



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 190

1st Session

33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, April 2, 2015 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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

DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Party

Darius Elias	Government House Leader Vuntut Gwitchin
Hon. David Laxton	Porter Creek Centre
Patti McLeod	Watson Lake

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

New Democratic Party

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

Liberal Party

Sandy Silver	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, April 2, 2015**

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

Prayers

INTRODUCTION OF PAGES

Speaker: Welcome everyone. As you saw, once again, I'm in a cast. It's dangerous out there. It's thawing and freezing. Be careful on the ice; this is what happens. There are a few others here who have had similar incidents as well.

It gives me great pleasure to announce that the following students will be serving the House as legislative pages for the 2015 Spring Sitting: Taylor Jeffery, Morgan Dumkee and Morgan Madden from Porter Creek Secondary School; Solstice Sarin-Toews, Maira Magsi and Ashley Harris — I hope I am pronouncing these right — from F.H. Collins Secondary School; and Clodagh Berg and Naomi Duru from Vanier Catholic Secondary School.

Today with us are Ashley and Morgan. I would like to ask all members to welcome them to the House at this time.

Applause

Speaker: That is what normally happens at the beginning of the first session. There are a number of changes to the Order Paper. You will have to bear with me because today we have quite a large number of changes.

Bills ordered dropped from Order Paper

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes that have been made to the Order Paper. Bill No. 101, *Disclosure Protection Act*, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, has been removed from the Order Paper as it is similar to Bill No. 75, *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act*, which was passed by this House and assented to during the 2014 Fall Sitting.

Withdrawal of motions

The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as they also relate to Bill No. 75: Motion No. 29, standing in the name of the Member for Riverdale South and Motion No. 498, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

Motion No. 702, standing in the name of the Member for Riverdale South, has been removed from the Order Paper as it relates to Bill No. 78, *Act to Amend the Marriage Act*, which passed this House and was assented to during the 2014 Fall Sitting.

Motions No. 174 and 520, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, have been removed from the Order Paper as they relate to Bill No. 82, *Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act*, which passed this House and was assented to during the 2014 Fall Sitting.

Members will also be aware that on January 16, 2015, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin was appointed to the Executive

Council. All motions for which the member gave notice as a private member have been removed from the Order Paper. I will not list them. There are 61 of them in total.

The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as they are currently outdated: Motions No. 593 and 613, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin; Motions No. 596 and 620, standing in the name of the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes; Motions No. 598, 605, 608, 610 and 633, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake; Motion No. 628, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South; Motion No. 635, standing in the name of the Member for Mayo-Tatchun; Motions No. 654 and 816, standing in the name of the Member for Klondike; Motions No. 728 and 871, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition; and Motions No. 813 and 849, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King. We are still not done.

The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as the action requested in the motion has been fulfilled in whole or in part: Motions No. 211 and 858, standing in the name of the Minister of Justice; Motion No. 241, standing in the name of the Minister of Community Services; Motion No. 403, standing in the name of the Minister of Health and Social Services; Motions No. 513 and 564, standing in the name of the Member for Mount Lorne Southern Lakes; and Motions No. 730, 743, 776, 794 and 832, standing in name of the Member for Klondike.

The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as they refer to a bill that is no longer before the Parliament of Canada: Motion No. 618, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South; Motion No. 655, standing in the name of the Member for Klondike; and Motion No. 661, standing in the name of the Member for Mayo-Tatchun.

Motion for the Production of Papers No. 5, standing in the name of the Member for Klondike, has been removed from the Order Paper as it is outdated.

Finally, Written Question No. 7, standing in the name of the Member for Riverdale South, has been removed from the Order Paper as it is also outdated.

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: Having made it through that, we will now proceed with the Order Paper.

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of World Autism Awareness Day

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I rise in the House today to ask members to join me in recognizing April 2 as the 8th World Autism Awareness Day, and the theme again this year is Light It Up Blue. The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution in 2007 which declared April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day. It is important to note that the UN resolution for World Autism Awareness Day is one of only three official health-specific UN days. This is significant as it will bring the world's attention to autism.

It is also important to note that the World Autism Awareness Day resolution encourages all member states to take action to educate its citizens about autism and to encourage early diagnosis and early intervention. It is through personal experience that I know that both early diagnosis and early intervention make a world of difference.

When my son was diagnosed with autism over 10 years ago, one in over 300 children was being diagnosed with ASD, or autism spectrum disorder. Now, 10 years later, reports are indicating that one child in 68 is being diagnosed with some degree of autism. Last year when I paid tribute to World Autism Awareness Day, I noted that, overall, boys were almost five times as likely as girls to get such a diagnosis, with rates of one in 54. This year, that number is reported to be one in 42. A year ago, I also noted that the rate of autism in girls was one in 252. More recent reports indicate that that number has changed to one in 189.

The UN resolution also mentions the high rate of autism in children around the world and the consequent developmental challenges. World Autism Awareness Day and the Light It Up Blue campaign draw awareness to autism as a growing global health issue. Activities take place in communities around the world each day to help increase and develop world knowledge of autism.

Mr. Speaker, World Autism Awareness Day celebrates the unique talents and skills of persons with autism, and it's a day when individuals with autism are warmly welcomed and embraced in community events around the globe.

Today, and hopefully each and every day forward, autism organizations all around the world, including our own Autism Yukon, will give a voice to the millions of individuals worldwide who are undiagnosed, misunderstood and looking for help and support.

Autism affects children in many countries, irrespective of gender, race or socio-economic status, and characterized by impairments in social interaction, problems with verbal and non-verbal communication, and restricted, repetitive behaviour, interests and activities.

There are consequent developmental challenges to long-term health care, education, training and intervention programs undertaken by governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, as well as its tremendous impact on children, their families, communities and societies.

On this day — and as a parent of a child with autism and on behalf of Yukon government and my government caucus colleagues — we would also like to recognize the parents, the grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, extended family members and the many caregivers and professionals who have worked so incredibly hard in Yukon to ensure that supports and services are available to families and children who are dealing with autism every day.

Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to support the valuable work of Autism Yukon and other non-profit organizations providing support to people with autism and raising awareness. It is with great pleasure that I can recognize a few individuals in the gallery today. Lissa Best, who is the executive director of Autism Yukon, has joined us, as well as Shirley Chua-Tan and

Ernest. Shirley was the Rendezvous Queen for this year and she has a son with autism — if everyone could join me in welcoming them.

Applause

Ms. Stick: I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Third Party to recognize World Autism Awareness Day. This day was first established in 2007 by the United Nations General Assembly. That was eight years ago, and since that time, I believe that many people across Canada, the Yukon and even the world have in fact become very aware of autism through the hard work of parents, families and organizations like Autism Yukon. Autism Yukon is a non-profit organization that offers support to families and individuals living with autism spectrum disorder throughout the Yukon.

I will not go into the descriptions or explanations about possible causes and impacts of autism, except to say that the supports being offered to families and individuals are important in the day-to-day lives of these individuals. The stats speak for themselves, and they are important when we are planning for providing supports and looking at prevention, but behind each stat are people — individuals and families.

What I would briefly like to comment on is what we as a community can do, and the most important thing, I think, is to listen. I have been looking quite a bit at information available through the Internet, through social media and through organizations that work with individuals and families with autism and see what people are doing on Autism Awareness Day. What stood out in particular when I was researching this was the point being made that people with autism want to be heard. People with autism want to be heard on what they feel, what they want in life and how they want to participate in community.

We do need to provide supports to families and individuals with autism, but we also need to ask what they need and listen to their answers. Often the answers will be the same as anyone else's — even ours — a safe affordable place to live, a job that pays real wages, a chance to participate in community activities and recreation and the opportunity to contribute and belong to community. For these things to be real possibilities it will mean listening and it will mean acceptance of people just as they are. I hope that on this day and every other day we thank those advocating and supporting individuals and families impacted by autism, and we listen carefully to what they want.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Before I open the floor for introduction of visitors, I would like to introduce a couple of people myself. In the Speaker's gallery we have Mr. Red Grossinger, retired CD with clasp. Mr. Grossinger is well-known in our community. He has worked with the legion and veterans across the Yukon as well as many other things. It is always a pleasure to have him come and join us.

