



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, April 20, 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

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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

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Liberal Party

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, April 20, 2015 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I rise today on behalf of all members of the Legislative Assembly to draw attention to National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week in Canada, which is April 20 to 24 this year.

The fact is that Canada's rate of organ donation is lower than many other countries, including the United States. For such a caring country, this is a surprising fact. We know that more than 90 percent of Canadians support organ donation — so where is the disconnect?

There are many reasons behind this low rate of organ donation, most of which are actually myths. The Mayo Clinic lists some of these myths on its website. One for example is that donating tissues or organs is against a person's religion. The truth is that organ donation is consistent with the beliefs of most major religions, including Christianity, Islam and most branches of Judaism.

Age isn't even a factor in organ and tissue donation. Canada's oldest organ donor was 93 years old. Let the doctors decide if your organs and tissues could save lives. Unlike in the movies, organ donation will only be considered once everything has been tried to save your life and there is no chance of survival. Two doctors, neither of whom is involved in the transplant, must declare the death before an organ donation can proceed.

While the vast majority of Canadians support organ donation, most of us don't formalize that support and yet it is so easy to do. Fill out an organ donor registration form. The form can be found in most doctors' offices and on-line at the Health and Social Services website. Your name will be placed in the Yukon Organ Donor Registry and you will get a heart on your driver's licence to show the world that you are a donor.

Most importantly, talk to your family about your wishes. They need to know how you feel, because doctors will support the wishes of the family at the time of death. We don't do organ retrieval in Yukon, but that doesn't mean that we still can't be donors. Yukoners travel; some individuals are medevaced south for care. There are live donations that can benefit others as well.

According to Health Canada, 4,500 people are waiting for organ transplants today. On average, 230 Canadians die every year waiting for a transplant. While thinking about our own mortality may be uncomfortable, by choosing to be a donor, we can help save lives and improve the lives of others. Actually, as one donor, we can save or improve as many as 50 lives. Not only would this give our families comfort, but it would be a great legacy to leave.

In recognition of National Victims of Crime Awareness Week

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I rise today to pay tribute to the National Victims of Crime Awareness Week taking place across Canada from April 19 to 25 this year. National Victims of Crime Awareness Week brings attention to victims' issues and gives us an opportunity to share best practices, thank service providers and raise awareness regarding provision of meaningful support for victims of crime and their families.

This year's theme is "Shaping the Future Together" and it recognizes that many victims of crime are looking to move beyond victimization. With the help of devoted professionals and volunteers, they can access effective programs and services and work collaboratively to navigate the justice system and shape their own futures.

The support systems in place for victims — including Yukon and First Nation governments, health care providers, community organizations, the RCMP, volunteers, friends and families — can all help those who have been victimized to access and to navigate the justice and legal systems.

Yukon is fortunate to have a community of individuals and organizations that are committed to ensuring that the voices of victims are heard in the justice system, that they are treated with understanding and compassion and receive the support they need.

Successful collaborations between Yukon government organizations and service providers ensure that victims of crime receive accurate and timely referrals so that they may best access the options available to them while navigating the justice system.

I would like take the time to highlight a few of the examples of collaborative approaches and coordinated delivery of services that are aimed at improving response to victims of crime. The creation of the *Victims of Crime Strategy* in 2009 and its implementation has been a collaborative process from the beginning. It has strengthened existing partnerships and led to improvements in referral processes, joint training opportunities and coordination of services.

Another important collaborative initiative that is having a positive impact for victims of sexualized assault is the Yukon Sexual Assault Response Committee. This inter-agency group has led to important policy development as it established best practices and protocols that have made for more timely identification of service gaps and collection of data while providing support to front-line responders.

The Domestic Violence Treatment Option Court is a unique and successful example of a partnership between

justice and social service providers to deliver a coordinated response for offenders and victims of domestic violence. This therapeutic court is motivating offenders to take responsibility for their actions by entering an early guilty plea and receiving counselling and programming under court supervision without re-victimizing the complainant.

Project Lynx multidisciplinary team implements national best practices for working with child victims and witnesses, including: the development of child-friendly environments; developmentally and culturally appropriate forensic interviews and medical examinations; testimonial aids; case tracking; and research.

The final examples I would like to highlight are the important partnerships Victim Services shares with Council of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon women's coalition. Supporting these organizations through funding for human resources only serves to strengthen the coordination and delivery of services for victims of crime and has recently announced this year, in partnership with the Women's Directorate, the creation of a new women's legal advocate position, which will again better help women navigating the legal system to be aware of their rights and the services available to them.

In recognizing National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, Yukon's Victim Services branch will be hosting a services for victims expo tomorrow at the Elijah Smith Building. The forum will run from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and will be an opportunity for service providers to celebrate collaborative community efforts and share information and experience with community partners and with the general public.

To everyone who is involved in the challenging but rewarding work of supporting victims through their journey, on behalf of government, I would like to thank them and encourage them to keep up the great work.

By working collaboratively, all levels of government, service providers and partner organizations can positively impact the way in which victims of crime shape their futures.

Ms. Moorcroft: I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, April 19 to 25. It is good to see that a victims expo is being held tomorrow, April 21, at the Elijah Smith Building from 11:00 in the morning until 2:00 p.m. Over the past 10 years, National Victims of Crime Awareness Week has been designed to raise awareness about the issues facing victims of crime and the services, programs and laws that are in place to help victims and their families.

Victim Services branch of the Department of Justice provides crisis support, information about victims' rights and the court process and links to other agencies, such as the Law Line, legal aid, the family law information services, law referral services, Many Rivers, the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society of Yukon, alcohol and drug services, First Nation counselling services, our transition homes — Kaushee's Place in Whitehorse and the Watson Lake and Dawson City shelters

for women and children fleeing abuse — the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon women's justice coalition.

The definition of "victim" is one that can be used to label. It can be used to shame and degrade a person and, at the same time, it can be used to give a victim of crime a certain status in the legal system. Current law and policy says that victims have the right to be treated with courtesy, caring and respect. Victims have the right to privacy, and victims have the right to expect that the justice system will do what it can to reduce their inconvenience and protect them from intimidation and retaliation.

We need to take a broad look at how we define and support victims of crime. Poverty, homelessness, racism, discrimination, colonialism, sexism, hunger, lack of services for addictions, children being disconnected and removed from their families — these are all causes of crime that have devastating consequences in our society.

We need to remember that many of the people who are convicted of crime have themselves also been victims of crime. Victims of crime and people convicted of crimes have frequently been victimized by lack of housing, by racism and discrimination, or by lack of access to a good education, or to health care, or to mental health services. These are problems that affect everyone and that the government must address. Victims of crime policies are designed to help people after they have been victimized. We should be trying to prevent the occurrence of crime by being tough on the causes of victimization and by being tough on the roots of crime.

The Yukon *Victims of Crime Strategy* also speaks about client-focused programs in the correctional system, including the clients who are sentenced to community service orders and probations. Government needs to deliver more correctional services and programs more often and work with First Nations to ensure those programs do meet all of our community needs.

This week, the "Walking With Our Sisters" exhibit of moccasin vamps continues at Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre until Saturday. Don't miss it if you haven't yet been there.

Yukon beaders contributed to this beautiful exhibit of moccasin vamps that honours the lives of missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada. The moccasin tops and the installation were deliberately left unfinished to represent the unfinished lives of these women and the family members they left behind.

Aboriginal women's groups in Yukon have documented 39 cases of missing and murdered indigenous women in Yukon and they have formed new partnerships with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in that work. "Walking With Our Sisters" has been displayed at many other locations in Canada since the fall of 2013. It is an opportunity for family and community healing as we walk around the exhibit and reflect on the loss of so many indigenous women. Outside the Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre, the sacred fire overlooking the Yukon River is being attended by firekeepers during the exhibit.

I would like to quote Native Studies assistant professor Robert Innes, who said: "It is easy to view native men as victimizers. Why? Because white people are already afraid of

them. If you fear someone, you're going to have a hard time empathizing with them as a victim. You might even have a hard time believing it."

We need to reflect on that. Governments are responsible for providing programs and services that treat victims of crime with courtesy, compassion and respect. I want to thank government and non-government workers who provide services for the children who have been assaulted or abused; for the women and the men who are victims of violence; and for all victims of crime. For National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, I urge Yukon government to continue to improve its delivery of programs and services for all members of society, particularly for disadvantaged and vulnerable people, who are likely to be the victims of crime and to commit crime. That's how we can respond to the root causes of crime.

Mr. Silver: I rise today on behalf of the Liberal caucus to also pay tribute to the 10th annual National Victims of Crime Awareness Week.

The 2015 theme is "Shaping the Future Together". The theme looks to highlight that victims of crime are working to move forward from being defined as merely victims and actually shaping their own futures. Mr. Speaker, sadly, the Yukon has the third-highest crime rate in the country, better only than the other two territories. Too often the focus is on the crime and we allow the offender to be too much of the story and we often forget that for every crime, there is an innocent person who has had their rights violated.

As mentioned, tomorrow Yukon Victim Services will be hosting a services for victims expo. Service providers and community organizations will be on hand to talk services partnerships. As a community, we need to stand together and to provide support to those who have been victimized and help them to move on.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Graham: I would invite all members of the Legislature to welcome to the Legislature here today the grade 11 social studies class from Vanier school, accompanied by their instructor, Jud Deuling. Welcome to the Legislature.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?
Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 20 — received

Clerk: Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly: I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 20 of the First Session of the 33rd Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Member for Copperbelt South on April 16, 2015.

The petition presented by the Member for Copperbelt South is comprised of 14 pages and appears in two versions. Both versions of Petition No. 20 meet the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

The version which the Member for Copperbelt South read into the record on April 16, 2015, and which comprises 13 of the 14 pages, will be entered into the working papers of the Legislative Assembly. The other version will be returned to the Member for Copperbelt South.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare Petition No. 20 is deemed to be read and received. Pursuant to Standing Order 67, the Executive Council shall provide a response to a petition which has been read and received within eight sitting days of its presentation. Therefore, the Executive Council response to Petition No. 20 shall be provided on or before Thursday, April 30, 2015.

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to begin the process of developing a made-in-Yukon K to 12 education curriculum through consultation with all of our educational partners, including students, their parents, Yukon First Nations, the Yukon Teachers' Association and expert educators, Yukon College, representatives from business and industry, school councils and the general public.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide a full public accounting of costs associated with the dismissal of four senior Government of Yukon officials.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Mine closure security

Ms. Hanson: On Friday, the Ketz River mine joined the illustrious company of Faro, Mount Nansen and Clinton Creek — all type 2 mines without operators that have been abandoned without proper remediation. Veris Gold, the Ketz River mine parent company, which has been in creditor protection since June 2014, has, as of April 10, abandoned their care and maintenance responsibilities at the mine.

The Ketz River mine is a type 2 site. The devolution transfer agreement between Canada and Yukon says that the federal government will cover the costs of mine cleanup at type 2 sites. However, since devolution, new work has been done at the Ketz River mine under the supervision of the Yukon government.

So, Mr. Speaker, the question is: What guarantee does the minister have that Yukon will not be on the hook for any of the cleanup costs associated with the Ketzka River mine?

Hon. Mr. Kent: On May 23, 2013, the Compliance Monitoring and Inspections branch of EMR issued inspector's directions requiring the company to take remedial measures to address concerns related to water quality and the stability and capacity of the tailings storage pond.

Again, members will remember last fall that, in response to the company's failure to perform the required work, security was seized, held on behalf of Yukon government, and measures were taken pursuant to section 35 of the *Waters Act*. As the member opposite mentioned, Veris Gold stopped funding the activities of Ketzka River Holdings on April 10, 2015. EMR is using the remaining security to carry out the essential care and maintenance activities on-site — for example, operating the arsenic treatment plant. Yukon has informed the Government of Canada that this type 2 site no longer has an owner and has initiated discussions that will include affected First Nations, pursuant to the requirements of the devolution transfer agreement.

Ms. Hanson: That still doesn't answer the question of how much Yukoners are on the hook, and there are clearly a number of unknowns here.

Let's get into the costs we know that Yukon has already covered. As the minister indicated, last year, the Yukon government conducted urgent repairs at the mine to ensure that environmental contamination didn't occur. To get the remediation done, the Yukon government seized a portion of the mine's security to pay for upgrades to the Ketzka mine road so it could get its equipment in.

Since then, the government has decided that the Ketzka mine road is a public road and has refunded that security. The Government of Yukon has off-loaded the \$1.2 million in road repairs to the Yukon public. Why does the Yukon government think it's fair to hit Yukoners with the tab for the Ketzka mine road repairs?

Hon. Mr. Kent: The member opposite is correct. We felt that, after that work was initiated — members will recall the tendering process. I guess the most important thing to update members of the House on is that the work we did last fall was able to accomplish what we had intended, which is to ensure that the tailings storage facility meets the needs and there's no threat of it overtopping during the spring freshet.

Again, we felt that work was necessary and we did seize the security used in amount of the security, but, in discussions with caucus and Cabinet colleagues and, subsequently, department officials, we felt that the amount spent on the public road should be transferred back to the security. We will be using that security to ensure that we continue to meet the remediation requirements of the mine going forward.

Ms. Hanson: It is robbing Peter to pay Paul. It is really obvious to all Yukoners that the government had no intention to upgrade this road before things went wrong at the mine. The Ketzka River mine shutdown is really a perfect example that the government has not in fact learned from its federal predecessors when it comes to responsibly developing mining

in Yukon. The Wolverine mine closure is just one more example of this government's failed approach that is leaving the public on the hook for millions.

When devolution occurred, Yukoners were promised a new, more sustainable approach to mining. The Yukon government was given the opportunity to create a modern mining framework under the devolution agreement by partnering with First Nations and industry. Instead, they have decided to go back to the old days and then, like now, the profits go south and the public takes the risk.

Why does this Yukon Party government continue to ignore the risks to Yukon by following this irresponsible approach to mining?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Unlike the Official Opposition, the government recognizes the important contribution that mining makes not only to Yukon, but to our economy. We recognize that we have a long and storied history of placer mining here in the territory. The NDP, of course, through campaign commitments in 2011, would have put that very industry in risk through increased royalties and taxes.

We recognize the jobs and business opportunities and other opportunities that come from the hardrock mining industry. We continue to invest in training. We continue to invest in infrastructure to support that industry. We continue to make investments across a number of different departments that would support a strong and robust mineral sector.

There is clearly a difference between the Yukon Party and the NDP Official Opposition when it comes to hardrock and/or placer mining. We support it; they don't.

Question re: Peel watershed land use plan

Mr. Tredger: We all know that Thursday afternoon is an obscure time to release unpopular statements on issues important to Yukoners, but this one has to take the cake. After announcing its intentions to appeal the Peel case days before New Year's Eve, the Yukon Party government has decided to quietly expand the scope of its appeal and hope that Yukoners don't notice. Rather than listen to the arguments made by the Yukon Supreme Court and respect its obligations toward the First Nation governments around the table, it is now doubling down on its attack on Yukon's land use planning process.

Why is the government expanding the scope of its wrong-headed Peel watershed appeal?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Certainly it is common practice to change legal counsel at an appeal stage of a court proceeding and that is exactly what we have done. We are not going to comment on the specifics of the case except to say that our goal remains the same, and that is that democratically elected public governments retain the authority to have the final say on public land.

Mr. Tredger: We know that the Yukon Party government is committed to this case — so committed, in fact, that they have gone outside the territory and hired Torys LLP, an expensive Bay Street law firm, to argue the Peel appeal on their behalf.

