the *Municipal Act* review. I'm wondering where we're at with that and how the consultation is going. Are they finished? Will there be recommendations? I just look forward to hearing some updates on that.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** The *Municipal Act* Review Committee has continued to meet regularly and has completed a findings report, which will be part of the next round of community consultation later this year. The committee was formed in the winter of 2011-12.

The review process focuses first on municipal input and allows for input from local advisory councils, First Nations and public participation via meetings and through our dedicated Community Affairs website. All municipalities and advisory councils were consulted in fall 2012 by the *Municipal Act* Review Committee. First Nations have been contacted and some meetings have taken place with interested First Nations. Issues brought forward during consultation so far suggest interest in amending the *Municipal Act* in several areas and the findings report will be released publicly within the next — just checking the timelines out — probably in June.



There will be input throughout this year from municipalities and the expectation is that there will be act amendments likely sometime next year following that.

**Mr. Barr:** I thank the minister for getting through that. Regarding the Yukon Municipal Board — I realize that it has a great many powers under the *Municipal Act* and that it has not published its decisions or recommendations to the minister and it has not published transcripts of their meetings and has no website and does not publish the minutes and does not publish an annual report. The current chair was appointed in 1984 and there seems to be no end date to this appointment. I was wondering where the decisions and recommendations of the board are housed. Are they available to the public? Is there any plan to review the operation of the board? Does the current chair, appointed nearly 30 years ago, have a lifetime appointment?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I believe this is something that has come up as an issue in the *Municipal Act* review, but as far as the details on what is available and what is under consideration for possible changes, I don't have that information at my fingertips at this point in time. Certainly the structure that is in place there has been in place for quite some time. My understanding is that potential changes or revisions in that area have come up in the *Municipal Act* review and would be one of the issues that — following consultation with municipalities — would ultimately be considered by government on whether any revisions are needed in that area.

**Mr. Barr:** Possibly the technology of the BlackBerry may release some information to the minister's fingertips shortly — we can hope. If not, I would look forward to hearing information that the minister is able to obtain in the future through correspondence.

Regarding the 911 service, I know that the Department of Community Services has made some progress on this recently.

Can the minister give me an update on the implementation of this program? When will this be up and running in all of the Yukon communities?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** First of all, just to recap with the member, the government is currently looking at and working with partners around the possibility of expanding the 911 dispatch to Yukon communities. We have heard specific concerns from some Yukon municipalities with regard to their concern about whether a centralized dispatch would improve service or actually create additional confusion or lag time because of issues such as local knowledge of landmarks or people's houses that might be referenced. As the member may be aware, the dispatch, for example, of the volunteer firefighters in a number of Yukon communities will go directly to — when someone calls the number, in some of those cases, those would go directly through the radios that are carried by those volunteers. Others do have a dispatch system in place. That is one of the specific concerns that have come up. There are also some technical challenges from Northwestel's perspective, which relate to expanding 911 service to communities — issues that I believe the member and one of his colleagues have asked about. Broadband capacity and phone system capacity are also things that have

to be considered by the technical people when they are looking at what happens when you put in place 911 switching from communities, where it is routed, how it is routed and how the call travels back and forth.

The context to this is that 911 has proven to be a valuable service in the Whitehorse area, just as it has in other areas. While it's not currently available in rural communities, emergency response continues to be delivered by the RCMP, emergency medical services and fire departments. The inter-agency 911 management committee has investigated workable solutions to expand and improve 911 service throughout the Yukon and has been working on this, including during recent weeks and months. One thing that came up — as the member may recall me noting previously in the House — is that while this work was underway and because we had specific comments and proposals from Northwestel that a phased approach be taken, that was what was being discussed at the management committee — that they look at a phased approach of implementing 911, the costs and technical challenges, et cetera, that had to be resolved during that. To my understanding, none are unresolvable, but it is also not a snap-your-fingers and implement-the-system situation.