Special today is that we have his son, Jeff Grossinger, who is wearing his uniform today as sergeant with the Royal

Canadian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. He is serving currently in Winnipeg. He is not a veteran as he is still serving. After 25 years, he is continuing on. I am pleased to have with him his daughter, Melissa, who is up here in the Yukon visiting with him. A warm welcome to them and thank you very much for your service — all three of you.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: It is my honour to introduce a couple of people in the gallery today. I would like to introduce Mr. Stirling Young and Mrs. Thelma Young — long-time friends who are here joining us today. I would also like to acknowledge Mr. Rick Nielsen, former chief of staff, as well as a constituent of mine and also a reporter, Murray Martin, who is here as well. I would like to ask all members to help me welcome them to the gallery today.

Applause

Mr. Hassard: It would like to ask all members to join me in welcoming Mr. Peter Turner, the president of the Yukon Chamber of Commerce.

Applause

Mr. Silver: I would like to give a warm welcome to a friend of mine, an ex-Dawsonite and a member of the EMS fraternity here in Whitehorse, Mr. Devon Bailey.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under tabling returns and documents, the Chair has for tabling the *Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly — 2015: Corrections in Yukon — Department of Justice*. This report was distributed to members and made public on March 5, 2015.

The Chair also has for tabling the *Final Report of the Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing*. This report was distributed to members and made public on January 19, 2015.

The Chair also has for tabling a letter from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin dated January 16, 2015, informing the Speaker of his resignation as Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Finally, the Chair has for tabling the *Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from Sitzings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees*, dated April 2, 2015.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Mr. Hassard: I have for presentation the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees. The report was transmitted to members and made public on January 16, 2015.

Speaker: Are there any further reports of committees?
Are there any petitions to be presented?
Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 16: *Third Appropriation Act, 2014-15* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I move that Bill No. 16, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2014-15*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 16, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2014-15*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 16 agreed to

Bill No. 17: *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2015-16* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I move that Bill No. 17, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 17, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 17 agreed to

Bill No. 18: *First Appropriation Act, 2015-16* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I move that Bill No. 18, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 18, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 18 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to respect the wishes of Yukon First Nation governments and the Yukon public by banning hydraulic fracturing in Yukon.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to act in the spirit of reconciliation envisioned by Yukon First

Nation final agreements and withdraw the four controversial amendments contained in Bill S-6.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to produce and disclose a revised estimate of the Wolverine project cost of reclamation considering Yukon Zinc Corporation has failed to meet the requirements for temporary closure under the Wolverine mine reclamation and closure plan.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to shelve plans for the proposed 300-bed continuing care institution and undertake comprehensive consultations and a needs analysis with Yukon seniors, elders and health professionals across the territory to determine how best to support Yukoners' right to age in place and thrive in their communities.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to follow through on a commitment to develop a mental health strategy.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Government spending

Ms. Hanson: You know, Mr. Speaker, just as the returning swans announce the arrival of spring, the millions of dollars in Yukon Party promises announces that an election is around the corner — \$330 million for a 300-bed institution for long-term care, millions in planning money for a mega-hydro project that could cost billions of dollars, \$200 million to twin the Alaska Highway in Whitehorse, and \$10 million here, \$20 million there.

Yukoners know the pitfalls of budgeting for election photo ops — projects that don't receive proper scrutiny, aren't well-planned, overwhelm the capacity of local contractors to bid on the jobs and result in massive cost overruns and design errors. The Auditor General has repeatedly taken the Yukon Party government to task on how it spends Yukoners' money. Does the Premier think he can simply spend his way out of this economic downturn with Yukoners' own money?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, because of the strong fiscal management of this government, we are truly in an enviable position during challenging times. Governments right across this country are cutting jobs and raising taxes. We're doing exactly the opposite. We're creating jobs and we're cutting taxes — putting more money into Yukoners' pockets.

Ms. Hanson: You know, Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Party playbook is pretty familiar: build a surplus in the early years after an election, then throw a whack of cash at capital

projects in the hope that voters will forget all the trouble this kind of cynical project planning has gotten us into in the past. Successive Yukon Party premiers have followed this plan: build the kitty, ignore the issues and the needs; don't consult in what projects we need; and then, as the election approaches, make a raft of announcements. We've seen it this last two weeks. The goal is simply to get photo ops and shovels in the ground, not to make the best use of the public's dime. This is no way to manage capital projects or the economy.

Does the Premier realize that the Yukon Party approach of making big pre-election spending announcements leaves the Yukon public on the hook for huge cost overruns and poor capital management?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I'll remind the Leader of the Official Opposition that the Yukon Party has had a surplus in 10 of the last 11 years. Mr. Speaker, we have net financial resources, the envy, certainly, of the whole country. We will be putting an additional \$5.5 million back into the pockets of Yukoners in this budget — Yukoners right across the board. You know, I challenge the opposition to tell Yukoners that investments in health care and investment in schools and education are not good investments for Yukoners.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, decreasing surpluses. Before the last election, the Yukon Party made a lot of big-ticket announcements without proper planning and oversight — for example, Dawson sewage project, Whitehorse Correctional Centre, hospitals in Watson Lake and Dawson, F.H. Collins rebuild and Mayo B. Each one of these projects was rushed to get shovels in the ground and there have been major consequences. Capital project spending should be about working with communities and citizens to identify needs. It should be about good projects, built on time and on budget with maximum benefits to the local workforce. Projects should be built in a managed way, not for elections and partisan purposes.

Does the Premier believe making hundreds of millions of dollars in announcements this late in his mandate will distract the public from his continued mismanagement and lack of consultation and planning under his watch?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, Yukoners trust this government to look after their money. Since 2002, Yukon Party governments have never raised their taxes and this year we will be putting money back into Yukoners' pockets to allow them to make the best decisions on what they want to do with their money. We continue to build prosperity by creating jobs and partnering with industry and other governments to continue to ensure that Yukon is the best place to live, play and raise a family.

Question re: Mine closure security

Mr. Tredger: Yukoners know too well the environmental and financial costs of poorly regulated mines like Faro and Mount Nansen, but we were promised a new way of mining that would be done sustainably and to the benefit of all Yukon businesses. With modern mining and regulatory regimes, the Faros were supposed to be a thing of the past, yet here we are with Wolverine, a mine that failed to

pay its securities, a mine that ignored its obligations in the mine closure plan, and a government that failed its responsibilities.

The result for the mining industry: a black eye affecting its image. Those benefits promised for Yukon businesses? That came in the form of \$4.3 million in unpaid bills.

Mr. Speaker, has this government really learned from past mistakes, or will they continue to take Yukon back to the days of wild-west resource extraction?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Of course this government recognizes that mining is the cornerstone of our economy, and we recognize the impacts that this closure is having on Yukoners, both those who worked at the mine as well as the businesses that supplied the mine.

Our government officials in Energy, Mines and Resources have been meeting with the Yukon Zinc Corporation and are closely monitoring the mine site to ensure there's no risk to the environment or the people who work and live in the area. Just this morning, the Minister of Economic Development and I spoke at length with the Chief of the Ross River Dena Council. We've extended offers to that community, as well as the community of Watson Lake, to have officials, and/or myself and the Minister of Economic Development, travel to that community to provide a technical briefing. I would also extend that offer today to members of the Official Opposition, as well as the Member for Klondike and the Member for Mayo-Tatchun. We will have officials sit down. It's a very dynamic situation that changes almost daily sometimes, Mr. Speaker, so I think it's important that all Yukoners are kept abreast of the situation at Wolverine as they go through this temporary closure.

Mr. Tredger: Yukoners thought that they were through having to clean up contaminated and abandoned mine sites with public dollars. On October 31, 2014, Yukon Zinc Corporation missed a \$350,000 payment to Yukon government, but they were allowed to continue their operations until Yukon Zinc closed early in the new year. The last security payment they made was on July 31.