Yukoners have been clear. The government should respect the Yukon Supreme Court's Peel ruling. Instead, the

Yukon Party government is choosing confrontation and spending a small fortune in public funds on one of Canada's most expensive law firms. The government owes it to Yukoners to tell us how much this is costing the public.

How much public money is the Yukon Party government giving Torys LLP to argue the Peel watershed case?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Given the fundamental importance that we have with the final agreements and the significance of the Yukon Supreme Court's interpretation of them, it is in fact in the public interest to have all matters reviewed by the Court of Appeal. As we work forward with our new legal counsel, achieving certainty that is needed for land use planning is paramount. As I've already stated, assurances that publicly elected governments have a final say on public land is a priority.

We have, for the public record, given the amounts that have gone into this case up until the appeal stage. Once we are through the appeal stage, we will then update the public and the Legislative Assembly as to the costs at that time.

Mr. Tredger: It's disappointing to see the Yukon Party government choosing rhetoric and secrecy over the facts and public engagement.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Elias: I'm going to have to take issue with the member's characterization of the debate today because he's imputing false or unavowed motives to the members on this side of the House by using words like "secrecy" and "rhetoric".

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

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, we've had this discussion. We've had it many times now during Question Period and you have ruled previously on this as recently as, I believe, Thursday. As long as my colleague was speaking of the government in general, not at a particular individual, I believe this is a dispute among members.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: The Opposition House Leader is right that I did rule last week on the use of the word "rhetoric" directed toward an individual. We've gone back, and the choice of that word has been used on many occasions and has led nowhere but to adding to the general discord of the House. It has been frowned upon because of that.

The idea that the government does things in secret is your opinion. They may not tell you what they're doing right away. Is that secret? I don't know. I don't really care. They choose to tell you about when they have made a decision on something when they've made a decision on it. That doesn't necessarily mean that they are imputing any wrongdoings.

You have a bit of a mixture here. I don't like the use of "rhetoric". It implies that there are unworthy intentions directed to deliberately mislead and create a position or

mislead the people. Refrain from using it. As for "secrecy", that's a dispute between members.

Please finish your question. I'm not sure what time you have left.

Mr. Tredger: One can only wonder how much money the government is spending on the Peel appeal. Imagine what our legal bill will look like when Bill S-6 ends up in the courts.

Yukon cannot go on like this. Endless court cases are expensive. They antagonize government partners and undermine the very economic certainty we need to succeed.

When is this government going to realize that they can't spend their way out of their conflicts with First Nations? When will they respect the government-to-government consultation obligations spelled out in Yukon's final agreements?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I will say for the members opposite and for the public, the importance of the overall goal is to ensure that democratically elected public governments retain the authority and the final say in final decisions on public land.

Question re: Liquefied natural gas facility

Mr. Silver: Last December, Yukoners learned that yet another capital project was mismanaged by this Yukon Party government and went over budget. Yukoners were informed, not by the minister, but by the president of the Yukon Energy Corporation, about the new LNG facility being \$6.4 million — or 18 percent — overbudget.

We could add this to a long list of projects that have cost more than they were supposed to under this government's not-so-watchful eye.

The new estimate cost, according to the president of the Energy Corporation, is \$42.9 million. Can the minister tell Yukoners whether this is, in fact, the final cost, or whether he, as minister, accepts responsibility for this major cost overrun?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: First of all, I have to point out to the Leader of the Liberal Party that he conveniently ignores that most capital projects are on time and on budget, or underbudget, and in the cases — for example, I draw the member's attention to the recent report of the Auditor General, which included the reference to the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, in which the Auditor General effectively gave government a gold star for management of the project.

Mr. Silver: I will give the minister a gold star for that as well, but we're not talking about the corrections facility today; we're talking about LNG and facilities therein. So if he could keep his answers to the question, that would be much appreciated.

We know the Yukon Party government, like their predecessor — they're very good at spending taxpayers' money. There are numerous examples all around us. I can give you some examples of cost overruns: the new ambulance station, the F.H. Collins school and the two rural hospitals being built in Dawson City and Watson Lake, both being very critical from the Auditor General of Canada. Despite repeat

promises to do better, the government keeps on going overbudget on these builds.

Will the minister at least take responsibility for the fact that this project — this project — is almost 20 percent over its original budget — yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: First of all, what I would remind the member of when he casts the assertion the government has not made improvement in this area, not only is it unfair to officials, it quite frankly does not reflect the facts. The most recent report by the Auditor General referencing government's capital construction — in that report, the Auditor General effectively gave staff a gold star for the good work that was done.

With regard specifically to the LNG project — that is managed by Yukon Energy Corporation, which is accountable ultimately to this Legislative Assembly, through the Yukon Development Corporation. In fact, that is one of the reasons why we have taken steps in the last three years to significantly strengthen the oversight and accountability of Yukon Energy Corporation.

The cost of construction of the LNG project is over the original budget. That is certainly not news that we're happy about, but I would remind the member that, in fact, strengthening the governance structure is an important part of what we are doing to prevent this type of thing occurring in the future and remind the member that, in fact, although he may not actually be aware of it, the Yukon Utilities Board ultimately exercises the oversight as the regulator for projects such as this one.

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, \$6 million — just because Ottawa continues to send us over 85 percent of our budget is no excuse to be wasteful of it. This is just another example of a major capital budget that has gone way overbudget — simple. It is at least 18 percent, or \$6 million, overbudget and it is not finished yet. The Yukon Party claims that it manages Yukoners' money carefully and yet we have taken another hit from another cost overrun that has just come to light. The minister stands here today and takes no responsibility for millions of extra dollars needed to be found to see this project through to fruition.

How does the corporation intend to cover this \$6-million cost overrun?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: It is a little bit interesting that the member has just now become aware of this and failed to ask the witnesses a question about this when representatives of the corporation appeared here in the Legislative Assembly last fall. They appeared to answer questions and yet the member was asleep at the switch, apparently.

Again, there have been cost overruns on this project. That certainly is not good news but, as I reminded the member in my previous question, strengthening the accountability and oversight of Yukon Energy Corporation is why this government in the past three years has taken a number of steps, including strengthening the protocol between government and Yukon Development Corporation, revising and updating the letter of expectation between Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation,

and we are taking the steps necessary to strengthen that oversight and accountability.

Again, I would have to point out to the member, the Leader of the Liberal Party, that it is passing strange that it took him until now to answer this question, rather than him actually asking the chair and CEO of the corporation when they appeared in the Assembly last fall.

Question re: Burwash Landing policing

Ms. Moorcroft: Earlier this month, an armed assailant attacked another person in Burwash Landing with an axe. The RCMP deployed officers from the closest station, 125 kilometres away, in Haines Junction. By the time they arrived over an hour and a half later, the suspect had fled.

The suspect in the axe attack is only in custody because they turned themselves in. An hour-and-a-half response time just didn't cut it.

If it took an hour and a half for the police to respond to an axe attack in Riverdale, this would be a major public crisis. Why doesn't Burwash Landing deserve the same level of police protection? Why isn't this government directing the RCMP to expand its operation to include a full-time police presence in Burwash Landing?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: What I would point out to the member is that, yes, the community of Burwash Landing is policed from the Haines Junction department and, during the summer, Burwash Landing receives additional support through the RCMP reservist program. I should note, as well, that response to Burwash Landing is supported in some cases from Beaver Creek in addition to the Haines Junction primary responsibility.

Since 2008, the Department of Justice has been funding RCMP reservists in Burwash Landing to address heightened policing needs during the summer, and this was the result of discussions between Kluane First Nation, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Department of Justice.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, why is it that Burwash Landing is deemed to require a permanent RCMP presence in the summer, yet somehow it isn't a priority for the rest of the year? Citizens need this. Community members have spoken out; the First Nation leadership has spoken out. Burwash Landing and Destruction Bay residents have the right to feel safe in their communities, just like any other Yukoner. It's that simple.

Mr. Speaker, when will the Yukon Party government put all Yukoners on an equal footing, listen to the community and use its ability to set policing priorities to request a permanent RCMP presence in Burwash Landing?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, again I would remind the member that the creation of this reservist program in the summer at Burwash Landing has responded to the period of highest demand. I would remind the member that — as she should be aware, considering her past time as Minister of Justice — there are many small communities across Canada that do not have a permanent police presence and receive police services via hub detachment similar to the RCMP detachment in Haines Junction. This includes many small

communities across British Columbia that fall into this category. Funding has been provided to address the highest demand period during summer months. As the member should be aware, Yukon's number of police officers per 100,000 population calculation compared to the rest of the country — we have some of the best access to police services of anywhere in the country. Providing more services anywhere — providing more officers in any area — does come at a cost. There's a capital cost as well. The member should be aware that good work is done by the Department of Justice and by the RCMP to assess those pressures and to make the best decisions that we can.

Question re: Gender equity

Ms. White: Income equality is an important indicator of equity and fairness in a society. When a society allows women to experience economic inequality, it places women at risk of being left behind on housing, mental and physical health, child care, education, social supports, food security, safety and employment.

Coming into equal pay would improve the safety, security and socio-political autonomy and well-being of women in Yukon. It would also have a positive impact on our economy. In short, no matter how you cut it, ensuring equal pay is not only the right thing to do; it is also the best thing to do for our society and our economy.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister responsible for Economic Development explain why neither equal pay nor gender-based economic equality are strategic goals in his department's current strategic plan?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, as the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission, I should note that of course we provide a range of programs throughout the Yukon public service and we do ensure that gender equity and equity of pay are provided through the Public Service Commission. Obviously when it comes to the private sector, there's a different discussion to be had. If the member opposite is suggesting that we impose some sort of new conditions on the private sector, that's something we have to have further discussion about. From our position as an employer — as the Public Service Commission — we provide payment equity as best we can throughout the public service and will continue to do so through the Public Service Commission.

Ms. White: It may be 2015, but when it comes to equal pay for equal work, it appears that Yukon's economy is still stuck in the past. Across Canada, women working full-time earn on average 20 percent less than men.

In Yukon, the *Yukon Bureau of Statistics Tourism Employment 2012* report shows that in the tourism sector, the average hourly compensation for female workers was over \$5 less than for their male counterparts in that same year. It is known that low pay, lower income and insecure employment drag down women's economic security and place them at greater risk of poverty and violence. The Women's Directorate gender equality indicators project website is due in October 2015.

Today is Equal Pay Day, which is why I am asking the questions. Will the minister honour Equal Pay Day with a commitment to publicly report on income equality, pay grade, employment type and status and job security for all territorial government departments as part of this project?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I am not aware that there are any issues of pay equity within the public service in the Yukon government. If that is the case, obviously we will move to address it. My understanding is that the Public Service Commission does provide equal pay for equal work regardless of gender throughout the public service in Yukon. If that is not the case, I will endeavour to look into it and determine what can be done, but to my knowledge we do subscribe to the tenet of equal pay for equal work, regardless of one's gender, and will continue to do so in the Yukon public service.

Question re: Tourism initiatives

Mr. Barr: It was my pleasure to attend the Tourism Industry Association's conference in Dawson and listen to tourism operators and industry analysts present the amazing Yukon opportunities that are within reach. I want to bring a few of these issues up in the Legislative Assembly today.

One presenter said that tourists are looking at authentic, unique experiences. Every circumpolar nation has northern lights, but only Yukon has Yukon First Nations. We need to showcase our vibrant aboriginal cultures. Our marketing and promotional initiatives need to do more to reflect this rich cultural heritage. The first round of the national advertising campaign was criticized for not having Yukon First Nation content.

How does the Minister of Tourism and Culture plan to make better use of Yukon's advantage of our unique First Nation culture and heritage to encourage more tourists to come to Yukon?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Thank you for the question. I too was very honoured to be able to present and to participate in this weekend's Tourism Industry Association's spring conference. It was a great opportunity to talk about some of the single largest investments in tourism marketing ever by this government in recognition of the significance of the contributions that this particular strategic sector, tourism and culture, contributes to our economy and the quality of life that we, as Yukoners, have come to enjoy. As the member opposite is very well aware, this particular Yukon Now campaign comprises some \$3.6 million. It is the single largest investment. It is representative of many years in the making. In fact, it even predates this government when it comes to tourism marketing investments.

Research-based, industry-led and market-driven are all of the fundamental pillars that drive our marketing campaigns. We know that the commercials — one of the pillars of this particular marketing campaign is commercials. It is but one of five commercials that was just recently aired in February. There are more to come and we certainly will continue to work with Yukon communities, including Yukon First Nations.

Mr. Barr: Yukoners know that our home territory is blessed with an abundance of wildlife and viewing opportunities. The chance to see grizzly and black bears, moose, caribou and migratory birds in the wild is a great attraction. Many participants at the TIAY convention think Yukon could do more to promote wildlife viewing opportunities to wildlife enthusiasts in order to grow our tourism industry.

Our neighbours in Alaska have measured the economic importance of wildlife. In 2011, over \$3.4 billion was spent in Alaska on viewing wildlife and hunting. Unfortunately, Yukon hasn't done this kind of analysis and there are a lot of gaps in our tourism data and research.

What plans does the minister have to market directly to birdwatchers and other wildlife enthusiasts to encourage more tourists to come to the Yukon as a wildlife viewing destination?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: It was an honour for me to also be up there at the Tourism Industry Association conference. It was great to be a keynote speaker and talk a little bit about our wildlife viewing program and some of the successes, which I would just like to highlight — I think a tribute in the House not too long ago was about Swan Haven — an incredible thing.

Our wildlife viewing program works hand in hand with the department and a lot of people didn't realize this up there, but we do work hand in hand with the Department of Tourism providing information and always looking to move forward when it comes to wildlife viewing in the Yukon, so those tourists and those Yukoners who enjoy looking at our species — whether it's a grizzly bear, wolf or moose — have that opportunity.

Mr. Barr: I'm glad the Minister of Environment is coming forward with tourism. Three thousand jobs are in tourism, our largest private sector employer. The contribution of tourism to our GDP is estimated at \$250 million annually, or four percent of the GDP. Unlike other industries, Yukon tourism has been recession-proof and the predictions are for more annual growth. But how do we take it to the next level? The industry needs ongoing investment and vision from the Yukon government. Yukon and Canada have contributed \$3.6 million for two years of marketing initiatives within Canada. It was less than the industry requested, but it was a start.

We can build Yukon's tourism industry to greater heights. Is the Government of Yukon prepared to make a long-term funding commitment for marketing the Yukon to the rest of the country?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: It's unfortunate that the member opposite — if he thought that tourism and culture were such a strategic economic driver — is that in fact the member opposite would actually start voting in favour of some of the major expenditures, such as the marketing initiative that the member opposite has referred to.

I want to point out the fact that, from the very first year that the Government of Yukon was elected, in a very first budget, the total O&M for operation and maintenance for tourism and for culture was about \$14 million. Today it's

actually sitting at about \$26 million. That incorporates the single largest investment in marketing campaigns.

I want to share some of the preliminary results that we're actually experiencing from those television commercials and the digital storytelling initiative, as well as the content generated by Yukoners themselves. Those television commercials were played some 500 times on 24 television channels — an estimated 30 million viewers across the country and 60,000 views on YouTube. After the first month that that commercial was aired, there were more than 22,000 visits to the Travel Yukon website, almost double the website traffic from the previous February.