The inter-agency 911 management committee has been investigating solutions. What I asked for last fall, after talking to a number of Yukoners — including municipal leaders, firefighter and EMS — was that in the interim, while that broader project was being dealt with, we looked at seeing whether we could quickly do something. What I proposed at that point was that we look at whether we could put in place a recording that when you dial 911 in rural areas, if someone didn't know that they should be dialing a local prefix and the latter part of the number, they would at least have the call go somewhere, rather than a tourist or an eight-year-old who dialed 911 going nowhere with their phone call and not knowing what to do about it.

What that then evolved into through discussions between staff and Northwestel was the conclusion that what they've termed an auto-select option would be workable and would be quicker for someone calling a phone number there. What that looks like is that it would involve callers outside the current 911 catchment area calling dial 911 on a land line or mobile and receiving a recorded message that states: "Emergency services for — community name — are for police press 1, for fire press 2 and for ambulance press 3." The caller would then be connected with a live person depending on the assistance required, i.e. RCMP rural detachment officer or RCMP PSAP operator in Whitehorse.

Pardon me; I am just drawing a blank on that acronym. It is a public service answering point, which is the technical term for what you get when you dial 911 in Whitehorse. The caller would be connected to a live person, depending on the assistance required, i.e. RCMP rural detachment officer, RCMP PSAP operator in Whitehorse, the firefighter on call or community nurse, respectively.

This is essentially who a caller would currently get if they dialled the published community emergency numbers in the Northwestel phone book. That system, through joint efforts

with Northwestel — and again I would like to thank Northwestel and particularly the president, Paul Flaherty, for his personal assistance on this project. They were able to assist us with this and in fact that system has been beta tested in Yukon communities, with the exception of Old Crow, which is on a different system because of the satellite nature of it and would require a different solution. My understanding is that it has been beta tested in all of the other communities and it works.

However, what we ran into is that the CRTC advised Yukon government that we would have to seek their approval before that process could be used.

I would note that the letter sent from the assistant deputy minister of Protective Services in Community Services to the executive director of telecommunications for the CRTC on March 14 was to follow-up in writing to confirm what had been verbally indicated by the CRTC. I believe the member should have a copy. I think I may have tabled it earlier. If not, I'm certainly happy to do so. We provided copies to interested members of the media and are happy to provide them to anyone else who wishes to see it. This is the March 14, 2014, letter to Mr. Seidl. I'll apologize to Mr. Seidl for mispronouncing his name at least a couple of times in various innovative manners here this afternoon.

The letter regarding Yukon interim rural 911 emergency response access thanked the executive director of telecommunications for meeting with them during a visit to Whitehorse.

“We appreciated the opportunity to speak with you and Commissioner Molnar about the status of 9-1-1 service in Yukon. As you may remember, our long-term intent is to ‘enhance’ our current 9-1-1 system in the Whitehorse catchment area and expand into our rural communities. This will take time and resources, and naturally involves the CRTC in its regulatory capacity. Currently, basic 9-1-1 service has been available to Whitehorse and surrounding residents since 1994. We have been working with our service provider, Northwestel, to scope out of this ‘expansion/enhancement project’ but are only in the initial stages.”

“In the meantime, we have since spoken with CRTC officials, Michel Murray and James Ndirangu” — and again my apologies to him for potentially mispronouncing his name — “by telephone to discuss, in more detail, our interim 9-1-1 proposal. We would like to set up a system by which callers in need of emergency assistance in a given rural community (i.e. outside the current 9-1-1 Whitehorse catchment area) could dial 9-1-1 on a landline or mobile and receive a recorded message that states: ‘Emergency services for (community name) are: for police — press 1; for fire — press 2; for ambulance — press 3.’”

Then as I noted, the caller would be connected with a live person depending on the assistance required and that would either go to the RCMP rural detachment, RCMP public safety answering point, which was the correct term for the PSAP, to a firefighter on call or community nurse respectively.

Then, quoting later from the letter: “We have been working with Northwestel to design this ‘interim’ project and

have beta-tested it to our satisfaction. Our intent was to have it operational by 15 March.” That is 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2014.