Wolverine operated for nearly three months without paying its security. Mr. Speaker, when Yukoners don't pay rent, or when any other Yukon business doesn't pay its bills, they don't get a free pass. What exact steps were taken by this government when Yukon Zinc failed to meet their October 31 security payment?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I guess the one thing I would like to do to inform the House is that there is \$7.8 million held in security for the temporary closure of the Wolverine mine owned by Yukon Zinc. Of course the member is correct: there was an October 31 payment of \$350,000 that was missed. I guess we could have taken the action of closing down the mine, but instead we wanted to work with the company to ensure that they could keep open for as long as they could. Unfortunately, economics, world commodity prices and a number of other factors have led to the temporary closure of that mine.

Again, I will just extend the offer that I did in my initial answer to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, as well as the

Member for Klondike, to have officials provide a technical briefing on this next week just to ensure that they are up to speed on the actions and what is happening.

As I mentioned, we did talk to the Chief of the Ross River Dena Council this morning and a number of his councillors and officials. We have extended that offer to individuals in Watson Lake — last week, I believe it was — when we did the local technical briefing for the media. As I have mentioned, this situation is very dynamic and is changing quite quickly, so I will extend that offer to members opposite to provide them with a technical briefing at our earliest convenience, perhaps as early as next week.

Mr. Tredger: Now we have a company that is \$647 million in debt. When Yukon Zinc Corporation closed the Wolverine mine in late January, they were required to keep the mine pumped and ventilated according to the temporary closure plan. They didn't and now the mine is flooding. The security fund that was established for the Wolverine mine cleanup was set at \$10 million, not \$7.8 million, on the assumption that the temporary closure plan would be followed. With the company disregarding its closure plan and the costs climbing, Yukoners will be the ones left with the tab.

Mr. Speaker, how much does this government anticipate Yukoners will pay to clean up the Wolverine mine because this government didn't do their due diligence when it came to oversight?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Again, with respect to the Wolverine mine, the company is in temporary closure right now. They are planning on reopening. That is our understanding and that is what the company has stated publicly.

Of course, they are delinquent on some of the security payments that we have talked about — the member opposite referenced the one from October 31 of \$350,000. Again, the company is in temporary closure. We have taken court action to recover those funds that they are short with respect to the security they owe. But again I will offer a technical briefing to members of the opposition as early as next week, if we can find a time that is mutually acceptable, so that they can get updated from government officials on what exactly is happening at Wolverine mine, what steps we're taking as far as compliance monitoring and inspections to ensure that the environmental integrity is protected there, as well as updates on the temporary closure as we know it in our lengthy discussions with the company.

Question re: Mental health services

Mr. Silver: Let's go back a bit. In 2011, the Premier made a commitment to spend some new federal money on designing a mental health plan. In 2012, a year later, a former Yukon Party health minister told a radio station that the government was planning a mental health strategy. Two years later, 2014, a former minister told this House, and I quote: "We're working on a mental health strategy and when it is available, I will be only too happy to present it in the Legislature."

The clock hits 2015 and Yukon has a new Minister of Health, but still no mental health strategy. We are one of only

two jurisdictions in Canada without a strategy in place and it shows Yukoners where mental health is on this government's priority list. Why is this strategy not in place after four years of promises from this government?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: The member opposite may not be aware that the department really provides a range of services and supports to clients with mental illnesses, mental health challenges, concurrent disorders and addictions — and their families.

We see this government standing up to the plate with announcements like the construction of the new Sarah Steele facility that will be — construction will be completed next fall. I've met with the Mental Health Association here in the territory and they're very pleased with the services and infrastructure that this government has invested in over the last number of years and we'll continue down that road.

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, the minister gave us a random list of some things that the government is doing to support people with some mental illnesses. Many of them are very good initiatives and we do applaud the government for their initiatives so far, but I would argue that it's not enough. What was promised was an overall strategy, a plan to ensure that programs and initiatives are actually working to provide Yukoners with what they need. The government seemed to think that this was a good idea as well. Every year since the last election, the government promised a mental health strategy and every year, it fails to deliver it.

Mr. Speaker, why is a mental health strategy not a priority for this government?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I think this government has put its money where its mouth is and shown how committed we are to offering services for individuals in the territory experiencing mental health issues, whether it's addictions or other issues. We'll continue the good work.

We just announced the five-plex on Fourth Avenue specifically for individuals who have mental health issues and need transitional-type housing. This government will continue to make investments in mental health and continue to do the good work. Mr. Speaker, I need to make a good point here and extend sincere thanks to the staff — the Yukon government staff and NGOs around the territory that are providing these services — second to none — and I would argue they are some of the best services in Canada.

Mr. Silver: I would like to apologize to those NGOs and staff that we don't have a mental health strategy.

Mr. Speaker, if it were a priority, then it would be in place. We remain one of only two jurisdictions in Canada without a mental health strategy. The endless promises from this government have become pretty tiresome. In 2013, the government released a needs assessment for the newly built hospitals in Watson Lake and in Dawson. The assessment was done after, not before, the buildings were constructed. But the report did say, and I quote: "That the implementation of a territorial mental health prevention and treatment strategy be a priority that includes local support workers who maintain contact with those in need..."

I know from the local mental health community in Dawson that we need a coordinator of services — a full 18 months after receiving the report and the recommendation has not been acted upon.

Why does this government hire experts in the field just to ignore their recommendations?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this government will continue to stand behind its staff and the NGOs providing services in the territory. These are actions and this government is interested in those types of actions where we can ensure that services are provided to those in need of the five-plex on Fourth Avenue and the need for a new Sarah Steele Building for drug and alcohol treatment. We'll continue to support those organizations like Many Rivers and the excellent work that they do. This government believes that taking those types of actions when it comes to mental health is very important. For the member opposite to indicate that we don't take it seriously is clearly very wrong.

Question re: YESAA process

Ms. Hanson: This week, the Premier had an opportunity to re-establish a positive relationship with Yukon First Nation governments. Unfortunately, the Premier used his presentation to the parliamentary committee on Bill S-6 to restate his support for unilateral amendments to YESAA. To add insult to injury, he suggested he would get together with First Nations after the amendments passed and somehow negotiate a bilateral agreement.

If the Premier had been interested in listening to views other than his own, he would have stayed to hear what First Nation leaders said, and he would have heard a resounding "no" to his insulting proposal. First Nation leaders were clear: They will not negotiate how to implement a bill that undermines their constitutionally protected rights and erodes the independent made-in-Yukon assessment process.

Will the Premier acknowledge that his unwavering support for Bill S-6 will lead to more court battles?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I guess I'll begin by reminding the Leader of the Official Opposition that Bill S-6 is actually federal legislation. It's not territorial legislation. So, through a process that they have gone through, it is moving through the Senate and now into the House of Commons second reading, and to the committee responsible for doing the consultations.

Bill S-6 is good for Yukon. Yes, I have reached out to Yukon First Nations and said that, through a bilateral accord, we can make this work. Yukoners have done it before and we can do it again. I used a couple of examples of the devolution transfer agreement and the Yukon Oil and Gas Accord, where the federal government provided legislation and then Yukoners, leaders, Premier and chiefs got together and found a path forward.

I believe that if we sit down we can find a way to implement these amendments on the ground for the benefit of all Yukoners.

Ms. Hanson: The Premier conveniently forgets important aspects of Yukon history. What the Premier's ignoring, when he talks about the Oil and Gas Accord and the

devolution transfer agreement, is that the Yukon NDP government of the day, and First Nation governments, agreed on the principles of the legislation before the legislation was passed, not after.

The Premier, on the other hand, is asking Yukon First Nation governments to ignore the fact that they did not agree to the four unilateral amendments contained in Bill S-6 and the Premier was outed by his own federal counterpart that he introduced two of those on his own. Now he somehow expects Yukon First Nation governments to want to talk about implementing legislation that changes the fundamental relationship in our agreements.

Why does the Premier think that First Nation governments will enter into a bilateral agreement after he has sold out their rights?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: This government will not comment on the consultation that occurred or did not occur between the federal government and Yukon First Nations. That would be disrespectful. Yukon First Nations can and will speak for themselves but, when it comes to Yukon government, we believe that we were consulted and that the federal government did consider the recommendations and comments that we did make before they tabled the legislation that we now know as Bill S-6.

I continue to say that Bill S-6 is good for Yukon. There is an opportunity now that the federal government — as they have in the past — will move forward with legislation to be able to sit down and find the path forward to implement the amendments that are before us. We owe that to Yukoners, for our leaders to be able to find a path forward. We've done it before; we can do it again.