So we are very much committed to increasing investments in tourism marketing and culture in all sectors in the —

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

The time for Question Period has now elapsed. We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 907

Clerk: Motion No. 907, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Cathers.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to section 4 of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*, recommends that the Commissioner in Executive Council appoint Annette King as the Child and Youth Advocate for Yukon for a term of five years, effective May 1, 2015.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: It gives me pleasure to introduce this motion. As members may know, Ms. King was the successful candidate in the Child and Youth Advocate position. This position makes her only the second Child and Youth Advocate since the position was created. First of all, I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming Annette King to the gallery, along with Tina Dickson, the office administrator for the Child and Youth Advocate, and Bengie Clethero, the Deputy Child and Youth Advocate. Please join me in making them welcome here today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Cathers: As members will know, the appointment of a Child and Youth Advocate followed a process that was an all-party review process of candidates. Annette King comes following time in the Department of Justice in Victim Services, and I'm sure that she will do an excellent job in the Child and Youth Advocate position.

I would like to congratulate her on her appointment and ask all members to join me in supporting the passage of this motion here today.

Mr. Barr: I too would like to rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP Official Opposition to welcome and support this

motion, and welcome Annette King to this position and look forward to meeting with you and discussing how we can be partners in moving things forward. I would also very much like to extend the thanks to Bengie Clethero and Tina Dickson, and Andy Nieman, the previous Child and Youth Advocate, for all the work they have done to bring us to this place where we are today.

It's a very important role and office that has been long awaited in the Yukon, and we look forward to your great work as we move forward over the next five years.

Mr. Silver: I'll be very brief. The Liberal Party will absolutely be supporting this motion. I just want to take an opportunity to thank Ms. King as well. Being on the committee that hires ombudsmen and child and youth advocates, et cetera, you find yourself in a humbled position, to sit there and interview people whose resumés just blow you out of the water. In this case, that was no exception.

Again, thank you very much to Ms. King for accepting the position. We look forward to working with her in the future.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: As the former Minister of Justice, I felt that it was important to say a few words here this afternoon, as I have worked fairly extensively with Annette over the last three years. I certainly found her to be a very professional, very compassionate and caring individual. In fact, early on in my tenure, I had an individual approach me who was a victim of crime and felt that in the past — and by saying “the past”, I'm speaking about eight years ago — that maybe her case wasn't handled the way she had hoped it to be at that time. I certainly gave her information on how the department, due largely in part to Annette's work, had made great progress.

I connected the two and have seen great things come out of this individual working in the community as a volunteer and speaking about her incident, being a victim of crime, and how it impacted her. In those remarks, she also talks about the work of the department, the work of Victim Services and certainly the work of Annette and how it benefitted her on a move-forward basis.

Looking within our community, I certainly couldn't think of a better candidate to bring on as the child and youth worker. I have all the confidence in the world in Annette and look forward to the work that we see in her five-year tenure. I would like to congratulate Annette on her position and certainly ask for the support of all members of this Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I would like to thank the other members who spoke in support of this motion and I won't go on at great length. I just congratulate Annette on being successful and wish her the very best in her new role, which I

am sure she will do an excellent job in, and I will commend this motion to the House.

Motion No. 907 agreed to

GOVERNMENT BILLS

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

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 17, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Pasloski.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: This appropriation act will allow the public service to continue to make certain expenditures, while the main estimates for 2015-16 are being considered by the Legislative Assembly during this Sitting. The interim funding request is for the period of April 1, 2015 through June 4, 2015.

The total amount for which the approval is sought is \$353,979,000 and it is made up of capital expenditure appropriations totalling \$96,621,000 and operation and maintenance expenditure appropriations totalling \$257,358,000.

The amounts required for this period have been derived by canvassing Yukon government departments to determine their expenditure requirements. The amounts are significant, largely owing to the fact that large portions of commitments and expenditures are made during this period.

I move that Bill No. 17, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, be now read a third time.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I intend to keep my comments very brief. As I have said previously, the Official Opposition will support this basically on sufferance. We do it because we know it's essential for the continued operations until there has been full legislative debate of Bill No. 18, which is the main estimates for operation and maintenance and capital for this fiscal year coming. We have indicated in the past that we would encourage the Premier and the Minister of Finance to actually respect the legislative responsibilities and accountabilities that all members of the Legislative Assembly have, which is to table and have debate of the budget before the beginning of the fiscal year so that we're not forced into this kind of a situation.

Mr. Speaker, we'll just move on with the business at hand.

Speaker: Does any other member wish to be heard? Are you prepared for the question?

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 17 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 17 has passed this House.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 18, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2015-16*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

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

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 18, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2015-16*.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: It is indeed a pleasure to have joining me Acting Deputy Minister of Finance, Mr. Mark Tubman, to be a part of general debate of Committee of the Whole for Bill No. 18, *First Appropriation Act, 2015-16*. I rise today to present introductory remarks to Bill No. 18, *First Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, more commonly referred to as the 2015-16 main estimates. My intent today is really to try to get to the point.

Our government has once again delivered a notable and sound budget. The 2015-16 budget builds on the work of our previous years and allows the government to provide significant investments now and in the future for all Yukoners.

We will speak of the expenditure and revenue details in depth during general debate; however, allow me to make some observations at this time. This is the largest budget in Yukon's history. This is the largest annual capital investment ever by a Yukon government. This budget provides significant tax relief to everyday Yukoners and this budget continues to provide for sustainable and affordable fiscal management.

To quantify my earlier points, this budget provides total expenditures of \$1.367 billion, operation and maintenance expenditures of \$1.054 billion, capital expenditures of \$312.7 million, and tax relief of approximately \$5.5 million.

Our fiscal position continues to be sound with an annual surplus of \$23.2 million and projected net financial assets of \$136.9 million.

Additionally, if I can turn your attention to our long-term fiscal plan, we are targeting significant multi-year capital investments in both 2016-17 and 2017-18. While we do expect such investments to draw down or to reduce our net financial assets, we continue to provide for a significant net financial asset position in excess of \$100 million through 2018-19.

There is no doubt our government has significant expenditures in the here and the now. However, this position by no means mortgages our future. In other words, we continue to avoid net debt.

Our government has been criticized for tabling what has been referred to as an "election budget". This is an incredibly short-sighted observation. As I have observed in my Budget Address, our government developed this budget in consideration of one of Yukon's economic mainstays, mining — as this iconic industry is experiencing a downturn currently.

The importance of creating jobs and opportunities was specifically considered in drafting this budget.

Further economic stimulus in the form of tax cuts for Yukoners is also integral to this budget.

I ask you, Madam Chair, would members prefer us to not invest now, to not spend on behalf of Yukoners today, and not to put more money directly into the hands of Yukoners? Rather, would they prefer us to have us only focus on hoarding for the future? As I consider the many comments and observations of the members opposite, I can only presume that their collective recommended approach is to sit on or to hoard Yukoners' money, not to invest in Yukon and Yukoners, and avoid providing stimulus to Yukon's economy in the face of some challenging times.

Each of our budgets has been designed to maximize benefits to Yukoners through strategic spending. This budget continues on that theme. Our government represents all Yukoners and we have endeavoured to deliver on the mandate bestowed by the electorate. It is our obligation and our pleasure to balance strategic spending with fiscal discipline, a combination that serves Yukoners today while also providing for our citizens of tomorrow. This approach has afforded our government the opportunity, through multiple mandates, to make significant investments for the benefit of all Yukoners.

Our government is proud of our record. We have a strong fiscal position. We continue to invest wisely and strategically on behalf of Yukoners. This budget continues to build on our past successes as we anticipate our next mandate.

A recurring theme throughout my comments is our government's commitment to invest not only in Yukoners today, but also to invest in Yukoners tomorrow through our balanced approach managing Yukon's finances.

Managing with tomorrow in mind is key. According to our Bureau of Statistics, in 2003, Yukon's population was just under 30,000; in 2014, Yukon's population was approaching 37,000; and for 2022, Yukon's population is projected to be approximately 42,000 people.

I have spoken at great length over the last few sessions about Yukon's increasing population and the infrastructure

required to support it. Individual ministers will be pleased to speak in more detail during line-by-line debate. However, allow me this opportunity to comment on the high-level investments identified in this budget.

Just under \$61 million is allocated in 2015-16 toward our transportation infrastructure. There's approximately \$35 million for municipal infrastructure, primarily funded under the original Building Canada agreement, and over \$145 million represents our 2015-16 investment in various property developments, replacements and maintenance.

All of these commitments, all of these initiatives, not only are investments in programs and services needs of Yukoners; these investments put Yukoners to work.

This budget leverages our previous efforts of sound, disciplined and rigorous management to provide for today and to provide for tomorrow. As I just noted, this budget reinforces the principle of fiscal discipline and balanced management that allows us to be responsive to the future needs and priorities of Yukoners.

In the immediate term, Madam Chair, our budget serves to fill important gaps in programming, service delivery and community infrastructure. We are investing in a diverse range of projects across the territory, selected to maximize benefits to communities and Yukoners — the Carcross fire hall, F.H. Collins, Yukon seniors, Sarah Steele, Klondike palaeontology — and, on a longer term basis, our government looks forward to working in partnership with the federal government on the new Building Canada infrastructure agreement and approximately \$342 million targeted for Yukon investment over the next 10 years.

The security of being in a very strong financial position has allowed this government to deliver this notable budget, a budget of significance to all Yukoners, a budget with a vision of important investments over a multi-year horizon.

Madam Chair, I've said it numerous times and I'll continue to make this similar observation. Our strong financial position provides us with the agility to be responsive to Yukon's emerging needs. I've spoken on how our successive budgets have built financial capacity and how we continue to build on that capacity with our forward-looking financial plan.

If you allow me the analogy, Madam Chair, this budget allows Yukon to dip into our savings account and invest in Yukon on behalf of Yukoners. This budget delivers a strong multi-year investment plan while respecting the long-term financial help of the Yukon. We do this without breaking the bank. This is not binge spending, nor is it an election budget, as the members of the opposition would have you believe, Madam Chair.

I did make similar observations in my second reading speech on Bill No. 17. However, allow me to revisit those previous comments as it is apropos to pause here for a moment and reflect on the conclusions drawn in the Standard & Poor's report of September 2014. If I may, Madam Chair, Yukon's double-A rating reflects "...the territory's very low debt burden, exceptional liquidity, strong budgetary performance..." and the territory's demonstration of strong

financial management and the expectation "...that Yukon will continue to produce strong budgetary results..."

Madam Chair, clearly Standard & Poor's gets it. Our record has been strong and we will continue to be strong as we support Yukoners through this and future budgets. This budget is not a one-off exercise. It highlights our commitment to provide important programs, services and investments to Yukoners while maintaining Yukon's strong financial position over the long term.

The 2015-16 budget projects an annual surplus. Further, as I have already stated today, we continue to target balanced budgets throughout the next few years as members will note from our multi-year plan. With net financial asset forecast in the \$100-million range over the next four years, I am confident the Yukon public will appreciate our commitment to fiscal discipline.

As the Yukon Party has done throughout our mandates, we continue to maintain a very healthy net financial resource position and to avoid net debt. In an environment where many other Canadian jurisdictions are working toward achieving balanced budgets and reducing their debt, Yukon is already there. We have balanced budgets and we continue to avoid net debt. This is a very important consideration. Our 2015-16 budget builds on our history of delivering on commitments in our platform, "Moving Forward Together" and provides a strong financial base to be responsive to emerging priorities and opportunities as they arise. Our record stands for itself. Having managed the government's finances over a multi-year horizon — since 2003-04 in fact; a period of 13 years now — Yukon Party has delivered effective, responsible and disciplined spending initiatives and investments on behalf of Yukoners.

What this Legislature will recognize in our 2015-16 budget is the continuation of our efforts. We continue to plan, budget and deliver the best of programs, services and investments for Yukoners. Not to put a fine point on it, but our government continues to plan, budget and deliver programs, services and investments for Yukoners with due consideration for fiscal discipline. As this is now the fourth year that the Yukon government has included consolidated financial information with budget documents, I am confident that members opposite will appreciate and recall my previous comments indicating that this consolidation disclosure contributes to transparency and accountability in government reporting. I will not elaborate again here today.

Madam Chair, allow me to focus members opposite on the unconsolidated entity — the amounts and resulting financial results that are supported by Bill No. 18, the *First Appropriation Act, 2015-16*. Members will find the non-consolidated summary starting on page S-5 of the 2015-16 estimates document.

Focusing on the unconsolidated side, the members opposite will observe that total expenditures, or appropriations identified in the 2015-16 main estimates, are \$1,367,070,000, of which \$1.054 billion is allocated to operation and maintenance and \$312.8 million represents our government's

investment in capital. Once again, Madam Chair, our government has provided a strong budget for all Yukoners.

As I stated earlier, in addition to the expenditure side, this budget provides tax relief to all Yukon taxpayers, totalling approximately \$5.5 million.

There is an understandable focus on the expenditure portion of the budget; however, as I just noted, our tax reduction measures — let's consider the revenue side for a moment. I hear a lot of talk about Yukon's reliance on Canada — talk about how Yukon is more reliant on Canada than we have been in years past.

There is no doubt that Canada is a significant partner in territorial investment through the various funding arrangements we have. However, I will detail shortly how Yukon's growth in own-source revenue has outpaced growth in the base transfers from Canada. I believe the members opposite forget that all jurisdictions across Canada — both territorial and provincial — are supported by similar arrangements by Canada. This is a significant point, not to be lost. All Canadian jurisdictions are supported by transfers from our federal government. Provinces and territories enter these arrangements based on one primary principle — similar programs and services for similar levels of taxation. This is the fundamental principle underlying federal transfers.

As I previously stated, it is often suggested that Yukon's dependence on Canada is increasing. If I were to look solely at the budget document, like so many do, I can understand how that conclusion might be reached. The information included on page 14 of the financial information section of the 2015-16 Budget Address booklet tells us that total federal funding — transfers plus recoveries — received by Yukon amounts to 84.2 percent of Yukon's total revenues.

There is so much more to it than the simple calculation reflected in these pages. I encourage the members opposite to apply some simple, basic analytics to gain a better understanding of the underlying data. Let's consider, Madam Chair, our federal funding arrangements under three general categories. First, there are recovery arrangements, where Yukon typically delivers federal responsibilities on behalf of Canada, on a cost-recovery basis.

Second, Yukon participates in conditional or time-limited arrangements that Canada has offered to its provincial and territorial partners. We might consider these as one-offs — certainly funding arrangements to which Yukon is no doubt a beneficiary, but nonetheless, these arrangements such as Building Canada and the territorial health system sustainability initiative are not unique to Yukon and come with specific spending expectations.

Thirdly, let us think about those components of Canada's support that are ongoing and reasonably predictable. That is, Yukon's key ongoing transfers under the territorial formula financing, the Canada health and Canada social funding arrangements. Yukon has been a significant beneficiary of recovery agreements and time-limited funding program agreements.

The benefits are more than purely financial.

These funding arrangements allow Yukon's participation in federal programs such as Building Canada. More importantly, our participation allows Yukon to influence initiatives and programs that are constitutionally the domain of Canada.

On the surface, our funding program and recovery arrangements do indicate a certain reliance on Canada. Recall however that in many cases, recovery arrangements reflect Yukon's delivery of programs and services that are constitutionally the responsibility of Canada.

Also recall that Yukon participates in time-limited funding programs administered by Canada just like every other Canadian jurisdiction. I have to wonder aloud if the critics of Yukon's reliance on Canada would have Yukon abandon participation in the funding arrangements. If that is not what they are suggesting, what exactly are they being critical about? Let's assume Canada and Yukon do not enter into recovery arrangements. Let's also assume that Canada does not administer funding programs to benefit all members of our federation. Yukon is left with two general sources of revenue: the ongoing transfer arrangements identified previously, i.e. the territorial formula financial agreement and the Canada Health and Canada Social transfers; and our own-source revenues.