“In our above conversation with Messrs. Murray and Ndirangu, we were advised, however, that we could not unilaterally put this system into operation without CRTC permission. As such, I am writing this letter to seek confirmation of this requirement and, if indeed the case, how to proceed further. We are interested in requesting approval at the earliest possible time.

“Again, thank you for your assistance. I look forward to hearing from you as soon as you can.”

Those were the key excerpts from the letter from Rick Smith, the assistant deputy minister responsible for Protective Services in Community Services dated March 14, 2014. The letter of response we received from the CRTC was dated March 24, 2014. The letter is from Mr. Seidl and it is addressed to Rick Smith, assistant deputy minister of Protective Services, Yukon Community Services.

It states: “Dear Mr. Smith,

“This is in reference to your letter seeking clarification regarding the steps necessary to introduce an interim rural 9-1-1 emergency response access system in the Yukon. The Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (the Commission) regulates the provision of telecommunications services in Canada. Section 25 of the *Telecommunications Act* (the Act) prohibits a Canadian carrier, such as Northwestel, from providing a telecommunications service except in accordance with a tariff approved by the Commission after a public process, unless the Commission has forborne from regulating the relevant service. Canadian carriers must also comply with any conditions on the offering or provision of telecommunications services established by the Commission pursuant to section 24 of the Act.”

Then it goes on — I will read other key excerpts here. The next paragraph, paragraph four of the letter, goes on to describe what is considered by the commission to be basic 911 and enhanced 911. “Basic 9-1-1 service connects a 9-1-1 call to a call centre. The caller must identify his or her location to the 911 operator, who then connects the call to the emergency response that is serving that area.”

The letter then goes on to describe enhanced 911. “Enhanced 9-1-1 service connects a 9-1-1 call to an emergency call centre and automatically provides the 9-1-1 operator with the phone number and location of the caller.”

It notes that Canadian carriers have tariffs for such services, including Northwestel's basic 911 emergency reporting services Whitehorse, an area in special services tariff item 722.

Going on, Mr. Seidl's letter notes that, “Based on the description you have provided, the Yukon Interim Rural 9-1-1 Emergency Response Access system proposed in your letter does not meet either the Basic 9-1-1 or Enhanced 9-1-1 service definitions as stated above.” It goes on to note: “There is therefore no obligation for a Canadian carrier to provide such a service. However, a Canadian carrier could seek Commission approval to provide such a service pursuant to a

tariff.” It then goes on to describe a little bit about how to make that application.

We have recently been in discussions with Northwestel intended to result in us and them taking the next steps necessary to seek CRTC approval for that interim system to be operating.

The highlights are that the system has been tested, and it would have been in operation now had we not received CR indication that we require their approval before we could operate it. We intend to seek that approval. It should also be noted that this is something that we see as in interim step but, as I noted in some of the excerpts I read earlier from the letter from the assistant deputy minister to the CRTC, it’s not a simple snap-your-fingers exercise to put in place a 911 dispatch system. As I’ve said several times before this House, when we’ve heard specific concerns expressed by some members of the Association of Yukon Communities and by municipal representatives, including one mayor in particular who has expressed strong concern, we do have to take that seriously.

If we go to a single dispatch system that provides ambulance service to the entire territory, while we see some obvious benefits in that, we also want to ensure that all of our partners see that as having a net benefit in improving service. When we do hear that there are concerns about that, I can and will emphasize to the member that we are going to treat those concerns seriously and respectfully, and we want to ensure that any steps taken toward a territory-wide 911 system are both technically and financially feasible and sustainable and, very importantly, are supported by our key partners, which include the RCMP, municipalities and, of course, all of our emergency medical services and volunteer firefighting departments. There are a lot of people who need to be talked to and who need an opportunity to understand the technical and logistical elements in implementing such a system.

There is work that needs to be done by Northwestel as well.

I should note briefly — with regard to the Iristel-Ice Wireless proposal that has recently been referenced — that Community Services advised me that they were first approached by Iristel-Ice Wireless in early April, so early last month.