Ms. Hanson: Talking about disrespect — at some point the Premier's going to have to realize that his disrespectful attitude toward Yukon First Nation governments —

Some Hon. Member: (inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Elias: To me, it's a clear contravention of the Standing Orders — using abusive or insulting language referring to the honourable member as Premier in the sentence that she just used. I believe there is a point of order warranted here.

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

Ms. Stick: I didn't hear a point of order in my colleague's comments and would suggest that this is merely a dispute between members.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: This time I'm going to say there is not a point of order but I'm going to caution members on the use of language. Inflammatory language will cause problems and it will come back to haunt you. We've done this before and I would prefer if we did not have to go there again.

Ms. Hanson: At Monday's hearings, mining leaders were asked about the impacts of a court battle over the four controversial amendments to YESAA. Their answers should cause this Premier to question his stubborn adherence to his narrative.

Kaminak Gold said that they would not be able to develop their Coffee gold project under the threat of litigation. Capstone, the only operating mine in Yukon, said — and I quote — “layoffs and the end of mining in the Yukon”. How can this Yukon Party government continue their narrative that Bill S-6 will lead to economic certainty when the evidence presented by industry and First Nation leaders is that it will devastate Yukon's mining industry and our economy?

Hon. Mr. Kent: This gives me an opportunity to remind all members of the House that the YESAA process is about much more than just mining. When I look at the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources — everything from energy projects to oil and gas projects, land acquisitions, agriculture, forestry, any types of projects like that — anything that requires a permit or a licence has to go through the YESAA process, but when it comes to the mining sector — I'll refer to the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board report that I tabled last May in this House for members to look at and in that — I'll quote: “In 2013... YMAB chose to focus on what industry has determined is the key issue negatively impacting the industry; the deterioration in the efficiency and reliability of the assessment and licensing of mining projects in the territory.”

It goes on to say that, “The system has become more costly, cumbersome and protracted and the Yukon's mineral industry is developing an increasingly negative image as an attractive investment destination... There is a clear urgency for the Government of Yukon to act.”

Of course, when it comes to the mining industry, we believe that these amendments that are proposed in S-6 are good for the industry. They are good for projects that are assessed in other industries as well.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite failed to mention that the Yukon Chamber of Mines, the Klondike Placer Miners' Association, the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board, among others, are supporting the amendments contained in S-6.

Question re: Hydraulic fracturing

Ms. White: Two weeks ago this government accidentally leaked their strategy for selling fracking to Yukoners. This strategy is an insult to the First Nation governments and the thousands of Yukoners who are opposed to fracking. It also flies in the face of the concerns of the scientific community who say that it is not proven to be safe. This confirmed the suspicions of many Yukoners that the select committee process was merely a formality for this government and that this government never had any intention of listening to the thousands of Yukoners who oppose opening up the Yukon to fracking.

After the strategy was leaked, the minister backpedaled saying that no decision had been made, but Yukoners — we want a straight answer.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier listen to the will of First Nation governments, Yukoners and the concerns of scientists, or will he plow ahead at all costs with his agenda to open Yukon to fracking?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I would just like to take this opportunity to thank the three government members and the three opposition members who participated on the select committee. I know it was a very long process and I thank them for their work. That work, of course, was delivered to this Legislature — or to you as Speaker, I believe — in the form of a report that contained a number of recommendations. The draft document that the member opposite is referring to was a response to those recommendations contained in that report.

We are not going to rush into this. We are not going to panic. We are not going to spread false information. We are not going to make an ill-informed decision. Members know there is currently no activity of this type taking place in the Yukon, nor are there any applications in the queue for this type of activity to take place. We are going to take a zero-tolerance approach to misinformation, Mr. Speaker, and we are giving full and fair consideration to the facts and the science, as well as to the concerns of Yukoners. This is an important issue and I will commit to legislators on both sides of this House that I will table a response to the select committee during this sitting so that we can have full and fair debate on the response provided by the government.

Ms. White: We look forward to that response.

We would be hard pressed to find a Yukoner who believes that this government doesn't have an agenda to open up the Yukon to fracking. This government created a strategy to sell to Yukoners something that they didn't want, and when it was leaked prematurely, they ran for cover. In typical Yukon Party fashion, they put the public servants in front of the controversy.

Mr. Speaker, Yukoners will not be fooled. They know that the department did not come up with the strategy on its own. They know that this government has had its eye on developing fracking in Yukon ever since it announced oil and gas as a key pillar of its economic vision.

What direction did the Premier and his Cabinet give the department in developing a response to the select committee report?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Once the select committee report was delivered, I instructed the department to come up with a response to the 21 recommendations, and that was what was contained in the draft document that was accidentally sent by one of my officials to a member of the local media.

Again, when it comes to fracking, I have mentioned that I will be coming forward on behalf of the government, my Cabinet and caucus colleagues, with a response to the report that was prepared by three members of the government side and three members of the opposition side. Again, I would like to thank them for the work that they put into that report and commit that before the midway point of this current legislative sitting, I will table a response to the report so that we can give full and fair consideration during this spring legislative sitting

to what the government's response is to the select committee report on hydraulic fracturing.

Question re: Continuing care facilities

Ms. Stick: This spring, my colleagues and I visited 17 communities and spoke with Yukoners about their priorities and their concerns. What we heard, loud and clear, was that Yukoners want their seniors and elders to remain part of their community for as long as possible. Rural Yukoners are worried. Sending these community members to Whitehorse will remove them from their valued roles as community leaders. What we heard reflects what is being said across Canada. Ninety-six percent of all Canadians agree. It is important to be able to age at home, with access to health care in a home setting. Did the minister hold any public consultations with Yukon seniors and elders across the territory before announcing the government's intention to build a 300-bed continuing care institution in Whitehorse?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: In fact, there were two needs assessments completed and a business case conducted for government and the current patterns of usage for long-term care.

We hear about the need for this facility on a daily basis from Yukoners, from our conversations with Yukoners. Designing a single facility that is a home — that is sense of community — for seniors who require that level of care is an important component to Whitehorse. It is an important component for those living in rural communities who can no longer care for themselves and who require a higher level of care.

This government has committed to building a 150-bed facility as we see in the budget in front of us. This government is also planning ahead. I know the members opposite are not familiar with that concept, but we understand that there may be a need for future beds and we are building a facility that has that option in mind for a future government to make that decision.

Ms. Stick: The minister talks in the media about helping seniors stay in their communities as long as possible, but it doesn't match the government's track record, especially given this plan for a 300-bed institution in Whitehorse. The Canadian Association of Retired Persons, the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Nurses Association all agree that institutional care is neither affordable nor the best means of care for most people. It is anticipated that this institution will cost \$330 million for 300 beds, and that is before the cost overruns Yukoners expect.

Did the minister hold consultations with Yukon health care professionals across the territory to determine how to provide the best support for our seniors and elders to age in place?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: We need to set the record straight here. The member opposite continues to talk about the seniors long-term care facility as an institution when we are modelling the Copper Ridge Place model that is very community-oriented. In fact, I just conducted a tour of that facility just a number of weeks ago, and when I left it

surprised me that there were 96 individuals living in that facility, but it didn't seem like there were any more than 10 people walking around throughout, not including staff or course. The staff of the long-term care facility in Copper Ridge does an exceptional job, and we are certainly grateful each and every day for the care that they give to our seniors who are unable to stay at home. This facility — Copper Ridge — and the new facility in Whistle Bend are not just for seniors. They are for individuals who are living with very complex needs who are unable to stay in their home even with family and friends' support.

We are very proud of this facility moving forward. I look forward to shovels in the ground and design. This facility will be very well-received by individuals and families who have loved ones who are unable to stay in their homes any longer.

Ms. Stick: Copper Ridge with 96 beds is not comparable to a three-story, 300-bed facility that this government is talking about with zero consultation with Yukoners or health care professionals in the Yukon.