These two components represent the revenue streams on which Yukon can rely on an ongoing reasonably predictable basis. We can effectively distinguish between more certain and stable transfer arrangements with Canada and Yukon's own-source revenues. The comparison is somewhat compelling. Madam Chair, would it surprise you to learn that since 2005-06, Yukon's own-source revenues grew by approximately 93 percent, while the revenue under the territorial formula financing agreement grew by 77 percent?

I see that you're telling me I'm out of time. I have a few more comments, but I will restrict them to my next opportunity to speak. Thank you.

Ms. Hanson: I certainly don't intend to reprise the Budget Address that was delivered respectively by both by the Minister of Finance and the Leader of the Official Opposition. I think both the Minister of Finance and this position had an opportunity to explore at depth and at length the respective views of the Official Opposition in the government with respect to not just the financial performance and accountability over the last twelve years — over the last four years — but also the specific matters at hand in Bill No. 18.

I do want to make a couple of remarks in the context of the general debate, but I would offer that it's our view in the Official Opposition that we've had an awful lot of — I would use advisedly the word "rhetoric" because by the Oxford definition it does mean persuasive discussion, persuasive argument — and so we have had a lot of that over the course of the first few weeks of this Legislative Sitting, but we haven't had the chance to get at the substantive matters at hand, which are really the discussions by department of the issues at hand.

The Minister of Finance has indicated that this is the largest budget in Yukon's history. Certainly we recognize

that. We would also point out that large or big does not necessarily equate with effective, nor does it mean sustainable.

The notion that we have laid out multi-year capital plans — well, one expects to see multi-year capital plans laid out in a budget. That is what you do. The question, though, is not just the amounts of money, but at what cost? The costs associated with each of the decisions around each of these major capital expenditures have everything to do with the approach and the strategy around investment in this territory.

The Minister of Finance presents it as an either/or. From the Official Opposition's point of view, we absolutely agree that it is important to invest and to invest now, but you have to invest wisely. You have to invest in consultation with all communities — First Nation governments, stakeholder groups, citizens — in order to ensure that the investments made address the expressed needs now and into the future and that they are based on evidence of need, evidence of future need and reflect that community input. We believe in the absolute imperative of strategic spending to maximize the opportunities for Yukoners. It is one thing to hear, as we keep hearing repeatedly, about the massive amounts of capital expenditures planned over the next short window, and they are short windows for building in the Yukon Territory.

We will raise, and we have raised, concerns about ensuring that that massive expenditure will benefit and provide maximum opportunities for Yukoners to benefit so that we are not repeating the fly-in and fly-out. We have had enough of that in other sectors of this economy. In the areas where the Yukon government can work with contractors, builders and planners, to me that is an opportunity that we should be doing to maximize Yukon citizens' — Yukon workers' — opportunities for employment close at home.

When we talk about the importance of strategic investment, there is no doubt that we have seen the government make announcements, but they seem to have been done in isolation of what communities have said, whether it is the absolute failure to consult with anybody outside the government — government internal discussions only — with respect to one of the largest capital budget items that is projected for this territory, starting — we have no idea what the end costs will be — at about \$330 million for a 300-bed care facility.

When you ask the medical association, the YRNA, seniors associations, a variety of community groups, have you had a conversation? What do you think about this? They look at you and say, "Well, nobody has asked us." I find that kind of a shock.

You see the territorial government not only making the decision internally that they're going to proceed with this, but they haven't even consulted with their sister government, the City of Whitehorse. So it's like big brother is telling you, "We want you to do this and we want you to change your planning, your OCP, to do it."

That's one large example, Madam Chair. We've seen the Association of Yukon Communities expressing similar concerns about how decisions are made about what

government — the Yukon government — deems to be the priority for the provision of recreational services and budgets for that. I mean, it's a good thing that the Yukon government believes it has the only idea about what communities need, but if it comes at the expense of a little community like Carmacks in order for — some would call it — an election item, and some would call it a pretty blatant election item — the artificial-turf project that seems to be rushing through, from the Yukon Party, in Whistle Bend. There's a whole series of those that we think merit focused discussion because they demonstrate that, contrary to what has been stated over and over again, just saying it doesn't mean it happens. What we are seeing is demonstration of no fiscal discipline in the budget that's presented. What we are seeing is the raising of flags on declining federal revenues. What we are seeing is a government that has spent down — I love the Minister of Finance's reference that now we're being allowed to dip into our savings account. This is a government that said repeatedly they didn't need to do that because they were such prudent and fiscally wise managers of our resources.

I think, in real terms, Madam Chair, the reality is that we are, in fact, more, not less, dependent after 12 years of Yukon Party government.

This massive decline in our surplus under the watch of the Finance minister is not a one-off exercise. It's a continuation — a continuation of spending. It's a continuation of the sort of selective-listening approach to how those spending decisions are made.

It's interesting when the Premier brings in the whole notion of comparing tax effort and our relationship to the federal government under the formula financing arrangements and equalization for the provinces. Section 36 that he referenced there — he didn't use it, but the notion there is that to ensure or aspire to ensuring that revenues to provide reasonably comparable levels of public services, at reasonably comparable levels of taxation, are provided. That's what section 36 is about.

You know, the Minister of Finance spoke at some length about how the Official Opposition really doesn't want the government to be able to take advantage of time-limited or other initiatives that come from the federal government. In fact we think that those are amazing opportunities to embrace change; to embrace innovative ways of looking at programs and services that benefit all Yukoners. The problem is that, as opposed to looking at these initiatives as opportunities — so whether it is time-limited funding that comes from the federal government to support initiatives on mental health and it's two or three extra years of funding focused on developing pilot projects to look at how you could more effectively deliver an area of either health services or a broad range of services — and then the intent is that governments, whether they're provincial governments or territorial governments, will look at how those savings impact other operations and it's how you incorporate that into your ongoing operations.

What we've seen this government do is, time and time again, say, "Oh yeah, we'll take the three-year funding. Oops, it's gone; that program is gone" as opposed to a fundamental

look at how you realign programs and service delivery and look at how we make changes. A real government does that. It doesn't just look at how new programs come along and how you can manage them on behalf of the federal government. A territorial government should not be a program manager. We look to the ministers as leaders, not as program managers. What I'm seeing evidence of is program management — and not that well done.

Madam Chair, I am concerned. We've seen a government that has, over the last — this is the fourth budget — each one of them has had sort of a diminishing set of expectations other than spending — diminished expectations in terms of looking at real opportunities that do exist and making choices that will forego our opportunities for a really diverse economy that is based on effective partnership. By the actions of the Finance minister and Premier, our opportunities to capitalize on investment opportunities, working with development corporations and First Nation development corporations, diminishes day by day. The \$500 million the First Nation development corporations currently spend in this territory could be in jeopardy at the rate this government is going as they look to see other jurisdictions, where they have more effective and more responsive interactions with government. That has real consequences for our economy, because those development corporations hire all Yukoners, not just First Nations. They contribute to the income tax pool of this territory. They're located here.

As we go through the budget debate on each of the departments and agencies of this government, we will be, as I said in the past and in my response to the budget speech on April 7 — we will be both raising concerns about what is being put forward and the approach taken, as well as offering some ideas and some suggestions.

As we have said often, the Official Opposition's job is — and we acknowledge and accept it — to hold the government to account. We take that seriously, but we also know that part of our job is to offer suggestions and we have done that on a regular basis over the last number of years.

We accept the fact that the government to date hasn't accepted anything that we have put forward as ideas, but that doesn't mean that the ideas don't resonate with Yukoners. This Legislative Assembly is intended to reflect the ideas of all Yukoners, not just the Yukon Party. So, on behalf of Yukoners, we will continue to provide focused attention to specific areas of the main estimates for 2015-16 in the context of the current and long-term implications for the decisions being taken and the choices being made, because they do have consequences for all of us.

I don't need it all, Madam Chair, so with that I will suggest that we move on to substantive debate on the matters at hand, which are really the issues of — I believe we have Community Services and Education up this afternoon. I know that people have been looking forward to getting into those departments and actually having a discussion about where we have come in the last year or two and what the plans are for this year.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: That truly was a great display of really where the NDP would be coming from, where they would be going. What we do know and what Yukoners know, is what the record was of the NDP and their approach to the economy, from examples of their past leadership back in the nineties, to be the last one, at which time we saw an exodus of thousands of people. We saw double-digit unemployment — essentially the first time ever that this government had to go into debt as a result of the leadership under the New Democratic Party.

What our plans shows is sustainability, contrary to the Leader of the NDP. We have the long-term plan that shows where we're going and how we're going to get there and, because of the fiscal management we have had, we have the ability to be able to address concerns as they arise, plus have a long-term plan for where our goals are and meet all of those needs and still do it without mortgaging our children's future.

What is a big priority for this government is dealing with that public consultation — producing what we have — contrary to the Leader of the NDP. There was a significant public consultation that occurred in 2011 in a public election when we put forward a platform that said that, if elected for a third consecutive Yukon Party government, these are the deliverables that we will do, and that guides us.

We don't get into power and then deviate. Our focus has been on our platform, and I am proud to report that we have made considerable progress in addressing the needs that were identified in that platform. That is a public consultation that occurs every four or five years in this territory, and we will continue to deliver on those things.

We are focused in our spending on infrastructure like transportation, telecommunications and energy. We are focused on regulatory reform. We are focused on education and we are focused on training, hospitals, schools, seniors complexes, nursing homes, home care, fire halls, Salvation Army and working with them, Sarah Steele, Jackson Lake, learning centres, energy programs and tourism. Yukoners will decide again, as they always do, as to whose priorities are in focus. That will again come forward and we will look forward to that debate and that public consultation with Yukoners.

It was also interesting that the Leader of the Official Opposition again refers to the 300-bed nursing home, which we continue to —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Chair: Mr. Pasloski has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: It does really sound sometimes like grade 1 or kindergarten —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: Ms. White, on a point of order.

Ms. White: We have had rulings today and we have had rulings in the past where we talk about keeping a level of decorum up, and I believe right there that was a very pointed, fairly aggressive remark directed at the Leader of the Official Opposition. I can cite either Standing Order 19(i), which is

“...abusive or insulting language...” or 19(g), because I believe that was false.

Chair: Mr. Elias, on the point of order.

Mr. Elias: In listening to the debate today, I believe this is a dispute among members because I did not hear the Hon. Premier actually finish his sentence, so I don't know what he was actually going to refer to listening to grade 1 or 2 about. Maybe it was about when he was in grade 1 or 2. I believe this is a dispute among members.

Chair's ruling

Chair: The Chair did not hear this comment directed at a person. I did not yet form an opinion as to where that comment was going. At this time, I would say this is a dispute among members and there is no point of order.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I was speaking about long-term care facilities and the NDP continuing to imply that we are building a 300-bed nursing home. We continue to say that we have plans to build a 150-bed nursing home that will be built in a manner that will allow for future enlargement because that is what vision and forward-thinking is about.

I do take a bit of solace in their approach because I was watching some of the NDP platform from the Alberta election that is currently going on provincially, where part of the Alberta NDP platform is to build 2,000 more nursing home beds at a rate of 500 a year for the next four years. I don't think they are articulating or describing these nursing homes in the same manner that the Yukon NDP are, so I do take some amusement out of that point.

As I said, I wasn't quite finished my remarks for Committee of the Whole. Where I had left off was saying that if we actually drilled down to do a comparison of the parts of revenue that are comparable, we would combine the TFF, the territorial formula financial agreement, plus the Canada health and social transfers on the federal side and our own-source revenues. What I said was that, when you look at these, what you would find is that, since 2005-06, Yukon's own-source revenues grew by approximately 93 percent while our revenue under the territorial formula financing agreement grew by 77 percent.

Would it also surprise you that in this comparison Yukon's own-source revenues increased from 14.3 percent of the total in 2005-06 to 15.5 percent in 2015-16?

Madam Chair, context is everything and I'm appreciative of the opportunity to set the record straight. In the context of Yukon's ongoing revenue streams, this very simple analysis indicates that Yukon's growth in own-source has outpaced growth in the base transfers from Canada.

Yukoners know that Yukon is the beneficiary of important principle-based transfers from Canada, much like all jurisdictions through similar arrangements such as equalization. Canada continues to support the north through our transfer arrangements and, if I may reiterate, Yukon's TFF growth was 2.68 percent versus 3.85 percent for equalization.

I have to wonder aloud if the members opposite are suggesting that Yukon abandon this principle-based approach

to our fiscal arrangements with Canada. I also wonder whether members opposite suggest their governments would increase the tax burden to Yukoners in spite of Canada's accepted principle-based arrangements. Is this really how, given the opportunity, the members opposite plan to implement their respective party's visions of a fiscal plan? I apologize for the tangent. Allow me to get back to the final comment on Yukon's anticipated financial results for the 2015-16 fiscal year.

Our fiscal position continues to be sound with an annual surplus of \$23.2 million, the projected net financial assets of \$136.9 million. Shortly I will speak of some of the expenditure highlights contained in this budget. Suffice it to say that our government continues to deliver on our commitments to move forward together and to make significant expenditures on behalf of all Yukoners in the delivery of program service and capital investments.

We have done this without breaking the bank. With all decisions to date considered, our 2015-16 budget forecasts an annual surplus of \$23.242 million. This means revenues for the Government of Yukon are projected to exceed expenses for the 2015-16 fiscal year. Of course, surplus is not the only indicator of our financial well-being that should be considered.

As I have stated previously in this Legislature — and I am sure to repeat many times — the preeminent measure of a government's financial strength is net debt. We have a net financial resource position of \$136.993 million forecast for the year-end March 31, 2016. Yukon government continues to maintain a healthy financial position and avoid net debt. Madam Chair, most other Canadian jurisdictions are reporting net debt. This fact alone is significant, but let me phrase this in a different way.

Net debt provides an indication of future revenue requirements for government; that is, net debt provides a measure of the future revenues required to pay for the past. The significance of this should be of comfort to Yukoners. As one of the only jurisdictions in Canada not to be in a net debt position, it will not be necessary to allocate future revenues to offset or pay for past expenditures. Our government can say we are paying as we go and, yes, we do have positive net financial resources to invest in future programs and services.

As I've said, our strong net financial position is the most important indicator of our government's fiscal health. This indicator speaks to the future and, as I have observed previously, the 2015-16 main estimates forecasts our net financial resource position to be a very healthy \$136.933 million.

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

We see many needs and we are taking the opportunity to address those needs. We do this on behalf and for the benefit of all Yukoners.

As legislators, we need to look beyond the short term and to consider the long term. We continue to plan and spend according to our plan. Our government has done this to the benefit of all Yukoners. We have done this without mortgaging the future.

As I stated previously, our financial health is extremely strong. Our history of significant investment continues with our government's 2015-16 budget, as our strong fiscal framework provides us the flexibility to be responsive to emerging priorities and opportunities as they are presented to Yukon.

I noted in my earlier comments that this 2015-16 budget reflects total expenditures of approximately \$1.367 billion, of which just under \$313 million is directed toward significant capital investments for the benefit of Yukoners, and approximately \$1.054 billion is allocated for operation and maintenance.

As I've emphasized throughout, our commitment to fiscal responsibility remains so strong, while we continue to invest strategically in Yukon and for the benefit of all Yukoners. It would be easy to go through the laundry list of what the 2015-16 budget provides in terms of specific 2015-16 expenditure items. Today I prefer rather to speak about how our 2015-16 budget supports our multi-year vision of where and how the Yukon Party is making a long-term investment and, therefore, a difference in the well-being of Yukoners.