At the tail end of April, they sent an exploratory proposal for providing 911 service to the Yukon, and we’re currently evaluating that proposal but have not made any decisions. This is at its early stage. I should note that key elements of the proposal, which I don’t believe we’re in a position to make public at this point because it contains some confidential proprietary third-party information protected under ATIPP — some of the elements that their representatives have spoken to publicly do include replacing elements of what the RCMP currently provides at the public safety answering point, doing so through a voice over Internet protocol system.

As the member can understand, there are some obvious concerns that we would have with that proposal. I can note that we’re still evaluating it and I don’t think it’s very likely that either the RCMP or the Yukon government would see a

benefit in replacing the RCMP’s role in providing the public safety answering point with people who are not to the same level of training or expertise and connected remotely over the Internet, and potentially subject to Internet disruption.

Whether there is any benefit in using it in any part of the system or as a backup is something that has not been determined, but I should note that, speaking generally to that, based on the initial evaluation, it is not something that appears to be everything that some may have thought it could be.

There is some potential merit in certain parts of it, but there are other parts of it that simply do not look like they would be an improvement to the service.

**Mr. Barr:** I thank the minister for his responses. One thing more around the 911 service — and I will ask another question after this — can the minister confirm that this is only for land lines, or does it also include cellphones? In listening to the minister’s response — much earlier in the response — realizing that when people are calling, at this point in time what we are faced with because of the lack of civic addressing in rural Yukon — although there have been efforts made to progress in this area. I’ll ask a couple of questions around that.

For some clarification, there have been some constituents and other Yukoners noting that Tagish will be handing out civic addressing signs that are ready to hand out, I believe, even this weekend, which I’ll be there helping to do — that’s going to be the first time that we do that — and there was confusion by some other areas that these signs will all be like a standard sign throughout the territory, or are different communities going to have different mock-ups of signs that would be individual to their community?

It is my understanding — and maybe the minister can clarify this — that the signs are being purchased by Community Services. Marsh Lake, for example, seems to think that Community Services will not be purchasing their signs; that the onus is on the community to purchase their signs. Could the minister add some clarification to civic addressing, realizing that it does go hand in hand with 911?

I will say again just for the record — or responses that I did say initially — that the first question has to do with confirming that the 911 is for land lines only — or does it also include cellphones?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** No, the interim service was for rural callers dialing 911 on land lines or cellular phones with the ability to press 1, 2 or 3. That is Northwestel and local phones. What I should note for the member is that for any proposal — or any alternate routing services backup, et cetera — the technical issues that relate to having Northwestel land lines route to a 911 call centre after you dial 911 — Northwestel has to be a part of that solution because it’s dealing with their system and their equipment.

Whatever the technical terminology is for setting up the call-routing and the switching, it has to be dealt with by the network operator, which is Northwestel.

In the issue of rural areas, Bell and Northwestel phones, again, were intended to be covered under this. My understanding is that those issues were being dealt with as part

of it, but the first step and first testing was done with land lines.

In speaking to 911, I again want to emphasize that we don't see the 911 "auto-select option," as it has been termed, as being the end of the road, but it was something that evolved from a desire to, say, in those areas where we know there have been and could be issues with people dialing 911 because they didn't know the local emergency response number — and that would primarily affect tourists and kids, I would think, but could also affect people living in other areas of the Yukon who travel to a rural area and say, "Oh, what's the number" if they have an issue. Particularly, I think it would be fair to say that some of the roughly 7,000 people who have moved into the territory in the past decade — and that number may actually be higher; that's a number just comparing populations then and now — they may not be aware in their day-to-day lives in the City of Whitehorse that there are different numbers in rural communities.

