



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 203

1st Session

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HANSARD

Tuesday, April 28, 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
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Liberal Party

Sandy Silver	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, April 28, 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 Immunization Awareness Week

Ms. McLeod: I rise on behalf of all members of the House today to acknowledge April 26 to May 2 as National Immunization Awareness Week.

We all know that immunizations save lives. In fact, they have saved more lives in Canada than any other health intervention over the past 50 years. It wasn't too long ago that childhood diseases such as polio, German measles or whooping cough caused severe sickness and complications and sometimes even death.

Here at home, despite the safety of immunizations, a robust publicly funded immunization program and the importance of immunization in keeping healthy, hundreds of Yukon children remain under-immunized. Immunization is the safest, most cost-effective public health approach to decreasing vaccine-preventable diseases in the Canadian population and yet there has been a decline in immunization rates in Canada. This is partly due to complacency and partly as a result of misinformation.

While Canadians have easy access to vaccines, a number of us are behind in our immunizations. We might forget to bring our children in for their booster shot or we might keep putting off making an appointment until we have more time. This can lead to outbreaks such as the measles outbreak recently seen in other Canadian jurisdictions and the United States. To help Yukoners get up to date on their immunizations, the Whitehorse Health Centre has weekday clinics from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. with extended hours every Tuesday until 6:30 p.m.

In addition, the Whitehorse Health Centre is hosting a health fair for children entering kindergarten. It's an opportunity for 4- to 6-year-old children to get a checkup for their vision, hearing and other health services, including having their immunizations updated. The fair will be held on May 7 and 8 at the Whitehorse Health Centre between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. In communities, people are encouraged to call their local health centre for immunization times and dates.

Children are not the only ones susceptible to vaccine-preventable illnesses. Many immunizations require a booster after a number of years, and teenagers and adults are encouraged to call or visit their local health centre to ensure

that their immunizations are up to date. Not only are under-immunized adults at risk of contracting the diseases themselves, but they can also infect others, such as infants who may not yet be fully immunized.

Finally, a word on misinformation — there are a lot of websites and other sources of information that seek to discourage us from getting immunized, and I urge Yukoners to obtain their information from credible sources that provide solid, scientifically accurate facts. Immunizations truly are remarkable at preventing the spread of infectious disease and I encourage all Yukoners to take the time to have their immunization status checked and get their immunizations updated if needed.

In recognition of rural experiential models

Hon. Mr. Graham: I rise on behalf of all members today to pay tribute to the rural experiential model taking place this week in the wonderful community of Watson Lake. Rural experiential models bring together students in grades 10 to 12 and educators from seven rural Yukon communities for an intensive week of learning and teaching in fine arts and applied science skills. The Department of Education is committed to increasing the diversity of programming options and improving learning outcomes for rural and First Nation students in this territory. This initiative supports equity in education for rural students by delivering similar opportunities to the participants as those made available to urban students.

Students from Carmacks, Dawson City, Haines Junction, Mayo, Pelly Crossing, Ross River and Watson Lake work together in larger groups, practising fine arts and applied skills with rural teachers and local experts, and learning about Yukon First Nation culture and traditions on the land. Students are able to choose from several daytime-session options and evening activities as well that appeal to their interests that have been developed and delivered by rural teachers, administrators, local experts and departmental support staff. The choices vary from ancestral technologies on the land, hair and esthetics, mini-med school, Dene games, sports, crafts, music, hiking, movies and many others.

The rural experiential model is an excellent example of how successful collaboration between teachers, administrators, Public Schools branch, school councils, First Nations and rural communities can support Yukon students. The success of the rural experiential models is thanks to the dedication and efforts of many terrific teachers, administrators and departmental support staff who work together to create a program that engages students and offers opportunities for students and staff alike to connect with peers and colleagues in other rural communities.

I would also like to thank the community of Watson Lake, which is hosting a rural experiential model for the very first time this year.