The minister says data and the rationale for the proposed 300 beds were provided to the public, and it was. There is a case plan there, but let's be clear, that is not consultation. Yukoners see the pattern. The Yukon Party government makes a decision without talking to Yukoners. Then they try to sell it, just like community hospitals, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister confirm that history is indeed repeating itself, as this government plows ahead with no concrete evidence that their proposed \$300-million facility is the most effective and affordable option Yukoners have?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I certainly enjoy the comment the member opposite just made about community hospitals. I question the comments that are coming, not just from this opposition party, but the other opposition party too, because as we know, and is clearly shown in the record, both those parties voted strongly against those community hospitals. They voted against the Watson Lake hospital; they voted against the Dawson City hospital; they voted against seniors housing; they voted against health care — a 350-percent increase in funding for home care. McDonald Lodge, Mr. Speaker — the Member for Klondike voted against that.

We continue to invest in doctors; we continue to invest in health care workers; we continue to invest in clinics — and now the announcement of an expansion of the new hospital. These parties are out of touch. They talk and they speak about what they would like to do, but then, of course, like everything else, as we move forward with plans to move Yukon forward on a path to ensure that our health and social services are there and that we build a strong economy, those parties vote against it.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I would like to rise and ask members to join me in welcoming two former members of the Legislative Assembly to the gallery, the former member for

Riverdale, Mr. Ted Staffen, and former Member for Klondike Mr. Dave Millar.

Applause

Government House Leader's report on length of sitting

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, I rise pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 75(4) to inform the House that the House leaders have met for the purpose of achieving agreement on the maximum number of sitting days for the current sitting. The House leaders have unanimously agreed that the current sitting should be a maximum of 31 sitting days, with the 31st sitting day being Thursday, May 28, 2015.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare the current sitting shall be a maximum of 31 sitting days, with the 31st sitting day being Thursday, May 28, 2015.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 18: *First Appropriation Act, 2015-16* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 18, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Pasloski.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I move that Bill No. 18, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 18, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, be now read a second time. Hon. Premier, the floor is yours.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, honourable members and guests, it is my honour and privilege today to table the 2015-16 budget, the fourth budget of the 33rd Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Before I get started, I would like to acknowledge the people whom I represent in the riding of Mountainview — Granger, McIntyre, Hillcrest and Valleyview. It continues to be an honour and a privilege to serve all those good people and residents within the riding.

Mr. Speaker, the official purpose of the budget is to inform the House and to inform Yukoners how we are managing the territory's finances. As Premier and as Minister of Finance, I consider this one of my most important tasks.

The Government of Yukon's budget for 2015-16 is \$1,367,070,000. The operation and maintenance budget totals \$1.054 billion, of which \$111,537,000 is recoverable. The capital budget is \$312.8 million, of which \$46.9 million is recoverable.

The 2015-16 budget has a healthy \$23.2 million surplus. This budget is all about putting Yukoners to work. For that reason, as Minister of Finance, I have purchased a new pair of construction boots instead of a new pair of shoes. Our government will stimulate the private sector economy by reducing taxes and putting more money into the pockets of Yukoners, and we will continue implementing, budget-by-budget, our government's vision of prosperity for the territory

by making Yukon the best place in Canada to live, work, play and raise a family.

That vision is the focus of this budget speech. Sir John A. Macdonald once said: "A set definite objective must be established if we are to accomplish anything in a big way." In other words, vision is a prerequisite of achievement. Since this Yukon Party team was elected in 2011, our aim has been clear: to move forward together on a path toward a stronger and more prosperous Yukon. It is our belief that this aim is inseparable from our goal of making Yukon a net contributor to Canada. Why is this important? It's important because economic self-sufficiency is the best path to economic strength, and economic strength is necessary to build a Yukon that we all want. As long as we rely on the federal transfer payments and as long as we rely on other hard-working Canadians, we will not be economically secure — and it's not a matter of economics. We have a moral obligation to take economic responsibility for ourselves. That is why a core principle guiding this Yukon Party government since its election has been to develop Yukon's economic strengths so that our economy can stand on its own and eventually contribute to the general wealth of this great nation.

Mr. Speaker, what defines political parties is fundamental principles. An example is that the Yukon Party believes that the private sector is the engine that drives economic growth. If the private sector is the engine, we want to be the transmission that will enable the engine to power forward.

We want to put that transmission in drive. Some members of this House want to put the transmission in park. They want to park the Yukon economy. They are opposed to the free-entry system for mining. They are opposed to the use of LNG. They are opposed to hydro development, and they are opposed to oil and gas development. They are opposed to all of these positive initiatives in this budget. In the same breath, they say they support economic diversification when they have ruled out the majority of Yukon's economic mainstays. Being opposed to everything doesn't prepare you for governing.

We believe it is possible to have the best of both worlds: responsible development and a healthy environment. It is not a choice of either/or. In 2011 we told Yukoners where we stand in the Yukon Party platform and we have been delivering on these commitments year by year, budget by budget.

We know there are some challenging economic times ahead as a consequence of the downturn in the metal markets. This challenge can become an opportunity. We have an opportunity to make some bold strides forward by investing in infrastructure and programs and services on behalf of all Yukoners. That is precisely what this budget aims to do. We are very proud to have a record capital investment that will put Yukoners to work and create a legacy that will benefit the whole community for years to come. That capital investment is only possible because of the fiscal leadership of this government. We believe in managing finances in a way that ensures we have money when we need it most. Yukoners are tightening their belts this year, which is why we are making these investments and providing tax relief. That is what our fiscal management over the past decade allows us to do.

I want Yukoners to know that we are committed to continuing with reliable, responsible fiscal management. Over the coming years we expect that growth in our territorial formula financing to slow over previous years. While we won't face the same challenges that other jurisdictions are facing around cuts and reductions, we are facing a period when restraint and responsible investment are required. Yukoners can trust this government to manage finances in the good times and the lean times, something the other parties cannot say.

Our focus has been and will always be and continue to be on Yukoners. We are committed to making Yukon the best place to live in Canada. Our first step in this regard is to further reduce the tax burden on Yukoners.

Our government will be amending the Yukon *Income Tax Act* and regulations. A few of the key amendments will include revising the personal income tax rate structure, significantly increasing the Yukon child benefit, increasing the political contribution tax credit to match on an ongoing basis the federal political contribution tax credit, and aligning the Yukon children's fitness tax credit with the federal children's fitness tax credit.

In addition, we are working in consultation with First Nations to undertake two major initiatives to improve the territory's regulatory and permitting regimes. One is the mine licensing improvement initiative, which will clarify the roles of regulatory agencies and make sure that the many levels of our regulatory system work well together. In no way will this lessen environmental protection or oversight of mining activity.

The second major initiative is the mineral development strategy to be completed in a year, which covers business climate, infrastructure, First Nation engagement, environmental stewardship and workforce training.

Underlying all of our initiatives with regard to making Yukon the best place to live is our commitment to strengthening our partnership with Yukon First Nations. Yukon has just less than half of the modern comprehensive land claim agreements in Canada. Yukon self-government agreements are unique in Canada, if not the world. It is in everyone's best interest for Yukon government and Yukon First Nation governments to work together for the betterment of all Yukoners, and we are committed to doing just that.

While our government believes that comprehensive land claims and self-government agreements through the *Umbrella Final Agreement* are the best path to follow, we are prepared to negotiate reconciliation agreements with the three non-settled First Nations. We have already entered into negotiations with the White River First Nation, the Kaska Dena Council, the Liard First Nation and Ross River Dena Council to negotiate non-treaty reconciliation agreements. While the opposition parties focus on issues where Yukon government and First Nation governments disagree, there are far more areas where First Nation governments and Yukon government agree and work collaboratively together. Even on matters such as YESAA, where we disagree on a few issues,

there is agreement on the majority of recommendations — 72 versus four.

My message to Yukon First Nations on Bill S-6 is to let it pass through the federal process as is, and then let's sit down and resolve any difficulties with its implementation through the negotiation of a bilateral accord. Yukon government and Yukon First Nations have demonstrated in the past that we can resolve any differences that we may have between our respective governments. We have done it before and we can do it again.