If someone goes to Dawson City, Carmacks or Tagish, they recognize that they may not be aware of what number to dial, which is what the intent of moving forward quickly with an option that allows people to press one, two or three for police, fire or ambulance. Because of the technical issues and the timelines we've seen from Northwestel about how long they feel it would take them to upgrade certain parts of their system to accommodate a centralized 911 dispatch, we still believe that interim option is one that we should pursue and seek CRTC approval to operate because, as I've noted before, it is something that is operable now. But Northwestel can't operate a system that the regulator, the CRTC, has told it that it may not operate until it seeks permission to do so. That does not allow us the option of operating that system immediately, but it is a matter of priority and we are currently working with Northwestel in determining what the next steps are in seeking that permission of the CRTC.

With regard specifically to civic addressing, we are working toward a standardized approach to ensuring rural Yukon has proper street signage and house numbering to assist in emergency service provision as well as to help people find people in rural areas if they are travelling to visit them or deliver goods, and so on.

The approach that has been started began with local advisory councils to identify community signage needs. Local advisory councils are implementing their plans based on respective needs and in accordance with required standards for any future 911 territorial initiatives. It should be noted that work is ongoing in areas, including the Tagish area. Indication has also been received from other LACs about their interest in participating. The option of introducing building numbers and street signage continues to be the main focal point for these communities.

Community Affairs initiated an interjurisdictional research paper, which detailed the implementation experiences of street addressing in three Canadian provinces — P.E.I., Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The work is being done with LACs, with some that are closer to having civic addresses than others. The approach is what we are focused

on, going forward. We'll provide coverage for street signage where it exists for streets, roads and any key marker points that might be determined to be added on a road, but will not be responsible for purchasing people's house numbers or house signage. That will be an area of personal responsibility.

Quite frankly, speaking personally, I think that considering the cost of a house and the importance of providing services to a family, putting up a house number or a sign identifying your name or both is something that every one of use can take responsibility for, just as it occurs within municipalities where municipalities are responsible for the street signage and the road signs, but whether you choose to put your house number on your house or not is something that is left to individuals. There are some that, due to privacy concerns, may wish not to do so. Of course, emergency responders do recommend placing your house number on your house and having it well-lit so they can find it in the event of an emergency. That is, of course, a matter of personal choice.

**Mr. Barr:** I thank the minister for the clarification on the signage. I would like to seek further clarification on the 911 service. Did the minister say that local cellphones would be able to access the short-term response to the 911? If so, will cellphones from out of the territory be able to call 911 in the communities?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** First of all, yes, my understanding is that the 911 auto-select option was tested and would allow for cellphones. I know the primary focus of the testing was on Northwestel's system, and the technical issues that were brought to my attention were primarily related to testing of the switch capacity in certain areas and how that would route. My understanding is that, yes, it would work for local cell numbers, but that is something that's not an option until the CRTC has approved its operation.

As far as non-Yukon cellphones, one thing that the member and people — including some whom I know and who live here but maintain an out-of-territory cell number — should be aware of and may wish to look into is that, depending on how that cell service provider has set up their network, in some cases if you have a phone, for example, based out of Edmonton or Calgary or Brampton, Ontario, that phone — if you dial 911 — will not necessarily route to the 911 dispatch centre for the area you are in. That is something that people who are going around with 250 or 780 phone numbers may wish to consider and look into. Those things are not directly within the Yukon government's control. Those are up to the cell service provider, and it really relates to how their network is set up.

The same would also apply for U.S.-based cellphone companies and members should also be aware that, for satellite phones, people should not assume that 911 is necessarily the number to dial on an Iridium phone or Globalstar, or whatever type of system you have. That is one thing that people should take into account. It's one of the downsides of moving toward an expectation that people think 911 service is the default and standard. If you are using a phone that is an exception to the rule, you may be putting

yourself at risk if you have not identified alternate numbers to call.

For example, as the member may know, it has long been advice included in local phone books and in public service announcements — we don't see it as frequently now, but going back decades in the Yukon — that if you are in a community and you can't reach a local number — especially a local police number, but other emergency responses as well — they can dial the Whitehorse dispatch centre for the RCMP, which is the public safety answering point, at 667-5555. As those who have been around here for more than a few years will certainly recall that, back before 1994, it was typical that people would be advised, if you are in a rural community and you can't reach the local RCMP office or local emergency services, that it was probably the best number to call and they would make best efforts to connect you with whatever type of emergency service was necessary.