Of course my comments will be primarily focused on a number of strategic initiatives. Individual members will however be happy to provide full details for their respective portfolios once we get into line-by-line debate. An important theme of our 2015-16 budget is putting Yukoners to work. It is therefore understandable that my comments will focus on many of the capital elements of our 2015-16 budget. Our government has had a string of significant capital budgets — eight successive years where capital investments have exceeded \$200 million and 2015-16 is no exception.

Our 2015-16 budget calls for an investment in Yukoners and Yukon infrastructure of over \$300 million. As I've noted throughout, our 2015-16 budget includes \$312.8 million for capital expenditures covering a number of important investments across a number of sectors, including: \$61 million in support of the territory's transportation infrastructure; \$35 million to support a variety of investments in municipal and community infrastructure; and \$145 million for the planning, construction and maintenance of a number of facilities. These are some impressive levels of investment in targeted sectors. I am confident these investments will indeed put Yukoners to work.

Madam Chair, I spoke earlier about how our 2015-16 budget continues to plan for the long term and strategic investments to the benefit of all Yukoners. Allow me this opportunity to bring just a few to your attention. Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation are planning a new large-scale hydro dam to power our future over 10 to 15 years and we will be investing \$2 million in hydro infrastructure in 2015-16 as well as \$4.3 million in the Keno/Stewart Crossing transmission line.

Yukon continues to work with Canada to finalize the new Building Canada agreement. Once finalized, this agreement will provide approximately \$342 million in project funding over the next 10 years.

The availability of suitable land is also a concern for Yukoners. Our budget provides \$7.7 million through the Department of Community Services to start phase 3 of the Whistle Bend development and another \$5.05 million through the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources to address land development in communities outside of Whitehorse.

Access to appropriate recreation facilities also continues to be of significant importance to Yukoners. Our budget provides \$400,000 for preliminary geotechnical work and detailed design of a soccer and running track sports complex. Following up on the tremendous efforts of the Yukon Foundation, which raised funds for an MRI, our 2015-16 budget includes \$22.3 million in support of the expansion of the emergency room at the Whitehorse General Hospital.

Finally, Madam Chair, our government and members opposite are fully aware of the anticipated growth in Yukon's population. We are all aware that more and more Yukoners have chosen to stay in Yukon throughout their retirement years. Allow me to highlight just three initiatives included in this budget to address infrastructure to support Yukon's aging population.

First, under the Yukon Housing Corporation, we find \$9.5 million to complete the Whitehorse seniors housing project that was started in 2014-15. Second, we have the anticipated completion in December of 2015 — the Department of Health and Social Services has identified \$7.8 million to complete the construction of McDonald Lodge in Dawson City. Madam Chair, as the last item in this brief list, this budget provides \$26 million to advance the planning, design and ground-breaking of a new care facility in Whitehorse. In consideration of potential growing demands, this facility will be built with the idea of future expansion.

These initiatives I have mentioned here today are just a few of the investments we are making on behalf of Yukoners. We are able to make these types of investments based on our successful record of planned and disciplined management of our finances. We continue to manage Yukon's fiscal framework over the long term. Our government continues its work to be ahead of the curve by identifying, planning and implementing long-term and multi-year expenditure plans now.

Madam Chair, my colleagues and I look forward to discussing the 2015-16 budget in more detail during general debate. Our government's commitment to sound financial management remains strong. As a result, we have net positive financial resources, we have accumulated surplus, and we have an annual surplus.

I am extremely proud of the efforts of our government to provide a wide range of program services and capital investments on behalf of all Yukoners while maintaining a very healthy long-term fiscal position. Looking into our multi-year forecast tabled with this budget, future years remain

extremely positive and revenues projected to exceed expenses for each of the next four years.

This forward-looking, healthy fiscal framework is what Yukoners can take great comfort in. Indeed, the Yukon remains financially well-positioned for the future.

Before I close my remarks, there was one other comment, I think, just based on the NDP leader's comments. She said that federal revenues are declining, and of course she is absolutely wrong there as well. Federal revenues' rate of growth is slowing, but they continue to grow. So this is a significant difference — a little play on words.

I look forward to any further questions.

Chair: Does any other member wish to speak in general debate?

We are going to move on then to departmental discussion. We are going to start with Vote 51, Community Services. The minister has requested a 15-minute recess for officials.

Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

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

Department of Community Services

Chair: We are going to enter into general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I am pleased to rise in Committee to speak to this year's Community Services 2015-16 main estimates. I'm joined today by Paul Moore, who is acting as our deputy minister currently. Our deputy minister, Kelvin Leary, is down undertaking some medical tourism, visiting Vancouver, doing some shopping. I understand he's purchasing two new hips and they'll be installed while he's down there, as well, so he's out for a few weeks, and Paul is acting in his stead. Chris Mahar is the director of Finance, System and Administration for the Department of Community Services.

I have a number of opening comments, but I do understand that the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes has a bang up intro so I look forward to hearing his intro and his questions.

Mr. Barr: Madam Chair, I would like to start off by congratulating the new minister on his appointment to Community Services and thank the previous minister for his efforts. I do realize that the new minister does have a sensitive side and I'm going to keep that in mind as we move forward today. I do take it to heart and I look forward to a great afternoon of kibitzing, and I do look forward to hearing his other opening remarks. This is a very different approach, but I surely do appreciate it. I thought he was joking.

I would also like to thank the members from the department for being here and I thank them for their ongoing hard work. I do wish Deputy Minister Kelvin Leary all the best while he's in Vancouver and, given that he's down there — from what the Minister of Community Services was stating, it's having to do with his hips, I know that being a

hipster is in these days and I'm sure he'll be walking with a different twist when he gets back. So we look forward to seeing him when he gets back and really in all seriousness hope that it goes well.

I have had some friends who have had those types of operations. In the long run it is a great thing but, like anything of that nature, it is definitely not fun getting to where you are feeling good afterward. I do wish him a speedy recovery.

With that, I would like to start out by just giving a shout-out to all the hard-working volunteers of the communities that I represent in Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, especially the LACs and the volunteers, the members of EMS, the volunteer fire department, search and rescue — to name a few — the parents and children — from the parades that are attended to the fairs that we know go on in the communities, especially Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes and throughout the territory. Cookouts, ski races — soon we will be seeing the teachers going around throughout the territory cleaning up the ditches and raising money for various outings that they will be attending.

I know that, as we move into the summer months, the youth will be out of school, and the parents who have been going to the school every morning and helping with the school breakfasts will have time off. I am sure it will be only to start to engage with their children, not at school, but cooking breakfast at home hopefully and exploring what this great territory has to offer in the summer months.

I would like to make mention of some of the things that are going on before I get to the bulk of the Community Services budget, the 2015-16 main estimates. In regard to Carcross, I know that mountain biking, the beach and the past endeavours with the Caribou Commons there and the VIC opening and the new businesses that were up and running — there is going to be a welcoming of six new units in Caribou Commons that local entrepreneurs will be able to rent. That is going to be an added attraction for those who are out there listening or who want to be able to take it to their community.

I know that on sunny days, hitting the beach and grabbing an ice cream cone at Skookum Jim's is a big hit. The long-awaited Caribou Hotel is going to be opening this summer, and I do know that there may not be rooms, but the bottom part — restaurant and beverage side — I do believe they are working hard at getting that open. I was speaking with Jamie Toole, and that is the goal. We do look forward to that in Carcross, along with some of the local authentic carvings and art that is on display for people to purchase. I know people have been working hard all winter to get ready for this tourist season and welcome those who come to visit our territory. The train crews are working hard.

People are going to be using the Carcross Desert in a different way, and I do welcome the learning centre that will be starting to move forward and also with the ongoing work from all parties to finally have a new emergency services building where the old fire hall is now — or search-and-rescue building — and that will be going forward. I know that has been long-awaited in the community and people are happy that's coming together. I know that the learning centre — it

was previously talked about as being a potlatch house and so on and so forth and is now the learning centre. It was welcomed by all members of the community at different community meetings, but the concern was that we didn't forget about the community centre in Carcross. I'm hoping to move forward with the new minister and maybe have him come out and view what's happening out there with the folks who are interested.

I do know that in the agreement of having the learning centre go forward, it was agreed on by all members of the community — different folks from all stripes of life, including First Nations — that there would be a timeline included if that was to go forward and that there would be a community club. There would be a timeline for that that would be looked at so that members can enjoy what other — well, basically all other communities in the territory have community clubs to gather at. I'll be bringing forward those concerns as we go forward as will the members of the community.

I know other positives are happening and I'm glad to see them coming forward, like the Conrad campground and the marina. I know that the minister opposite will also be commenting on these, so I'm letting him know that these are good things. However, people still would like to get rid of the one-way street.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Barr: Thanks for the public notice there from across the way. The sewage lagoon is moving forward, but hazardous waste is another area, not only for the Southern Lakes but throughout the territory. I'll be commenting on that later.

I would also like to mention that Mount Lorne has enjoyed the new Zamboni. However, the community itself also is quite a destination point for the number of activities that happen at the Mount Lorne community centre — from the food nights, to the learning of different foods, to yoga classes; to the sled-dog races — Carbon Hill and the ski races that I've been fortunate to be able to attend and volunteer at. The local volunteers there are endless in Mount Lorne in providing opportunities for all walks of life. It is quite an attraction for many people from Whitehorse to attend any activity that is happening in Mount Lorne, not to forget the square dances, the local talent such as Nicole Edwards or Al Pope or some of the other ones who end up down there playing — Annie Avery, the Fiddleheads — playing for their pancake breakfasts.

There are ongoing issues there with the McGowan lands. It is a concern how that is progressing. There are concerns about agricultural land — the numbers coming in — and wildlife corridors and so on and so forth that I'll be putting forward.

There are wishes of that community that hopefully we can work on together regarding solar panels on the community club at Mount Lorne and possibly other community centres throughout the territory, looking toward renewable energy options and some of the O&M costs throughout the territory, not only in Mount Lorne. There is an initiative by some of the locals there, looking at the Building Canada fund. Hopefully

they will be able to cut down on the energy costs so there can actually be more money added to ongoing efforts by community members that will result in more of the fine programming and staff required to be able to continue the great work that is done in Mount Lorne.

I also note that civic addressing in Mount Lorne is something that has been receiving continued work and now that some of the roads — there are roads that have been given street signs, which is very helpful now and it is moving into the civic addressing stage. I know that with members from the staff meeting with the LAC and comments, not only about discouraging where it was going with McGowan — hopefully those considerations will be looked at — but also some of the considerations of a more Mount Lorne-suited civic addressing structure that people are happy with and willing to work with, and that will still allow emergency responders expedient times in responding to emergency situations that we know, at the end, either saves a house from fire or gets people to the hospital, saving their lives at times.

One of things about that is, you know, the roads back and forth — some of them need continued work. I do know that the Annie Lake Road for one, out there, has been requested from the previous Minister of Highways — for the grader that runs that Annie Lake Road now and over the years, there is really no more pit run left to grade. What seems to be happening, which work was started in the fall, was that as the grader goes down, there being no pit run left, it's bringing up boulders of large sizes. It's taking out mufflers. It's very difficult on the vehicles. I understand that some of the work had started, but the work that had started — basically with the weather as it was — is nonexistent from driving out there and seeing reports and listening to the people who do drive the Annie Lake Road. We're hoping that this government would be able to complete the work that was started last year and have a stretch of road that isn't going to cost those who live there for mufflers and shocks and suspensions and so on and so forth — or taking out rads with large rocks that seem to be only left to grade.

Some other areas — I know that Marsh Lake, from attending out there at various Canada Day celebrations — the amazing Fred Penner show that happened just recently, prior to Rendezvous, and the fine work that the folks do. I guess, whenever we bring people to town, they dovetail some of these folks no one would get a chance to see. That was one thing — I believe there were over 250 — my goodness, I have lots more, Madam Chair.

I will keep going, though, and I'll let the minister get back up, but I do know that, with Fred Penner, 250 youth were able to attend that one event — also reminding that it takes a lot of volunteers. Marsh Lake does have a lot of volunteers, not only with their fire department, but the people who were volunteering at the Army Beach Road and putting in trails. I know the money came forward — and very happy with that. Then they were able to put in their sweat equity and design the trails out there — from still reclaiming from the 2011 flood that we had, following up on being able to put some décor back into all the dead growth now as a result of the flooding

and the ditches being graded. Those things have happened, and they're looking forward to actually accessing some more funds to continue to beautify that back space.

Along with Marsh Lake, civic addressing is one of the things that the community had fundraised for to get monies for signage. However, seeing that other communities, such as Tagish, have received monies for those signs, they would also like to access money from Community Services to complete the work that they have.

Hopefully the minister will recognize that the people themselves have put in their time and energy in obtaining funds to do so, and I only believe, from this member, that it would be the right thing to do to qualify their efforts in putting forth money so the remainder of the civic addressing signs could come from Community Services so that they can finish some of the work that they have begun and that we do know is complemented from funding from Community Services in other areas and only kind of rise up to have it be recognized there also.

The Jackalope has Friday dinners and there is open mic there — music. It's a great place to be in Marsh Lake, but in speaking with all of the Southern Lakes, the water level and the raising of the water level do cause great concern — with how that may be proceeding. I know that people are not in favour of raising the water level in Southern Lakes for various reasons. I'll get into that later.

I'm not sure how much time I do have, but I would like to speak just quickly and briefly about Tagish. There is a new well there. However, I had written to the minister and I will be following up on that — how we can look at backup plans for when these things go out because many people do have blue jugs and can't get water because they get it regularly and can't go more than a couple of days, and sometimes the well has been out, for example. It's great that there is a new well, but some of the ongoing issues for when it does go down — because possibly not all the kinks are worked out, or in the future — that all the communities that are on water wells and that go get their own water — that we institute backup plans such as what Tagish has offered at the fire hall, that somebody could be there when that happens in that community and maybe in others and that somebody could go there and have the door open to allow people to get drinking water in the times that when rural water wells are down. That's something that hopefully we'll hear more about as we move forward.

There are so many involved people in that community, Tagish, who are looking forward to a possible warmup shack for the rink and a rink cover such as the kind of defunct one in Carmacks. I'll stop right there. Thank you Madam Chair. I look forward to hearing the minister opposite in his remarks.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: It seems that the member opposite's comments related primarily to issues of concern in his riding and there wasn't a lot to do with Community Services main estimates but, since he has raised a number of the issues — I will respond, as he has raised a number of issues that I'm very interested in commenting on.

First of all, I know that the member opposite noted the great development at the Conrad campground in his riding.

We're very proud of that, although I should note that the expenditures themselves are made in the Environment department. Questions about the development itself can be directed to the Minister of Environment when we are on the Environment budget. Likewise a number of the highway issues, the road issues, that were raised by the member for roads in his riding can be directed to the Highways and Public Works department, as the Highways and Public Works department tends to be the department that deals with highways. The land issues — I know that he mentioned the McGowan lands and other possible developments — of course relate to the Energy, Mines and Resources department, which has the land development aspects of those issues.

The one thing I will note though is that he did comment on some of the goings-on in Carcross and of course I'm happy to comment on some of those. He did note the fantastic announcement that was made earlier this month on April 14 when the Premier announced that the Yukon government will contribute \$2.7 million toward the construction of a learning centre in Carcross. As the Premier noted on April 14 — and I quote: "The Carcross learning centre will become a central gathering place for the entire community, providing a number of critical services to Carcross/Tagish First Nation citizens." He added, "We look forward to working with the First Nation on this initiative and other projects."