Equally important is our relationship with the Government of Canada, our sister territories and the provinces. Canada is a federation founded in cooperation and partnerships. Canada's relationship with the three northern territories is especially important because, unlike the provinces, Canada owns all the land and the resources north of 60. What this means is that Canada will be the major beneficiary of resource development in the north. Under the current revenue arrangement, Yukon would be able to retain just over \$50 million. Our vision of building a prosperous Yukon and becoming a net contributor to Canada could happen very quickly. This is why our government continues to urge Ottawa to partner with us by investing in major infrastructure projects to help develop our vast resources. We need more and better roads to access our resources. We need more reliable and redundant telecommunications infrastructure to drive the expansion of our IT sector, and we need an abundant and affordable supply of clean power to ensure that, as we grow, we grow responsibly.

We are moving forward on all of these fronts. We took a major step in November 2013, when our government directed the Yukon Development Corporation to plan a new large-scale hydro dam to power our future. It will be another 10 or 15 years before this project is completed, but we need to be proactive about strategic infrastructure development and our action now will be rewarded in the future.

Mr. Speaker, infrastructure projects like these have long horizons, but we are undertaking many other initiatives whose impacts can already be felt.

For instance, we're dedicating significant resources to making land available to Yukoners. In rural Yukon, we've signed a memorandum of understanding with seven municipalities to work toward providing land for potential territorial, municipal and private development. In Whitehorse, we'll be allocating \$7.7 million for the start of phase 3 of Whistle Bend. Ownership of phases 1 and 2 was already transferred to the City of Whitehorse in 2014.

In order for Yukon to be the best place to live we need healthy citizens and safe communities. This government has a strong track record of investing in infrastructure and programming to support healthy, active lifestyles and to enhance community safety. I could talk at length about the many initiatives we're undertaking to this end, but I'll just point out a few of the highlights.

Recently the Government of Yukon and the Government of Canada signed a new five-year Northern Wellness

Approach agreement worth over \$2 million to promote healthy living and build capacity at the community level.

We've also extended the popular municipal domestic well water program, which will allow eligible property owners in participating municipalities to apply for a low-interest loan to develop domestic wells. In Ross River, we are committing \$250,000 toward the purchase of a new water delivery truck.

This budget also commits significant funds toward addressing community safety issues like wildfires, emergency services and flooding. To mitigate the risk of wildfires, we will provide \$850,000 to fund FireSmart projects across the territory over the next year. To improve emergency services, we will make basic 911 available to all Yukon communities and we will continue to invest in modernizing our emergency fleet vehicles and infrastructure, including the construction of a new \$3.8 million fire hall in Carcross this year. To manage the risk of flooding, we will allocate over \$1.5 million in this budget for flood and erosion control projects in Carcross, Mayo and the Liard River.

There is no way I could talk about Yukon as the best place to live without reference to our beautiful, clean environment. Yukon government is doing its part to ensure it stays that way. That's why we're investing more than \$5 million for remediation work at contaminated sites to minimize the risk to human health and the environment. One the legacies left to us to clean up is the Marwell tar pit, the largest hydrocarbon contaminated site in Yukon. We are in year five of a 10-year project to remediate the site with a cost of up to \$2.5 million in 2015-16 and we will invest up to that same amount in remediating other contaminated sites that we own across the territory.

Another significant initiative we are undertaking to protect our environment is the *Yukon Water Strategy and Action Plan*. The importance of water to our livelihood and to our identity cannot be overstated. We are a territory of rivers, lakes, streams and glaciers. As part of this action plan, we will further develop a groundwater program, expand our water monitoring network and improve access to drinking water to ensure that future generations continue to enjoy the abundance of clean water that we have been so fortunate to experience.

Making Yukon the best place to work is what the 2015-16 budget is all about. This is the largest capital budget in Yukon's history. Our government has heard loud and clear that Yukon's private sector is facing economic challenges and it's time for government to invest in public infrastructure. Highways, resource roads, bridges, airports and aerodromes are integral to our development and high on the list of priorities that create jobs for Yukoners.

Over the coming year, Yukoners will be doing work on the Campbell Highway. Yukoners will be doing work on the Dempster Highway. Yukoners will be doing work on the Klondike Highway. While funding for the Shakwak agreement to improve the Alaska Highway and the Haines Road remains in limbo, we will use the remaining funds — some \$10 million — to put Yukoners to work rehabilitating sections of it. Yukoners will also be doing work on bridges — specifically, Partridge Creek bridge, the Nares River bridge

and the Tatchun Creek bridge — and on airports and aerodromes, ensuring that our entire transportation network is in top condition. Specifically, Yukoners will be put to work providing almost \$5 million of upgrades to community aerodromes. In Whitehorse, Yukoners will be put to work providing pavement overlays to the parallel runway and taxi A and E and developing 20 lease lots on the south side of apron 2 to address the demand for small lots at the Whitehorse airport.

Mr. Speaker, this budget also includes funds of \$13.5 million to provide for the government's building infrastructure, plus an additional \$1.4 million to maintain Yukon Housing Corporation's stock. But we're not just investing in reroofing, painting and energy upgrades; we're investing over \$11 million in tech infrastructure, of which \$4.8 million is allocated for e-health and there is an additional \$2.1 million for school-based IT. Among other things, our tech investments include a platform to enable on-line permitting and licensing for fishing, camping, hunting, transport and trades. I'm sure I'm not the only one in this room who is very much looking forward to the convenience of getting my camping permit on-line when my family and I decide to go away for a weekend at the last minute.

Mr. Speaker, Yukon is steadily becoming the tech hub north of 60. The Technology and Telecommunications Development Directorate of the Department of Economic Development is receiving over \$800,000 to extend beyond its two-year mandate in order to advance the technology and communications sector. This extension will support the business development phase of the diverse fibre project with the goal of building a second fibre optic link into Yukon. Alaska Power and Telephone plans to lay down a marine fibre optic link in the Lynn Canal, linking Skagway, Haines and Juneau, which will make a fibre optic link through Skagway a promising option for the future. We are examining the possible link in collaboration with the Northwest Territories, utilizing the Mackenzie Valley and the Dempster Highway.

In addition to facilitating work through public infrastructure investment, Yukon government also has four dedicated funds that allow enterprising Yukoners to pursue the economic opportunities that they want. One of the most popular is the community development fund. Over the past year, our government approved almost \$3 million in funding of 82 projects throughout the territory in areas from tourism to sports to First Nation culture. Over the past year, 56 projects were approved for the enterprise trade fund, totalling over \$200,000. Twenty-seven projects from Yukon communities for things like strategic planning, land development and bioenergy were approved under the regional economic development fund for a total of over \$300,000. Sixteen projects were approved under the strategic industries development fund for a total of over \$800,000. One of these projects was a collaboration between Vuntut Gwitchin Development Corporation and Northern Cross (Yukon) to examine the possibility of building and operating a petroleum refinery in the Eagle Plains area. Many Yukoners were put to work by these funds and more jobs will be created in 2015-16.

Tourism is one of Yukon's economic mainstays that employs many Yukoners — the more tourists who travel and visit Yukon the more Yukoners who are employed. Yukon is always looking to expand its markets. The Minister of Tourism and Culture and 12 tourism-industry delegates recently returned from the first-ever minister-led tourism mission to Asia in late February as part of the Yukon Now marketing program. Accomplishments included: the launch of Tourism Yukon's first-ever Chinese website, www.travel yukon.cn; the signing of Yukon's largest-ever partner agreement between Yukon government and the Canadian Tourism Commission in Japan for our marketing campaign and commitments by Japanese and Chinese tour operators to enter into cooperative marketing agreements to market travel packages reflecting Yukon as a year-round travel destination.

The Yukon Now campaign has been a very successful one so far, and I encourage everyone to visit Tourism and Culture's website to have a look at the many resources there, including the digital storytelling project and the user-generated platform that allows Yukoners and visitors to post pictures, videos and other content to tell the world about what makes Yukon the best place to visit and to live.

Tourism and arts and culture fit together hand-in-glove. Our museums and First Nation cultural centres play a critical role in promoting and preserving Yukon's heritage and culture. Yukon government provides operational funding to 11 museums and seven First Nation cultural centres, and we will be increasing this funding by 20 percent over the next two fiscal years from around \$1.5 million in 2014-15 to almost \$2 million in 2016-17.