I hope that has answered the member's question.

I will just reiterate the cautionary note for people that if you have an out-of-territory cellphone or satellite phone you should really look into where dialing 911 will route you to. I'm not for a moment suggesting that you test it, as members and other listening may be aware that in fact it is illegal to call 911 without cause to do so, but I would encourage you to contact your telecommunications provider to determine where it goes to.

It should also be noted that those who use Skype for telephone service — my understanding is that Skype also has the same issue and does not provide 911 contact. That's something that people who are moving away from a phone system should be aware of. It also relates to a similar topic that should be a good opportunity, this being Emergency Preparedness Week, to remind people that there are a lot of people who have gone away from having land lines and do not depend on cordless phones and they should be aware, during this Emergency Preparedness Week, of the fact that experts do recommend that you also have at least one dedicated phone that does not depend on a limited battery supply, because in the event of an extended power outage, if you're using a handheld cordless phone as your household phone and either the unit itself runs out of batteries or the base unit depends on AC power to operate, you may find yourself without a phone without having thought of it.

An old-fashioned touch-tone phone or a rotary dial, if you happen to have one of those, is still something that it is a good idea to have one plugged into your wall or at least in your closet, so that if you lose power, you don't find yourself without a home phone, particularly if you are in an area that doesn't have cell service.

**Mr. Barr:** I thank the minister for his clarification on that.

I am going to move away from communications — although this is still about communication, in the broader sense. That is, to inquire from the minister — we are aware that the Ross River suspension bridge is still outstanding and ongoing and there was a joint press release by the Ross River Dena Council and the Premier regarding moving forward and

there was, at that time, I guess, a commitment to retain the integrity and the safety of the bridge and that there was going to be an RFP put out.

As I understand it, we are still waiting on the RFP for the Ross River suspension bridge. I would like to get an update on this and also ask why it is taking so long. What is the government's plan for access to the far side of the Pelly River this summer?

I was approached again over the weekend by local outfitters and adventure tour folks who depend on being able to get over there. I know that this does involve Highways and Public Works, but it is a major concern out there. I would like an update on this situation.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** The Yukon government continues to work toward finding a solution for the future of the Ross River bridge. In late March, we issued a joint news release with the First Nation indicating an agreement between the Premier and Chief Ladue that the government would issue a request for a proposal to stabilize the bridge. Work on the RFP has been a high priority but is not complete. That is due to the fact that Community Services and Highways and Public Works have been working jointly on this, but they are also trying to ensure that it is structured right to maximize the chances of getting people to bid on it and to do so in a way that is has been structured carefully and properly to ensure that the end result, first and foremost, provides for public safety, while recognizing the community's concern and passion for the bridge as well as the interest in the bridge that some Yukoners outside the area have as well. Public safety is the primary concern and engineering reports on the bridge have identified serious safety concerns, which would affect any activity on or near the bridge, including work to stabilize it. Additional assessments of the bridge structure are being done before we issue the RFP to ensure that staff have taken all factors into account and are in the best possible position to receive a successful proposal from a contractor.

Government, both at a departmental and a senior level, is in communication with the Ross River Dena Council. That included a recent meeting directly between staff of the Premier's office and Ross River Dena Council at the end of April. The primary concern remains public safety. The update on the status of this has been shared with the Ross River Dena Council.

Again, what I should emphasize to the member is that one of the primary reasons we were acting quickly to take down the bridge, while attempting to preserve its elements, was the concern about the impact on ferry operations that could occur if the bridge was still in place. The Department of Highways and Public Works is working on a plan to operate the ferry while recognizing the Occupational Health and Safety rules. As the member may be aware, the way we operated it during the period of roughly 10 days at the tail-end of last summer's season was operating the ferry with a search and rescue boat alongside it at all times. That was staffed by staff from Wildland Fire Management who had very recently found themselves relieved of the volume of the summer fire season.

We need to take into account both our needs for search and rescue response capacity, as well as the staffing duties of other people, in coming up with any possible solution for operating the ferry.