Madam Chair, financial support for the centre results from the intergovernmental accord signed by the Premier and the Carcross-Tagish First Nation in March. Through the intergovernmental accord, the two leaders committed to working — the leader of course is Khà Shâde Héni Danny Cresswell — together on common priorities. In addition to financial support for the learning centre, the accord supports the negotiation of an education agreement to improve the outcomes of CTFN students and the provision of training for front-line workers focused on mental health and substance abuse. Similar accords have been signed with the VGFN and the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun, as well as the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and the Kluane First Nation. The accords provide a practical way for governments to work together on joint priorities and initiatives.

Further to that excellent development, we've announced in the budget that we will be moving forward with the new fire hall in the community of Carcross. The Yukon government has allocated a significant amount of money in this budget for that construction. The design is substantially complete and the preliminary site assessment has begun. The Fire Marshal's Office has met with the local advisory council to discuss the new fire hall, which, for operational reasons, is based on an existing proven design. The Fire Marshal's Office is sensitive to the prominent location of the fire hall and looks forward to working with the community to ensure that the building is kept to the best degree possible with the character and sense of place that has been developed in Carcross.

The new fire hall will integrate local emergency services. It will have three bays and will house fire, Yukon Emergency Medical Services and search-and-rescue vehicles. There will

also be a fitness room that will be available for community use and will replace the aging existing fitness room in Carcross. Of course with that fitness room being open to residents of Carcross, it's likely, as fitness centres tend to do — that room will certainly become a focal point for the community, I'm sure, as those community residents who choose to access it will certainly have a sense of community with that particular building and with that particular room within the building.

If I may, I know the member has a number of other comments he would like to make about his riding, and I look forward to hearing those. Using my remaining time, I will turn to the matter at hand, the main estimates for Community Services. The department's main estimates include over \$54 million in capital expenditures and over \$84 million in operation and maintenance expenditures.

The Department of Community Services makes important investments in programs, services and activities that support healthy and sustainable Yukon communities. Our 2015-16 budget prioritizes investments for Yukoners and Yukon communities that will bring long-term benefits to the territory. Ultimately, the investments that I will highlight today support our government's approach to making Yukon an excellent place to live.

The breadth of the programs, services and support offered by Community Services is impressive. I would like to begin by telling you about our investments in Protective Services division. Our Protective Services division supports our communities and our quality of life, ultimately helping to make Yukon one of the best places to live. The division includes the Wildland Fire Management, the Emergency Measures Organization, the Fire Marshal's Office, Emergency Medical Services and the Building Safety branch.

Every year, Yukon can experience emergencies, including wildfires, floods, avalanches, extreme weather, human-induced and technological failures and other related events. By investing in personnel, equipment, training and infrastructure, the government has strengthened interoperability and coordination among the territory's emergency response agencies to bolster their preventive and response capacities.

We recently announced our support to move the current 911 call centre managed by the RCMP from its downtown location up to our new emergency response centre. This will be an important step toward our expansion of basic 911 to rural communities by next summer.

With the 2015 forest fire season about to begin, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge our Wildland Fire Management team who are starting to prepare for the season ahead and are ready to help protect us all and our communities through their important work. They too help make Yukon a great place to live.

Our Wildland Fire Management capital budget for 2015-16 includes a number of important investments, such as \$390,000 for the replacement of a pumper truck as a part of our fleet replacement plan; \$200,000 for other equipment

replacement and \$250,000 to expand the asphalt tarmac at the Carmacks air tanker base.

We have allocated over \$15 million in the 2015-16 operation and maintenance funding for training, fire suppression activities and other operations to manage this important public safety program in Yukon. This includes salary and wages, repairs and maintenance, fuel costs, training and other supports that enable the team to protect our communities from the potentially disastrous effects of a wildland fire.

We will again have two full turbine air tanker groups for the fire season this year. These turbine aircraft significantly improve response times, carry heavy payloads and meet current North American standards for air tankers.

We recently announced over \$850,000 that will be allocated for FireSmart in 2015-16. This continues to be a valuable program that is helping to reduce the risk of wildfire to our communities. More than \$13 million has been invested in 395 FireSmart projects across Yukon over the past 16 years. FireSmart funding is available to First Nations and municipal governments, registered non-profit organizations, community associations and school councils.

Managing fires in Yukon's boreal forest is always challenging, but I know that we have the right people, equipment and protections in place to safeguard our communities.

Yukon's Emergency Measures Organization leads all emergency preparedness planning for the Yukon government. It focuses on the four pillars of emergency management: prevention/mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. In an emergency event, EMO is responsible for drawing together the resources and expertise required to support a response in a timely and effective manner, whether it's from a local source, across Canada or across North America.

In 2015-16, we will see capital investments for EMO that include: \$30,000 for replacement of a search and rescue vehicle; \$235,000 for search and rescue storage units in Carmacks and Haines Junction; and \$125,000 for emergency public alerting equipment that will enable Yukon government community transmitters to broadcast mandated public emergency messages issued by Yukon or Environment Canada as part of the national public alerting system. \$620,000 in O&M funding is also identified for the emergency measures office to manage its operations.

The Fire Marshal's Office is responsible for reducing the loss of life and property to fire and the related emergencies throughout Yukon. It does this through leadership, education, enforcement, program development and first response. The FMO operates 16 volunteer fire departments inclusive of over 225 volunteer firefighters in unincorporated communities. In addition to the peace of mind that a properly equipped and trained fire department provides to a community, this operation is also of enormous value because a local fire service has a direct economic impact on residents who are able to pay lower homeowner rates levied by insurance providers.

The budget identifies over \$1.7 million this year for the operations of the FMO. This includes funding for honoraria for volunteers recruited and active in various communities around the territory.

The capital budget for the FMO this year is over \$4.7 million. It includes \$993,000 for fire protection, including fleet fire truck replacements, volunteer fire department equipment and upgrades, including fleet repair, turnout gear replacement, communications equipment and more.

Building on the past investments we have made in fire hall replacements, including significant investments in 2014-15 for the fire hall in Beaver Creek, as I noted earlier, we're investing approximately \$3.7 million in 2015-16 capital dollars for the construction of a new fire hall in Carcross. This new fire hall will reduce operating costs and better meet the needs of the local fire department and other emergency services within the community.

In addition to wildland fire, structural fire and emergency measures, the department continues to enhance Yukon's emergency medical services. YEMS provides safe, effective and timely emergency pre-hospital care to Yukon residents and visitors. In doing so, it is responsible for air and ground transportation of patients to and from the health care facilities throughout the Yukon, and tertiary centres in southern Canada.

YEMS is an essential partner in Yukon's health care system and works with Health and Social Services, the Yukon Hospital Corporation and other partners to respond to emergencies whenever the need arises. In this way, Yukon EMS helps to provide consistent, competent health care across the territory.

In 2014, YEMS responded to 5,278 calls in the Whitehorse catchment area and to 1,334 calls in the communities, for a total of 6,612. The YMS medevac air ambulance service responded to 860 calls in the same time frame. Our Yukon EMS team members are there for us in our time of need. These skilled men and women in the service, both staff and volunteers, do a tremendous job protecting our communities and making Yukon a great place to live. I want to take an opportunity to thank each and every one of them for what they do for us.

The 2015-16 budget identifies \$451,000 in capital expenditures. That includes \$310,000 to support the purchase of two new ambulances. Our main estimates include \$386,000 to support a strategic investment fund for rural community operations in our emergency medical services. This funding will help us make a difference in our service to communities and our partnerships with communities when it comes to EMS service.

The 2015-16 budget also identifies over \$9 million in O&M funding for emergency medical services operations in Yukon communities and that includes honoraria for EMS volunteers, wages, repairs and maintenance for ambulances and stations, upgrades to communication equipment, training and more.

Community Services is committed to providing emergency responders, both staff and volunteers with the

facilities, infrastructure, equipment and training that they need to do their jobs to the best of their ability and to provide care for Yukoners. I think I hear some of them out there right now. Their service on behalf of all Yukoners helps make Yukon a great place to live.

Also, in this branch of CS, the Building Safety and standards branch is responsible for helping to keep Yukoners safe in their homes and in the buildings they use for work, recreation and daily business. The branch accomplishes this through developing, interpreting, administering and enforcing the building, plumbing, electrical and mechanical standards in unincorporated communities, rural municipalities and rural areas of Yukon.

Building Safety and standards issues permits for, and conducts inspections of building construction, plumbing, electrical, gas and boiler related work on buildings and facilities in rural municipalities, unincorporated communities and rural areas. In 2015-16, over \$1.8 million is identified to support branch operations of the Building Safety and standards branch.

Moving on from the Protective Services branch, I would like to turn to the Community Development Division. First of all, within that division is of course Community Affairs. This budget also reflects the significant investments we in the Department of Community Services are making to support and build the capacity of local governments. The programs and services we offer help make Yukon communities great places to live, work, play and raise families.

Community Services supports the establishment and operation of effective local governments and works to foster effective working relationships between communities and the Yukon government. Communities rely on Community Affairs staff for their integrity and professionalism, which is evident in the successful partnership with the Association of Yukon Communities and work that has been accomplished with municipal governments and local advisory councils.

This government recognizes that municipalities make a major contribution to improving Yukoners' quality of life and we are providing over \$25 million to directly support local governance in 2015-16.

We are providing \$72,000 for LACs and value their contribution to local governance; more than \$6.6 million in grants-in-lieu of taxes are also payable to Yukon's eight municipal governments and \$100,000 is identified as a contribution to the operations of the Association of Yukon Communities.

Community Services promotes good governance and sustainable and healthy communities and we believe in supporting Yukon municipalities.

I recognize my time has elapsed, so before getting into the other branches of the government and providing a brief overview as to what this budget entails for those branches, I will cede the floor and look forward to hearing comments from members opposite.

Mr. Barr: I thank the minister for his remarks. I will speak in some generalities still for a bit. I would like to finish up with Tagish and then carry on before I move into more

specific questions. I do thank those for listening and look at going forward to other parts of the debate.

I did want to comment — I know the elders and seniors at the Tagish community hall enjoy their carpet bowling activities and also the coffee and chat. The fall fair has continued to expand along with the weekly farmers market, which has been ongoing with the hard work of the folks in that community — looking forward to the funding that I know that this side of the House has brought up prior to even my being here around the different structure funding for community clubs and that is welcome. I guess as we have all moved in that direction, it is welcome in the rural communities to be able to have some breathing space, so I would like to thank all those for those efforts so that we're now in a place that — for example I was at the last rec meeting last week in Tagish and they're looking at being able to have some other funding to help their rec director not be so taxed in all the work that will make life a little easier in that one particular community club, so I would just like to thank those involved for seeing that to fruition.

Also the civic addressing is moving forward in Tagish and the minister opposite may be happy to hear that if he hasn't done so already. People have been putting up those signs to number their places. I would like to comment on the funding for training that was announced by the minister briefly just minutes ago in his first remarks and acknowledge the new Fire Chief Boyd Piper and a couple of the other volunteer firefighters who will be using some of those funds to attend the first upcoming competition for first responders in Vancouver in May. I wish them all well and know what that has done is that it has raised the morale of other volunteer firefighters, which we know we've been hearing can be lacking in some of the communities. People are kind of excited about getting into physical fitness to be able to take pride in increasing their own personal abilities in their physical fitness, which will only result throughout the territory in greater responses and efficiency in delivering the skills necessary to be a first responder.

I do know that the culinary cook-off coming up at Six Mile River is a welcoming thing in May — a welcoming event. The swans at Swan Haven — we do know the numbers of swans that attend are in huge numbers and it's always a welcoming sign of spring, but not to forget that they're very close to look down upon the Tagish bridge and see what only happens once a year here when they are coming through — for many people who do get to view them. I haven't ridden my 10-speed there, or my bicycle there yet, but I'm going to take a ride to the —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Barr: Well no, I'm going to actually wear off a few more pounds and ride my bicycle — not my motorcycle — although that time of year is upon us and that's great.

I heard the minister prior commenting on some of the things that I did speak to that are Energy, Mines and Resources, Highways and Public Works. Some of these — I am quite well aware of that. I'm just taking the time to mention some of these things because they have been ongoing

issues in the communities that I do represent and throughout the territory. I would be remiss if I didn't comment at some point. Seeing that these are some of the moments when I get to speak, I would like to mention Pennycook road — that people are still waiting for those kinds of things for the new Highways and Public Works minister — that it's on the radar. I'll just leave it at that.

I would like to move on now and speak to the 2015-16 specific estimates. When I look at these estimates, the story begins to emerge and it's most telling that the estimates point to a number of Community Services projects that were budgeted for the 2014-15 fiscal year and that either did not get built or major work did not get completed. These projects include: Beaver Creek library; the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation administration building's energy retrofits; the Mayo new community well and treatment; Teslin waste-water system upgrades — and the list goes on. All told, \$8.2 million in capital projects — \$8.2 million — was budgeted for last year and then wasn't spent. This year the government has announced that it has record spending planned for Yukon. How can we feel comfortable with the government managing the megaprojects being touted by the Premier when the modest projects currently in progress are running late? Madam Chair, why is this? A contractor is not bidding or not accepted. Are tenders not awarded? In a place like Yukon, when too much capital spending is approved, it's easy to overwhelm the capacity of local companies and more are handed to Outside contractors.

Here's what happens next: the trickle-down economic benefits of Outside contractors with fly-in or non-resident labour does not accrue to the territory, yet the jobs are done by local companies or by hiring local workers. This challenge applies to any department where capital spending is committed — Health and Social Services, Highways and Public Works, Yukon Housing Corporation and Community Services.

The contrasts are clear, Madam Chair. Hundreds of thousands of dollars for another recreation facility in Whitehorse, the outdoor AstroTurf fields and the projects in communities like the Dawson City rec centre and the Carmacks arena are still left wanting.

Community infrastructure, of which the maintenance is the responsibility of the department, isn't being maintained. It just isn't happening. Look at what happened to the Ross River School, a project for which problems were known to the government in 2008. When we were there on our community tour, it was brought to our attention, and it was kind of reminiscent of the Ross River bridge, which is now a success story — and it's very happy that the people came together for that. But to note that, back in 2008 when repair funds were allocated to the school, it's the view of those in the community that those repairs hadn't happened. What we're looking at is that people are in houses. Although the community has risen to the occasion with what's going on with the school by hosting classrooms and activities and there being various outbuildings, this didn't have to happen.

Also, we know that community resources in the school, like the Ross River library, aren't accessible.

Similar questions exist for several of our ambulance stations in Watson Lake — I do remember from three years now that concerns that were brought forward. The question is whether or not this has been resolved, especially in the winter months — when the bay itself was not built to enough length so that a stretcher could be pulled out in the bay itself, so the doors have to be left open, not only to do some of those things with stretchers, but to clean the ambulance itself. At minus temperatures, that's quite an inconvenience to those who are delivering that service or trying to do just the daily upkeep, maintenance and cleanliness of that ambulance station.

I also have to think about the ambulance station, or the ambulance, in the new — although it's welcomed that the new fire trucks are happening and new ambulances are purchased. Those are great things. However, some of the infrastructure, like in Carmacks, that still isn't built — and hopefully we'll get a timeline when that place will happen. I do realize that we can't do it all at once. I've stated that, however, when we do move forward in places like Carmacks for an ambulance station or a fire truck, that is taken into consideration, that the building itself will be designed so that especially the trucks and the ambulances themselves will fit in the space provided, and that ongoing care and maintenance and moving of stretchers — when you move a six-foot stretcher out the back of an ambulance, it requires probably at least eight more feet on the length of the bay — so that these things are in the design as we are going forward and these things are taken into consideration.