We are also moving forward with a detailed design phase of the Yukon Archives vault expansion project at a cost of \$629,000 to ensure the Archives continues to preserve our rich documentary heritage as the existing space reaches capacity.

I have spoken quite a bit about encouraging visitors to come and experience all Yukon has to offer, but Yukoners need no invitation to take advantage of our territory's tremendous recreational opportunities. Yukoners love to play and we especially love to play outside. We love hunting; we love fishing; we love camping. Expanding access to Yukon's wilderness is a priority for us. We are working with several Yukon First Nations to make some lakefront cottage lots available to Yukoners at various lakes throughout the territory, and we are moving forward with the expansion of our territory's campgrounds. Specifically, we are working with the Carcross-Tagish Development Corporation to clear the site for the new Conrad campground on Tagish Lake's Windy Arm, which will open in 2016. The bulk of that work on this 35-site campground will take place this year with an allocation of \$500,000. We are working carefully to ensure that the development of the campground is consistent with the objectives of the adjacent Conrad historic site, where the small town of Conrad supported the Venus silver mine in the early 1900s.

This year, for the first time, we are committing \$76,000 to allow 10 campgrounds to open on May 8, weather permitting,

rather than the May long weekend. We do not just play outdoors. We love arts festivals, music festivals, theatrical plays, cultural festivals, Thaw di Gras, Sourdough Rendezvous, the Arctic Winter Games and the Yukon Quest. We love participating in a whole variety of different sports involving all age groups, from the very young to the very old.

The government will continue to support this healthy, active lifestyle through sponsorships, funding arrangements and direct investment in leisure facilities.

To that end, we're investing \$400,000 in preliminary work on a new soccer and running track complex to be built in the Whistle Bend subdivision in Whitehorse. We recently announced a \$400,000 increase in the community recreation assistance grant funding for unincorporated Yukon communities.

In addition, we'll allocate \$1 million to support the 2016 Arctic Winter Games in Nuuk, Greenland, and \$100,000 to support the Arctic X Games, an alternate event hosted in Yukon that provides a competitive opportunity for participants of those sports not included in the Arctic Winter Games.

If Yukon is the best place to live, work and play, it's a natural outcome that it's the best place to raise a family. On the health, social and education side of the ledger, Yukon has an array of facilities, programs and services second to none in Canada, and we are constantly striving to make them even better. We took a big step in this direction with the official opening of the MRI facility at Whitehorse General Hospital late last February. It's now fully operational. This is Canada's first MRI north of 60. It will both reduce the cost of Yukon's medical travel program and spare MRI patients from having to travel and bear travel-related costs.

Health is an area in which we partner closely with Canada. After the territorial health system sustainability initiative, or THSSI, ended in March of 2014, our government put a number of formerly federally funded THSSI programs into our base budget, including palliative care, public health and prevention, rural mental health services and chronic conditions management programs, at a cost of \$2.4 million.

This year, the new territorial health investment fund, or THIF — don't get me started on acronyms — will be allocated to chronic disease management, mental health initiatives, e-mental health supports and medical travel. E-health is the transfer of health resources and health care by electronic means and currently has three components: a client registry, a drug information system and a lab information system. These systems will be implemented over the next two years, with more than half of almost a \$10-million capital cost recoverable from Canada Health Infoway, and will further bolster our already-expanding e-health service systems.

As a small jurisdiction, it's not possible for us to be leaders in all areas of health but, in contending with FASD, Yukon is at the vanguard. This government is committed to keeping us there. We are establishing a local adult diagnostic clinic to replace the current itinerant model. We are training physicians and psychologists to better respond to individuals with FASD, and we're investing in the completion of the FASD prevalence study to look at the incidence of FASD,

substance abuse and mental health issues in the adult corrections population.

Our government is also working hard to find more long-term care spaces for Yukoners to free up acute care hospital beds. We recently purchased the Oblate Centre on Sixth Avenue in Whitehorse and will be converting it into a small 10-bed continuing care facility to be opened late this fall, at a cost of almost \$2 million.

On a larger scale, we'll be proceeding with the construction of the 150-bed Whistle Bend care facility in January of 2016, with an initial allocation of \$26 million. We will design the facility to allow for potential future expansion.

Dawson City will also see enhanced continuing care services when the new 15-bed McDonald Lodge opens in 2016, another facility that will have an option to expand. \$7.8 million will be allocated from this budget to the completion of that project.

An important area of health that has not always had the attention it deserves because of a lack of understanding or because of social stigma is mental health. This government is committed to changing that. This budget allocates funding to several mental health initiatives. To help persons with mental health conditions develop their independence, we will provide transitional housing for a period of two months to two years. To provide a safe and supportive group home for Yukoners who suffer from cognitive disabilities, we will be rebuilding the St. Elias adult group home and we've already set aside \$4 million for its design and construction. This new building will increase capacity from five to 10 spaces and will be constructed by the Kwanlin Dun First Nation.

To support Yukoners with enhanced alcohol and drug detoxification services, we'll be beginning construction of the new Sarah Steele Building this spring for a total target cost of \$21 million. The new complex is a much needed replacement of the old Sarah Steele Building and will have enhanced medically supported detox, a separate youth detox unit, concurrent inpatient treatment for males and females and continuous intake.

Two days ago our government also had the pleasure of jointly announcing the contribution of over \$13 million to the construction of the new Salvation Army centre that will provide improved and expanded services for some of our more vulnerable Yukon citizens. Our partnership with the Salvation Army is a strong foundation upon which to build hope for those most in need.

It's easy to see that, with the construction of all these facilities, Yukon's private sector is going to be very busy this construction season. This work will be spread throughout the territory. In Faro, our budget includes \$3.5 million to begin construction of a replacement for the RCMP detachment in Faro. In keeping with our justice initiatives, we're happy to report that we'll be dedicating \$500,000 annually to extend the Community Wellness Court pilot program for an additional three years.

We're also taking steps to address women's issues in the territory. A new women's legal advocate will support women navigating legal and social systems and will provide training

for front-line workers throughout the territory. This coming October the Women's Directorate will also launch an interactive website showcasing a current profile of women's equality in Yukon based on indicators like health, education, economic security, leadership, childcare safety, arts and athletics.

Housing is a Yukon government priority. Northern housing trust funding of \$1.395 million has been provided to support affordable rental units of which \$1.16 million is for the units in Carmacks and \$235,226 is for the units in Carcross.

The remaining balance of \$6.83 million in the northern housing trust will be allocated to the following initiatives: \$3.5 million for the municipal rental construction program to partner with municipalities to increase the supply of rental housing in Yukon communities; \$1 million for the rental housing allowance for families to enable low- and moderate-income families to access rental housing in the private market with a direct subsidy aimed at reducing incidences of core needs; \$800,000 for rental quality enhancement grants to increase the quality of rental housing stock in Yukon to meet or exceed minimum rental standards; \$800,000 for accessibility enhancement grants to increase accessibility of housing stock for homeowners and landlords; \$480,000 for housing action plan implementation to provide contracting resources to implement the housing action plan; and \$250,000 for a public/private partnership plan for Fifth and Rogers designed to increase the supply of affordable rental housing as well as meet other needs. This plan will maximize private sector investment and involve the City of Whitehorse. In addition, the CMHC — the Canadian Mortgage Housing Corporation — and the Yukon government, under the investment and affordable housing agreement, have agreed to match contributions of over \$1.5 million per year over five years to fund affordable housing projects. A portion of this funding must be targeted for victims of violence.

Also, a new 48-unit seniors housing building on Front Street in Whitehorse is being constructed with funding of \$13.5 million over two years, and a six-unit seniors building in Mayo is scheduled to be completed later this summer.

Our government is investing a further \$7.5 million to complete the construction of the new F.H. Collins school this fall. Once the school has been completed, there will be a procurement allocation of almost \$3 million to provide furniture and equipment for the new school and an additional \$3 million to upgrade the current technical education wing at F.H. Collins school.

Our government is investing heavily in improving all facets of Yukon's education system. To address fundamental life skills, we are continuing work toward Yukon literacy strategy, and to address the needs of our post-secondary learners, we will be reviewing the *Students Financial Assistance Act* as well as the Yukon apprenticeship training and tradesperson certificate program to ensure that both programs are modernized and synchronized with similar programs across Canada.