My understanding is that staff of Highways and Public Works are working on trying to minimize disruption to ferry service while keeping the cost of operation in mind. Of course, staff safety is of paramount concern. I do have to emphasize that the whole reason government was proceeding in the manner we did was because there will be some impact to the ferry scheduling as a result of the bridge still being in place, instead of having been taken down in late winter as was the intention.

We recognize that this may have some impact on outfitters and the tourism industry in the area. While connecting with them directly is the responsibility of Highways and Public Works, it's something I know I have raised on several occasions repeatedly, and asked that we ensure we're contacting those associations. I have personally contacted some who could be affected by it and put them in contact with government staff. I also personally raised this issue with the president of the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon and asked him to ensure that both TIAY and Wilderness Tourism members were made aware of the potential impact of the ferry schedule and asked that, if they had not already personally heard from staff of Highways and Public Works, they please get in contact with them and either contact the Minister of Highways and Public Works or me if they had any issue reaching them or were not sure who to call to get into contact with them.

Again, for anyone the member has heard from — outfitters or the tourism industry — who have expressed any questions or concerns about this, if they have not already had direct contact with staff of Highways and Public Works to talk about ferry operations and identified their concerns and likely operation schedules, then I would strongly encourage him to have them contact Highways and Public Works. I don't have the contact information for the appropriate person to talk to right in front of me, but certainly they could contact the minister's office or contact my office to be put into contact with the appropriate staff of Highways and Public Works to identify their specific needs and interests and help staff of Highways and Public Works understand the potential stakeholder effects of various scheduling decisions that could be made.

I would note to the member that no decision is consequence-free, and as a result of hearing strong community concern with what seems to government to be the appropriate solution, we made the decision, following a meeting with the Premier and Chief Brian Ladue of the Ross River Dena Council, to not take down the bridge but to proceed with an RFP to seek proposals on stabilizing the bridge to allow safe ferry traffic while other solutions are considered. The net effect of that is that this year is going to have some impact on ferry operations and is going to have some impact on the cost of ferry operations by making it more challenging and more expensive.

The bottom line is that anyone who is a stakeholder in that area, who plans to use it and who has not had contact directly with Highways and Public Works, please be sure to contact them. I encourage, as well, members of the Yukon Outfitters Association, Wilderness Tourism and TIAY, in addition to contacting government, to contact the associations representing you so that they are aware of your concern in case they are contacted directly by government staff during any discussions about the Ross River bridge and, in particular, operation of the ferry during this summer season.

**Mr. Barr:** It really is a sad state of affairs where we are at with the bridge at this point and all the events that have led us to this point. However, we are at this point where the bridge is where it's at and we are still without an RFP. Can the minister give a timeline as to when this restructuring of the RFP will be made public so that tenders can be made? Does the minister think that this stabilization will happen this summer?

Hearing the response from the minister regarding the ferry system, it is good to know — I would not have known — that the minister has been doing some of this work in contacting some specific stakeholders.

Is there going to be a public announcement of a sort that will help people, if they are affected, know to contact this number such-and-such to see how this is going to affect you?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Some of the specific suggestions the member made I've referred to the Minister of Highways and Public Works and suggest that he and staff may wish to consider the member's suggestion about notification of stakeholders. Most of the key stakeholders are probably well-identified by this point, but I believe the minister is likely listening to that suggestion and I'll leave it for him and the staff of Highways and Public Works to take under consideration.

I would note that the government's last in-person communication with Ross River Dena Council was on Friday, April 25, when government sought input from the chief and council and discussed the proposed next steps and rationale behind it. Government's primary concern remains public safety. Again, I would note that, with the member getting impassioned on the subject, he may not have recognized — and I encourage the member to take a look at the YouTube videos that have been posted and I believe are still up on Community Services' website, which show the video of visual inspections of the tower conducted on September 28, 2013, showing the severe cracks and demonstrating the deteriorated condition of the bridge.