It just makes sense that we really do ask the people who are in the trenches, the volunteers who are out there doing that work — their opinions as to some of the oversights that do happen. This is not to place blame on anyone or anybody in the department; it is only that we continue to sharpen our pencil to see how we can do better. I am just raising those things in that way and hope that as we do move forward that we learn from our past. I have all the confidence that the minister will take this to heart because I know he is a good guy — sensitive, I was going to say.

Moving on — on the question of emergency services, I would like to underscore that we will be watching closely to ensure that Haines Junction ambulance services' ongoing challenges are met by the department. Not all ambulance services are created equal and ensuring a long-term solution that allows Haines Junction to access continued ambulance services is of paramount importance. When I speak to that situation — and I know that this has to do with what will be happening over this next year in Community Services — I raised questions about this last fall in the House. I do know that that issue is still outstanding, but I had been given assurances that it would be resolved by this summer so that we are not looking at the volunteer hours — and the numbers are high for emergency folks in that ambulance in Haines Junction.

The issue is that because of the length of the callouts, those volunteers are out so long that with the time for them

being volunteers and then to attend their day jobs becomes very difficult. It is specifically in the summer months that these things occur. I know I did hear on the news last week that there are still concerns that there hasn't been an agreement reached as to how this will proceed as we move forward and the summer months are coming quite quickly. I am looking forward to hearing the latest update on that. I did ask about that in the briefing, and I would like to thank the members of the department for the briefing. We did very much spend our whole time and wish we could have spent more. Although it was very informative, that was one of the things that had been left unanswered.

I guess I would like to speak also on waste diversion. We see from the budget that this Yukon Party is still committed to short-term solutions to the real challenge of recycling in Yukon. It is good to hear that one of the recyclers, Raven, is looking at opening their after-hours drop-off, which is going to be welcome to those who desire to recycle in the territory.

Although the recyclers did receive what they asked for — and that is not disputed at all, because I know that the minister has stated that — I would hope that before we get to another place in recycling, that there be talks that would be ongoing so that we could look at long-term planning for recycling in the territory and solid-waste diversion, for example.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Barr: Oh yes, thanks. Although I know that there are questions within what I'm stating, I will have specific questions, one at a time. If I don't hear the answers in these, I will go back to them and we'll finally get to that part of the debate. I am still trying to just move through some opening remarks in this way.

I'm sorry, Madam Chair, how much time do I have? Three minutes? Okay.

A specific question here — and it does come from realizing some of the past things I've brought up in the House — is: Does the government have a plan to cycle out some of its older landfills and ensure that we have a place to put our waste? Is there any plan being undertaken on this? The budget seems to fail on any concrete evidence of such planning. I know that there has been some berm-raising of some of the periphery solid-waste facilities to allow for the life of what is in place to live longer, knowing that from previous discussions, the landfill solid-waste facilities themselves are reaching their filling point sooner than the projected numbers, as a result of people dumping in periphery landfills other than in Whitehorse here. So that is a question that I did want to raise.

I'll just sit down and look forward to listening to the minister's other remarks.

Chair: Would members like a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Madam Chair, I would like to thank the member opposite for his comments and questions. I think it would probably benefit the House to leave the questions aside until after the opening statements are done. That way we can engage in single questions and single answers. It would probably be easier. For now, I will continue with my opening remarks and then once we've finished those, we can get into those individual questions.

I did want to thank the member opposite for the very kind words about me, although I think it's important to reflect that I am a very sensitive guy. I hope he takes that into consideration the next time we engage in Question Period or other fora where he may be a little bit mean to me. I would like to remind him that my feelings are very sensitive, as he noted correctly. I thank members for offering tissues at this time.

The department support for sport and recreation in Yukon includes support for our athletes and ambassadors in major games and at local levels and for building our sport and recreation facilities so our athletes and citizens have places to train, have great places to play and ultimately, live happier and healthier lives.

We have committed a significant amount in this budget to repair and upgrade existing recreation facilities in our 12 unincorporated communities. In 2014, the then Minister of Community Services announced support for the development of a new outdoor sports complex in Whitehorse. This facility is envisioned to have two artificial-turf fields, an eight-lane rubberized track and bleachers. Community Services has formalized an agreement with the Yukon Outdoor Sports Complex Association, YOSCA, so that we can move forward together on the work required to develop this important piece of sport and recreation infrastructure. We have awarded the design contract and are working with the City of Whitehorse now on finalizing a location along with the necessary zoning requirements.

This facility will provide opportunities for enhanced training and development for Yukon athletes. It will offer a new space for the territory's recreation community to host events during the summer months. Facilities like this provide sport development as well as social development, and economic benefits for the community as a whole.

Yukon government will also invest \$1 million in this budget to support Yukon's participation in the 2016 Arctic Winter Games in Nuuk, Greenland. As we recently announced we will be providing \$100,000 to support the Arctic X Games, an alternate event here that will be hosted in Yukon to provide a competitive opportunity for participants in sports that will not be reflected in the Arctic Winter Games in 2016. Yukon's leadership in the Arctic X Games has not gone unnoticed by our neighbour jurisdictions across the north or by the athletes who will be able to compete at the highest level in both Greenland and Whitehorse in 2016.

This budget also includes an additional \$325,000 to support the 2015 Western Canada Summer Games, where I'm confident that again our Yukon athletes will be ambassadors for our territory and for their sports.

We recently announced a \$400,000 increase in community recreation assistance funding, or grant funding, for unincorporated Yukon communities. This funding increase begins in this 2015-16 budget and helps our communities fund recreation, wellness and active living opportunities. If members have a chance to look at the budget, you will see some significant increases across the Yukon in those unincorporated communities. As I am sure all members can appreciate, our investments in sport and recreation this year contribute significantly to making Yukon a great place to live and to play.

Over \$2 million in operation and maintenance funding is budgeted to provide public library services in Yukon communities. This includes funding to operate the Whitehorse Public Library and to support staff in our community libraries. Circulation of physical materials remains at the heart of libraries and their use continues to expand. In Whitehorse, we estimate that over 150,000 items were borrowed in 2014-15 and that, in the communities, over 34,000 items were borrowed. Loans of physical materials are now complemented by the use of electronic resources such as the e-library, which continues to rise in popularity. An estimated 5,000-plus publications were borrowed electronically in 2014-15. The e-library is very successful with some-2,000 e-books and audio books available for downloading. New titles in both English and French are added to the collection each year. Since its launch in 2011, over 1,100-individual users have borrowed items from the collection more than 15,000 times.

Libraries play an important social role in our communities and foster connections between people. Programs for all ages, public meeting rooms and Internet access are just some of the services that are offered by our libraries. Our libraries provide a safe, welcoming and comfortable environment to relax, study, read or play and are a key pillar in making Yukon a great place to live.

Within our Community Operations branch, there is over \$7.7 million in operation and maintenance funding allocated for this branch to manage public drinking water facilities, solid waste, waste-water disposal and other services that benefit unincorporated Yukon communities. This includes our recently announced increase of \$641,000 to support recycling diversion credits, along with a \$689,000 increase to support solid-waste management.

Our O&M investment in operations also includes a \$111,000 increase to support community groundwater monitoring. In 2015-16, Yukon government is committing \$250,000 toward a new water delivery truck in Ross River. That is an important resource that serves the community.

Infrastructure development continues to be a priority of the department in 2015-16. Our department delivers infrastructure projects through our Infrastructure Development branch, along with our Community Affairs and Community Operations branches. You will find highlights of over \$1.8

million in gas tax-funded projects in this budget, including funding for the construction of a new lagoon for the community of Ross River, support for the Ross River solid-waste facility and upgrades to the Burwash sewage lagoon.

A new gas tax administrative agreement was signed on July 24, 2014, which provides up to \$163 million in funding from 2014 to 2024 for public infrastructure projects in Yukon communities. Eligible categories have been expanded, and remaining money from the previous fund has been rolled into the new agreement.

To date, over \$73 million in funding has been approved for 185 gas tax projects and various municipal and First Nation initiatives through the gas tax fund. These initiatives are crucial to our communities.

This budget includes comprehensive support for Building Canada projects across our territory. Some of the projects continue work that has been started in previous years. All of the projects make a difference to our communities. Since 2007, federal, territorial and municipal governments have committed over \$265 million to core infrastructure needs in Yukon under the original Building Canada fund. The new Building Canada fund will provide approximately \$342 million to support Yukon infrastructure over the next 10 years in a 75-percent Canada, 25-percent Yukon split. We expect to see over \$29 million invested in Building Canada projects in this coming year. This funding, along with the gas tax, helps us to address our ongoing infrastructure needs, create jobs and improve the quality of life for all Yukoners.

We are currently developing a new Yukon infrastructure plan and are engaging with key stakeholders across the territory. Once in place, this plan will guide our investments for the short and medium term. Specific Building Canada highlights for this year include the following: funding to support upgrades to the Carmacks waste-water plant for a total of \$1.1 million; upgrades to the Dawson water system for \$1.75 million; \$3.2 million for Mayo sewer, water and road upgrades that will accommodate existing and future urban lot development; \$3.1 million for water well upgrades in Mayo that will include a new well, water treatment and distribution of local drinking water; roads will be upgraded in both Pelly Crossing and Teslin; and \$2.1 million will support the replacement of three lift stations in Teslin as a part of upgrades to their water system.

The Tagish Taku subdivision and supply pumphouse and fill point will be constructed with \$400,000 in funding support. Over \$5.1 million will support the construction of a new water treatment plant and pumphouse in Watson Lake. Over \$1.2 million will go to support the design and construction of a water treatment plant to serve the communities of Deep Creek, Horse Creek and Grizzly Creek. Also \$1.8 million will support upgrades to the community water well in Mendenhall, including well upgrades, storage tanks, filtering treatment systems and an addition to the facility to house new equipment. \$600,000 will go to support our efforts in building on our solid-waste action strategy to make infrastructure improvements to our territory-wide solid-waste management system. This will include upgrades to

make our facilities more efficient. In 2015-16, the government will also invest \$1.7 million in flood- and erosion-control projects throughout the territory, including projects in Carcross, Mayo and Liard.

Madam Chair, within the Land Development branch of the Department of Community Services, we have a supply of lots in the City of Whitehorse that are available for sale over the counter and this is a significant accomplishment, as part of making Yukon a great place to live means ensuring that Yukoners have great spaces to live on and build dream homes. Together with the City of Whitehorse, we have worked hard to catch up the supply of land with that of existing and future demand.

The Whistle Bend development in Whitehorse is growing. A number of streets have been filled with homes, which allow the installation of the final street landscaping to proceed in some areas this year. Three small neighbourhood parks will also be constructed and landscaped in the subdivision this summer. Eagle Bay lookout will be a beautiful addition to the recreation space in Whistle Bend. The viewpoint is located close to the entrance of the subdivision and will provide residents a view of the valley in which McIntyre Creek joins the Yukon River. In recent years, a number of eagles have returned to make this area their home.

There is over \$7 million identified in the 2015-16 budget to support the land development work in Whistle Bend this year. This will include work with the City of Whitehorse to improve the performance of the Livingstone Trail sewage lagoon and reduce odours to the best degree possible. When complete, this subdivision is envisioned as a neighbourhood for 8,000 residents, complete with transit service, a town square featuring public parkland, retail shops, space for a school, plentiful greenspace and many kilometres of paved and unpaved trails.

Within the Corporate Policy, Community Services division, we have a number of important items. In the area of Professional Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, formerly Consumer Services, our department will continue to provide support over the coming year. \$781,000 is included to support Professional Licensing and Regulatory Affairs. This branch licenses well over 4,000 professionals, including health professionals, medical practitioners and real estate salespersons. As well, the branch expects to issue over 150 raffle and casino licences for charitable and religious groups in Yukon in 2015.

We also have the Corporate Affairs branch in that section. To ensure orderly and responsible commercial activity in Yukon through Corporate Affairs, \$835,000 is allocated this year, including costs associated with implementing a computerized personal property system that is another step in modernizing Yukon's business environment and is helping ensure that Yukon investors and consumers enjoy similar opportunities and protection as in other Canadian jurisdictions.

The business legislation reform project, which modernizes Yukon's business legislation, is also coming into effect on May 1, 2015 and will be administered by this

branch. This major project will help to make Yukon a more attractive place in which to register a business entity and contribute to our economic growth.

The Employment Standards and Residential Tenancies office also falls under the department. The new *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* provides a clear framework for Yukon tenants and landlords and works to promote a healthy private rental market that is in line with best practices from across Canada. We look forward to finalizing the necessary regulations to fully proclaim the act into effect later this year.

Public education materials, an important component of the act, are being finalized to help guide landlords and tenants in their agreements and understanding of rights and responsibilities. The total allocation for the new Employment Standards and Residential Tenancies office is \$889,000 and includes personnel dollars, program materials and dollars for operations.

In the Property Assessment and Taxation branch, \$4.7 million in O&M funding is allocated. This includes significant funding in transfer payments to Yukon homeowners for the Yukon homeowners grant. In 2015, we estimate that over 23,000 properties will be assessed and over 8,000 homeowner grants will be paid, and \$1.8 million in capital is allocated to continue to support important taxation based lending programs. The first is the rural electrification and telephone program to assist rural property owners with installation of power and telephone services in rural areas.

The second is the domestic well program, which helps rural property owners with low-cost financing to drill domestic water wells. We took steps last year that included making changes to the *Municipal Act* and the *Assessment and Taxation Act* to expand the rural domestic water well program to property owners in participating municipalities. This expansion is also captured in the \$1.8-million capital funding for this year and includes an increase of \$400,000 overall.

All three of these programs are fully recoverable on property taxes through local improvement charges.

The highlights mentioned today merely scratch the surface of the great work of the Department of Community Services and the work that the department does to make the Yukon a great place to live.

This concludes my remarks on the main budget for 2015-16. I just wanted to thank the department — each branch — as I've tried to overview some of what they do. I look forward to getting into individual questions now about the various aspects of the budget and providing some responses to questions as they arise.

Mr. Barr: I'm happy to hear the minister's comments and his opening remarks. We're nearing the end of the day. I'll move into some other stuff, although I have some comments.

I would first like to start off with the initial comments from the minister of what, quite likely, in the past could have been called a point of order around meanness. I heard that word. However, I do know, and I did overhear, that the minister was planning on getting me a teddy bear that reflected my true character, and he knows I do not have a

mean bone in my body. It is a good day here in the House, Madam Chair, and we'll just carry on from here.

I would like to say that the Yukon NDP believes firmly in the importance of community infrastructure. I just have a bit more to speak on this prior to getting into first questions. Although I've asked several, I will go back to them, as the minister requested, in the department.

The Yukon government cannot be a Whitehorse-centric organization, we believe. We heard earlier today from my colleague who asked why the Village of Burwash Landing is still served by Haines Junction RCMP. The station is over 125 kilometres away. The government has the power to make a positive change in this community by requesting that the RCMP station be a permanent force in the village.

Madam Chair, the government seems to be pushing back against the community and against the First Nation government, which are pleading for this change. It's a similar refrain to what we heard from Yukon's communities and local area councils. At the end of the day, Yukoners do not feel listened to.

This spring, my colleagues and I were part of an organized 17-stop sustainable and prosperous community tour to listen to Yukoners from across the territory and we had discussions about our future. This is what we heard: the consultation isn't there; community needs are not being met; government assets are not being adequately maintained; and communities are not happy.