Another priority for all of us is closing the outcome gap between rural and urban students and between First Nation and non-First Nation students. To this end, we will work closely with communities, with the Council of Yukon First Nations and with individual First Nations themselves.

We are currently working with CYFN on a joint education action plan that focuses on the priorities of culture and language, authority and responsibility, sustainability supports and success, and student achievement. We have developed the rural equity action plan to promote distance learning and collaboration opportunities for students in our communities. A similar initiative is currently underway in Watson Lake, where the secondary school has piloted a new approach to education that blends on-line instruction with classroom instruction to provide more educational options.

As well, a new residential schools curriculum is now part of the grade 10 social studies in three schools: Robert Service School in Dawson, Tantalus School in Carmacks, and Vanier Catholic Secondary School in Whitehorse. Both the blended learning approach and the residential schools curriculum will be expanded to other communities in the future.

Mr. Speaker, we have conducted a number of important agreements to expand our research and post-secondary offerings. We have just approved over \$6 million in funding for the Yukon Research Centre over the next five fiscal years. We have entered into a five-and-a-half year funding agreement with Yukon College to support the ongoing operation of the Northern Institute of Social Justice.

We will also be receiving funding from the federal government under the Canada-Yukon job fund agreement, which was launched on September 4, 2014. Over the next six years, Canada will provide Yukon with almost \$6 million to encourage greater employer involvement in training and to enable Yukoners to develop the skills that they need to find and maintain employment.

In addition, we have partnered with Canada on the labour market agreement for persons with disabilities, which was signed last February. Over the next four years, Canada will allocate \$5 million to provide labour market supports specifically to persons with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of exciting initiatives in this budget and I've only touched on the highlights here. Suffice it to say that I am confident that our commitment to being proactive, taking steps now that will pay off immediately and well into the future, will continue to advance our vision of making Yukon the best place to live, work, play and raise a family.

In closing, I want to return to education for a moment. It has been said that education is the most powerful weapon that you can use to change the world. Just ask anyone and they'll tell you that they agree with that statement. But when the economy is struggling and when jobs are being lost, education is often shifted to the back seat as an important policy focus but not demanding immediate attention. This Yukon Party government has never stopped working to improve Yukon's education system, but it's time to give education a permanent front seat spot.

Our most important job as leaders today is to prepare the leaders of tomorrow. Education is not an alternative to investing in our economy; it is an investment in our economy. There are many economic factors that we can't control. We can't control mineral prices; we can't control oil prices; we can't control economic developments in other provinces and other countries, but we can ensure that our kids get the best education possible so that whatever unexpected challenges arise in the future, they are ready to face them. Over the coming months, we will be rolling out a new vision for education in Yukon. We will be taking a comprehensive look at Yukon's education system, to assess what's working, what's not working and how we can make it better.

Let me be clear that this is not just a thought exercise. This is not just about gathering our educational partners and stakeholders to produce a set of recommendations that will be filed away somewhere, never to be realized. It's time for action. It starts with curriculum. Mr. Speaker, Yukon is currently tied to British Columbia's curriculum. In the *Education Act*, there is a provision for some local content, but it's not enough. Our social and economic realities are not the same as B.C.'s. One size does not fit all. We need to ensure that our curriculum reflects the different aspirations of our diverse student body. Not all of our students have the same aspirations. Some want to attend university; some want to start their own business; some want to enter the trades; some want to start working as soon as possible. We want them to have the competencies and skills that they need to follow the path — any path — that they choose. Yet despite this, we still offer only one standard — one educational stream through which all students must pass. It's time to change that. We need to offer education options that set students up for employment opportunities in all fields. Our goal is an education system that is engaging and relevant for all of our students. Not only will it make for more satisfied students; I believe it will improve our labour market. Young Yukoners with jobs are more likely to become Yukoners raising families.

This alone will go a long way toward improving our education system, but education is not just about curriculum. It's more than academics. We used to talk a lot in education about pedagogy. Pedagogy literally means guiding a child. We need to bring this idea back into education. Education needs to be a team effort among parents, educators, communities, our partners and all other stakeholders that guide each child toward adulthood.

In part, yes, this means academic guidance, but it also means emotional support and personal guidance, focusing on the individual needs of our students. A child who feels insecure, stressed, angry or threatened will struggle to learn and will struggle to fully develop as an individual. School will never be a replacement for a healthy home, but if the fundamental promise of our education system is to develop the whole child, then we cannot ignore students' non-academic needs in school. To that end, we will be focusing specifically on assessing what resources our schools and our educators require to ensure that those needs can be met.

These changes will take time to develop, but it will be time well-spent, and it won't just take time, it'll take partnerships. We all know the old saying that it takes a whole village to raise a child. Well, it also takes a whole community to educate one. So this initiative will depend, in large part, on bringing the community back into education. We need parents to get more involved in their children's education, both at home and at school. We need educators and administrators to provide their professional input. We need all departments that deal with youth, such as Justice and Health and Social Services, to share their corporate knowledge, and we need First Nations to be partners in building a system that reflects their aims.

Improving outcomes for First Nation students has been a long-standing goal of the Yukon government and of Yukon First Nations, and it will be a major focus of this initiative. We need to have an honest and open conversation about how to improve First Nation students' outcomes. All of us involved want the very best for each of our students, and we are committed to moving forward together with First Nations to find practical solutions to these challenges.

Mr. Speaker, in government, many of the decisions we make are based on economics, and an investment in education will pay dividends in the future. We're not just doing this because it makes economic sense. Many of us in this room are parents. All of us have been students. I believe we can all see the value in investing in our kids, and I am hopeful that this will be an opportunity for us to unify around a common objective, without letting politics and partisanship get in the way. This is too important for that. Our kids deserve better than that.

Achieving this vision won't be easy or quick, but I have confidence that we will make it happen. More details will be rolled out in the coming months but, for now, let me reiterate that this initiative will depend on all of us working together. It will involve everyone who has a stake in our educational system: students, their parents, Yukon First Nations, the Yukon Teachers Association, expert educators, Yukon College, representatives from business and industry and all those who want to be involved.

As I said at the beginning of this speech, vision is a prerequisite of achievement. We have the vision, now let's achieve it.

This brings me to the conclusion of the Budget Address. I'm proud of the work this Yukon Party government has done since taking office, and I look forward to the work that lies ahead.

This 2015-16 budget will put Yukoners to work and continues the pathway to prosperity that we set out in our 2011 election platform, "Moving Forward Together". It is designed to advance our government's vision of prosperity for the territory by making Yukon the best place in Canada to live, work, play and raise a family. Budget-by-budget, we are achieving that goal.

May divine providence guide our deliberations. I commend the 2015-16 budget to all Members of this House.

May God bless Yukon, may God bless Canada and God save the Queen.

Motion to adjourn debate

Ms. Hanson: I move that debate be now adjourned.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition that debate be now adjourned.

Motion to adjourn debate on second reading of Bill No. 18 agreed to

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, 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: Enjoy your Easter weekend.

This House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 7, 2015.

The House adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled April 2, 2015:

33-1-150

Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly — 2015: Corrections in Yukon — Department of Justice (Speaker Laxton)

33-1-151

Final Report of the Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing (Speaker Laxton)

33-1-152

Letter from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin informing the Speaker of his resignation as Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole (January 16, 2015) (Speaker Laxton)

33-1-153

Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from Sitzings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees (Speaker Laxton)

33-1-154

Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees Fourteen Report (January 16, 2015) (Hassard)

Written notice was given of the following motions April 2, 2015:

Motion No. 894

Re: urging the Government of Yukon to use the 2015-16 budget to make Yukon the best place to live, work and raise a family (Elias)

Motion No. 895

Re: urging the Government of Yukon to transfer the animal protection program to the Department of Environment (Elias)

Motion No. 896

Re: urging the Government of Yukon to examine options to provide Yukoners with taxation relief (McLeod)

Motion No. 897

Re: urging the Government of Yukon to transfer the special waste program to the Department of Community Services (McLeod)

Motion No. 898

Re: urging the Government of Yukon to extend the exemption from compliance with the new energy efficiency standards of the National Building Code (McLeod)