There are also other elements contained in reports that have been made public from DNA engineering, which identified concerns with other parts of the bridge structure. All of those things have to be taken seriously. That is why structuring the RFP has not been a simple matter. I remind the member that the reason we originally proceeded with a plan to take down the bridge, rather than attempting stabilization or repair, was that was what was recommended by the engineer who had successfully bid on the contract in 2013 to do the repairs to the bridge, with an amount allocated for that

between the engineer and the welder at \$1.1 million. The inspection by Jerry Lum of DNA engineering and by Klondike Welding on September 28, 2013, led to a recommendation contained in a September 30, 2013 memo that we made public, which contained the recommendation that no further repairs to the bridge be carried out. That is why government acted on that basis.

After sharing that information with the community and others, we heard and recognized the strong concern from both the First Nation and community members objecting to government taking the recommended course of action. Therefore, as a result of that and treating that public and First Nation input seriously, the agreement was reached by the Premier and Chief Ladue at a meeting in March on a course of action to seek to stabilize the bridge.

I have to draw the member's attention to the reason why that was not the course of action taken initially, which was structural issues with the bridge. That means that staff, in structuring an RFP, have to be very careful and conscious of how it's being structured to try to maximize the chance that someone will bid on that successfully and be able to do the work successfully, while ensuring that government has structured it appropriately so that we maximize the chance that people will bid on it, but also have included the appropriate language and appropriate provisions to ensure that that work is done safely and that it achieves the objectives and the intended outcomes, which are to stabilize the bridge and ensure that we have fully provided for public safety and have not put an historic structure as more important than public safety.

I would again remind the member of the many investments that have been made within Ross River — contrary to assertions, particularly by some of the members of the NDP, about Ross River — and remind them that, in recent years, we've put money into upgrading the roads and we've built an arena, which was a platform commitment in 2011. The cost of that arena was \$6.5 million out of a budget, by the way, of \$7 million. That project came in under budget.

I would again note that the Protective Services building that I referenced earlier in this House today, which houses the water treatment facility and the fire truck, is also an investment of \$7 million in Ross River.

We have money allocated in this year's budget to upgrade both the solid-waste facility, the sewage system and septic pit. That is an additional \$2 million allocated for those items, and we will continue to work with the First Nation and the community investing in things that reflect the community needs and community priorities.

I would remind the member that it is also important to recognize in this that each community has different priorities and different needs, and the investment that the Yukon government has put into the community of Ross River in recent years compares well to investments in other communities and compares very favourably to national averages and norms for investment by a territorial or provincial government in a community of that size. We will

continue to work with them to address their needs and their priorities, as we do with all Yukon communities.

Madam Chair, I would like to point out to the member that, in terms of drinking water upgrades, the responsibility for the provision of safe drinking water is an important issue for government at all levels. Our collective actions are important to ensure safe drinking water supplies and prevent negative impact that contaminated drinking water could have on public health.

As the member will see in this year's budget — as there have been in previous budgets — there are significant investments by government into safe drinking water and improving community supplies. This began with addressing and responding to changes in the national standards, including particularly the change in the national standard for acceptable lifetime accumulation of arsenic. That change in that particular standard has cost the Yukon government tens of millions of dollars. We do recognize the importance of investing in those areas, but that has led to a whole host of changes in Yukon communities including, as the member should be aware, Carcross.

This year in February — along with Yukon's Member of Parliament, Ryan Leef, and the chair of the local advisory council, Dan Kemble — we jointly opened the new water treatment facility in Carcross. There have been investments in communities throughout the territory including in Ross River, in the Klondike Valley at the Rock Creek centre, in Haines Junction, in the Village of Teslin and the list goes on. This also follows changes the Yukon made in 2007 following public consultation and changes to the drinking water regulations, which were really aimed at responding to what all jurisdictions were doing in the wake of the tragedies in Walkerton, Ontario, ensuring that we upgraded our regulations to provide for public safety and avoid that type of tragedy occurring in any of our jurisdictions.

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

**Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Cathers 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 the 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 5:29 p.m.*