We know that the Yukon Party government prefers to stick to its guns and push forward, as we are hearing and reflecting back with a top-down communities plan, but we are doing communities a disservice when the government puts Whitehorse first.

I know that I did mention the Tagish fill site and the new well there. I had brought it up previously that that site has been going through some growing pains that have left some of the folks living out there without access to water for a week. I had written a letter about a backup plan. It would seem to me that this could fall into place for rural communities throughout the territory. I would like to hear a response from the minister: Has there been consultation with — specifically the Tagish volunteer fire department that is willing to work with it toward a backup plan so that if the pump does go out — people, especially those who are living by "blue jug" as we know it if you live in rural parts — blue jug water fills — they could be able to access a backup plan in the future when the water source in the community for the general public isn't available?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: The new well at Tagish — if it isn't already commissioned, I think it is in the final throes of commissioning. I believe it is operating now, but the member's question is: What happens if the well doesn't work? Obviously, the first step and first goal is to have the well work.

The intent is to have the fill station operate for residents, but if there is an emergency and something happens — if the building burns down or the pump goes awry — that is something we'll have to deal with, depending on what happens, but we don't have a specific backup plan if it were to

occur tomorrow. I believe that what we would do is find a way to ensure that citizens have access to drinking water, whether it is from water delivery from Carcross or another fill site nearby. I don't know exactly what the member is looking for with regard to consultation. To my knowledge, no consultation has occurred to date on that but, as we move forward with the new fill site, if it is determined that it is something that we need to plan for, I will of course work with the community to determine how best to address those needs.

Mr. Barr: I merely included other communities that would be something kind of on the books that people could revert to, rather than wait — if there wasn't the possibility of people getting water. I do know that in Tagish — this is why I did send the letter to the minister, because people did want to know what they could do because they had and have been experiencing the availability due to — at one point, which I haven't heard definitively yet. The problem at that specific place, leaving people without water, was the possibly of an electric switch that was causing the problems. It was kind of like an intermittent problem and, without waiting for it to happen again, it would be as simple as contacting the fire hall that is already willing to do so — to open its doors — and let people know that's something that would be approved of and that it would be in place now, rather than wait, especially for a place that we already know has been having difficulties with getting water.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: The member is correct. There were some electrical switch problems with the well initially. I believe we resolved those concerns or those issues, but if they remain unresolved, I'm sure that staff are working diligently to address them. My understanding is they have been addressed and that the fill point is working. The member is correct. In an emergency situation, folks could go to the fire hall, but obviously with regard to drinking water, there are certain permits that are required and I don't think those are in place for the fire hall because it's not intended to be a drinking water supply.

Madam Chair, we'll continue to consult with the Tagish LAC. To my knowledge, they haven't raised this to date as being a significant problem — that being the need for an ongoing backup plan. But like I said, in the event of an emergency occurring, we'll of course respond and address the needs of the residents as best we can, whether that means having them go to an alternate flow point, whether that means having them go to the fire hall or whether it means finding other sources for drinking water for residents. But nonetheless, it's something we will continue to work with the LAC on and try to address the needs as they arise.

Mr. Barr: It was from one of the discussions with the LAC at a meeting — and I do attend the LACs in my riding quite regularly in all the communities, whether it is Tagish, Mount Lorne, Carcross or Marsh Lake, to hear from them specifically about ongoing issues. It was from one of those meetings that I said I would pursue that. If you would like a letter from the LAC, we can certainly do that also. It was a good point noted that the fire hall isn't designated for drinking

water, so that is something that people hadn't thought of as a result. However, we will just move on from there.

I would like to raise a question about waste management, as it was on everyone's mind over the new year that government missed its platform deadline to divert half of Yukon's waste with the 50:50 diversion waste by 2015. Knowing that we are in 2015, has the government set a new goal for 2016 in reaching 50:50 waste diversion?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: As the member points out, we have committed to using 50-percent diversion as a target going forward. Obviously we haven't reached that target so we'll continue to strive for that. I think that we have made considerable strides in increasing diversion and promoting recycling in the territory. Obviously the announcement that we made earlier this year of the enhanced diversion credits and the commitment that we've made to those diversion credits in our budget this year will certainly go a long way toward that. As we have all acknowledged, the diversion credits are not intended to be a long-term solution; however, they do provide a nice bridging function as we move forward with plans for future developments.

Obviously, as I've explained previously, those include regulatory changes, including changes to the beverage container regulation as well as the designated material regulation. The Department of Environment has that work underway currently and is still in the process of reviewing the public consultation and drafting the changes as per the consultation. I think that the enhanced beverage container regulation will go a long way to addressing the financial sustainability of the recycling system in the territory.

Community depots, as well as processors here in Whitehorse, benefit significantly by collecting handling fees through the beverage container regulation. The contemplated increase to the surcharge associated with the BCR will provide additional funding for both processors and for handlers who access that funding. I think that the steps that have been taken, and will be taken through the changes to the BCR, will significantly improve the financial sustainability of those community depots.

Obviously the changes contemplated for the designated material regulation will also add to the financial sustainability of our waste management systems here in the territory, and the inclusion of new products, such as electronic and electric products, will be a significant boost to the financial sustainability of the waste-management system.

I also wanted to note that, under the BCR, by including additional products such as dairy products, dairy jugs, there is an additional stream of revenue then available to both depots and processors as well.

To circle back to the original question, no, we haven't changed what we're working toward, and that goal remains a 50-percent diversion. We'll continue to work with our partners in the communities, whether it be here in Whitehorse or out in the rest of the Yukon, to address the needs of communities for infrastructure. We'll continue to make changes to our regulatory structures, like the BCR and the

DMR, and we'll continue to make considerable investments in the recycling system, as outlined in the budget here today.

I hope that addresses the member's question.

Mr. Barr: There's some clarification there for me on this side of the House. I was glad to hear in the minister's response that he recognizes that this isn't going to solve our problems into the future although, with the BCR and the DMR, those measures taken to date — we still need some long-term vision on how we will move forward in the territory so we're not ending up in a crisis situation like we have, where basically the government did do as requested by its partners and that the whole process led to things piling up, up at the Whitehorse transfer stations, with the shutting down of one of our recyclers to drop off 24 hours a day, such as cardboard and so on and so forth.

We do know that there are some steps that have arrested the immediate issues, but we're looking at the long term. What does the minister have planned to be proactive with ongoing talks with the recyclers in the territory?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: The member is correct that, as a result of our investments in the recycling diversion credits, Raven Recycling was able to reopen its public drop-off. I should note that, even when they had that public drop-off closed, Yukoners and folks in Whitehorse continued to have considerable access to recycling opportunities that were available in our community. Obviously there is more work to be done, and we'll continue to work with our partners throughout the Yukon to do that.

What we are contemplating, as I mentioned before, is making improvements and changes to the beverage container regulation and the designated materials regulation to add products and increase the rates. As I've indicated to the House before, the intent is to continue with that process to enhance those regulations. As we continue to develop that, we'll add products over the years. It's important that we add them in a consistent but manageable fashion so that folks aren't overwhelmed.

We'll continue to work with our Yukon communities, the partners we have in waste management throughout the territory, whether it be in recycling or in any facets of our solid-waste management systems. We work with the solid waste working group through the Association of Yukon Communities. That group has yielded some significant and tangible outcomes that we are working to implement. They include sharing best practices for signage, for training and for other considerations of that nature.

We are investing in infrastructure, both for recycling and for other forms of solid-waste management in all Yukon communities, whether they be transfer stations like the ones in the periphery of Whitehorse or whether they be regional landfills — regional solid-waste facilities — like Dawson and now Watson Lake. We will continue to enhance the opportunities that those communities have to recycle and to divert waste from the system by improving access to that infrastructure and we'll continue to work with our partners. Obviously as I said before, the diversion credits aren't a long-term solution, but they do offer a nice bridging mechanism for

any transition that would occur. Obviously it remains to be seen what exactly the City of Whitehorse will do with their plans. They've indicated — earlier at least — some intention to explore the opportunity of a curbside program in Whitehorse. If they do undertake that, that's a decision that they'll have to make, but we will be talking to them about that in the weeks and months to come.

We'll continue to look at what the City of Whitehorse is doing. We'll continue to look at what our communities are doing and we'll continue to make strategic investments where necessary to address the needs of Yukoners. But as I said before, the Yukon government is committed to environmentally and fiscally responsible waste management. Recycling is an important part of our plan and we'll continue to work with all of our partners, including the City of Whitehorse, to develop a sustainable model for the processing of recycling materials. As work continues to establish a more sustainable waste management system across the territory, the Yukon government is committing \$573,000 in this budget for local recycling processors, based on the type and tonnage of recyclable materials they process in 2015-16.

This is two and a half times more than what was provided last year. Another \$68,000 will be provided to ship some of the stockpiled materials that had built up over the last year. As I noted before, we're reviewing the necessary regulations to improve our system.

Madam Chair, I think we have a path forward. We're working closely with the processors. We're working closely with communities and we'll continue to do so throughout the coming years.

Mr. Barr: I'm happy to hear that there will be ongoing communication between the stakeholders in recycling in the territory and that I would hope to hear within this year that there is some tangible information rolled out by the government — what's coming up and how to proceed — so that we're not kept short or get caught having to stockpile to get where we are at now and play catch-up so that we can move forward in a timely manner. I will look forward to hearing more and will be keeping an eye on that so that we hear actual action timelines for specific areas.

I thank the member of his response and I would like to just continue on this line of questioning regarding solid-waste facilities and reflecting on Mayor Potoroka's comments for Dawson, for example, with hazardous waste in our rural facilities. It is not enough at this time that people are holding on to hazardous waste at their homes. They are being required to hold on to hazardous waste in their homes longer than they would like. For example, in Dawson — which is one that has stated their concerns around this — they themselves at the solid-waste facility in Dawson — the collection of these hazardous wastes is, I believe, two times year, and that is not enough and the space isn't enough. They have to handle hazardous waste too long. That would require the government to look into this and — not only in Dawson, but other rural places that deal with hazardous waste — that it be moved out of communities in a timely fashion, so that it gets to a safe place where it is not going to contribute harm to our

environment and so that families don't have it lying around their yards, given that the sites are not able to receive hazardous waste from them in a timely manner. I look forward to hearing the minister's response.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: The special waste program in the Yukon government and the household hazardous waste program is obviously something that is actually relatively new to the Department of Community Services. It came about as a result of the transfer from the Department of Environment to CS earlier this year, which was announced late last month — or earlier this month; I stand to be corrected on the date. We felt that it was an appropriate change to make to move the special waste program from the Department of Environment to Community Services to reflect Community Services' ongoing role in solid-waste management in the territory, and the fact that we are often — to use the term — “the boots on the ground” when it comes to solid-waste management in the territory. As a part of that transfer, obviously as well, the animal welfare program was transferred over to Environment from CS. There were some jokes about draft picks being involved, but I won't get into that.

With regard to solid-waste management in the territory, and specifically with regard to special waste and household hazardous waste, we are pleased to continue to provide the service, which provides up to \$200,000 of assistance, to allow for proper disposal of household hazardous waste and special waste. This service fits well within the Department of Community Services, which has a mandate to provide solid-waste services in unincorporated areas and to administer stewardship programs for designated materials throughout the territory.

The two departments — Community Services and Environment — are working together to ensure a smooth transition with no interruption in service for 2015. Any programming changes will continue to support existing businesses and offer viable solutions for industry, government and the public to dispose of their special waste in a responsible manner.

There are two components to the special waste program: the collection of commercial special waste, currently operated through a contract, and the collection of household hazardous waste, which is carried out by municipalities and NGOs, with YG staff providing technical advice.

Transportation costs account for about one-third of the total cost of collecting, transporting and disposing of special wastes. Programming delivered by Community Services beginning in April of this year will be similar to the services provided by Environment in past years, with one exception: disposal and transportation of household hazardous waste will continue to be subsidized by government, with free drop-off days offered throughout Yukon communities. The only change for 2015 will involve a reduction to the amount of assistance provided to a commercial business for the removal of special waste, from a limit of \$2,500 per business per year to \$1,500 limit per business per year. Approximately 25 businesses will be affected, as they employ that service. On a

positive note, reducing the per-client limit will allow more businesses to receive support through the program.

The commercial collection program is based on a first-come, first-served model, where participants are responsible for paying all costs associated with the disposal of their generated special waste. As I noted, the municipalities obviously perform an important function with regard to the collection of householder hazardous waste, and we come out from time to time to the communities to collect that waste.

I haven't heard that there was an inadequate frequency with which we're picking up this material. If that is the case with a particular community — Dawson being the example the member opposite raised — I'm happy to work with the municipality to determine if we can pick that up more frequently. I know that oftentimes — we try to get it out annually but, in some cases, communities simply don't have enough material to justify the cost of going out and picking up material on an annual basis, so we'll go every other year.

If that's not the case in a community like Dawson, as suggested by the member opposite, we're happy to work with the community to try to get out more frequently or try to remove more material when we do.

I haven't heard, in my conversations with the mayor of Dawson, that there's a concern about the special waste program and, if that's the case, I look forward to working with the municipality to address it. I believe that covers the question the member opposite raised.

Mr. Barr: I thank the minister opposite for his response. I'll pass that information on to Mayor Potoroka and I'm sure he'll be happy to hear that the minister is willing to work with the situation there. I'll also sleuth around and see, for other rural communities, if possibly this is an issue and let them know that the minister is willing to work with finding solutions, if there are issues in the picking up of hazardous waste, not only from businesses, but from households in rural Yukon. We're just looking to do this to keep people safe. I thank the minister for his response.

I'll just stay with the landfills for a moment here and direct a question that I did speak to in my opening remarks of the minister. It had been brought forward — and I did bring it forward, I believe, in the spring of last year, when I was speaking with some of the folks who had contracts, particularly in Carcross and Marsh Lake — where there had been some consultation with a firm from Toronto to look at the lifespan of the solid-waste facilities themselves and being able to reach the 10-year life expectancy of amounts being dumped.

I believe there was one study done for \$100,000 from a firm that came from Toronto and stated, “Well, we'll just raise the berm level in the periphery of the solid waste.” I believe some of that work may or may not have been done, but I would ask the minister, if he is not aware, to look into the situation because it does raise the question that was brought forward as to how we are looking at the life cycles of our solid-waste facilities, noting that the 10-year cycle was looking more to be a realistic five-year cycle in the capacity that would be left.

I didn't hear that in the minister's opening remarks and would like to bring it to his attention, so that we are looking forward, rather than being caught unaware of a situation such as this, because it does take planning to look at alternate solid-waste dump sites, if you will. I remember when Carcross — its capacity was filled and the planning wasn't in place then to move to where the solid-waste facility is now.

It left a lot of people, especially who lived there, with a lot of concerns as to the site that is in existence out there with the environmental concerns that have to be addressed — a YESAA application and so forth — if this is coming up, so we are prepared.

I would ask the minister if he is aware of this. If not, take it into consideration and get back to me with the information at his earliest convenience.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I know that there has been a lot of work done with regard to the life cycles of solid-waste facilities around the territory, although I am a bit puzzled as to exactly which site he is talking about. He is referencing the fact that we were going to increase the berm height of some site, but I am not sure which one. If he is able to give me the name of the site that he is talking about, where there are apparently plans to raise the berm level, I would be happy to look into the matter.

Typically, our sites are transfer stations and are not intended to be "dumps," to use the term the member referred to.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 18, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Mr. Elias: I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.