In recognition of the Yukon School of Visual Arts graduates

Mr. Silver: It is with great pleasure that I rise on behalf of the all of my colleagues here in the Legislative Assembly to

pay tribute to the graduates of the Yukon School of Visual Arts. SOVA is an incredibly important institution to the residents of Dawson City and I hope that the students graduating look back on their time in the Klondike with great fondness.

I spoke today to Dr. Curtis Collins, the director and program chair, and he had this to say — and I quote: “This year’s group can be characterized as being extremely entrepreneurial and community-minded.” The direct programming of SOVA has a lasting impact on the social fabric of the community, but this year’s cohort stepped up more than ever and participated in many community events. The students helped organize, for example, a fundraiser to provide a local summer girls’ rock camp for Dawson students. The fundraiser was called “Punk-Rock the Night Away” and was held at the YOOP Hall. It was organized and featured performances by SOVA students.

Students also participated in a “nuit blanche”-style project in the dead of Dawson’s winter called “(s)hiver” that involved indoor and outdoor projects, events and functions at a number of locations — including KAC hall, the Alchemy Café, SOVA and the farmers market — in the dead of winter. There were circus performances; there were art projections on buildings all around town; and even an Outside DJ on Front Street complete with dancing and wood-chopping.

Mr. Speaker, both of these events and many more examples — far too many to list here — are examples of volunteer work that is done outside of the course requirements for these students and they are welcome contributions to the dynamic of winter life in the Klondike.

I’m a huge believer in SOVA and Dawson’s artistic community as a whole. It has a positive effect on our image, both on the national and the international stage, and continues to gain recognition, whether it is in galleries, theatres, or film festivals. It is interesting to note that the majority of full-time students this year in SOVA came from outside the territory — just showing the strong reputation that the school has developed.

So, on behalf of Dawson City residents, I would like to thank the students for choosing SOVA and for the contributions over the year to our town. To the graduating class, you have achieved a great milestone and deserve credit for your accomplishments. I would just like to congratulate the class of 2015. Congratulations to Izzy Burgwin, Robin Henry, Courtney Holmes, Ben Lamarche, Joe Sims, Jon Vanneste, Carly Woolner and part-time students Joyce Caley, Elise Ebner, Cathie Findlay-Brook, Haylie Griffis-King, Susan Holland, Andrea Pelletier, Max Sims and Nina Vroemen.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

In recognition of National Day of Mourning

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I rise today on behalf of Yukon government in recognition of the National Day of Mourning begun by the Canadian labour movement in 1984 and formally recognized by Parliament through the *Workers Mourning Day Act* in 1991. Today is set aside by Canadians

as a day of mourning to remember workers killed, disabled or injured in the workplace and workers afflicted with industrial disease.

Yukoners and Canadians mark this day because we seek earnestly to set an example of our commitment to the issue of health and safety in the workplace. Last year, five Yukoners died on the job. That is the highest number of workplace fatalities in the territory in more than 20 years.

These workplace deaths took loved ones from wives, children, brothers, sisters, friends and colleagues. In addition to those deaths, more than 430 workers were injured so badly they could not immediately return to work. Mr. Speaker, if one is too many, then 430 is far too many.

The impact reaches beyond the workplace. It reaches into our homes, into our community and throughout the entire territory, as we saw during that moving Day of Mourning commemoration less than a year ago. Sixty-three Yukoners have been killed on the job since the founding of the National Day of Mourning in 1984. The National Day of Mourning stands as a reminder that the simple act of going to work changed workers’ lives and the lives of all those around them for the worse.

Mr. Speaker, as I thought about why we observe today, I asked myself: What does it mean to remember the five Yukon workers who were killed and the 430 who were injured? For me, it means a renewed emphasis on safety as a shared responsibility.

It means reminding ourselves that we each must be vigilant and use a high level of common sense to protect ourselves and our colleagues on the territory’s worksites. We must work harder to make a difference in our workplaces to keep each other safe. That is what we committed at today’s ceremony. This year, let us commit to doing better. Let us work together to protect each other from harm to ensure we all return home to our loved ones at the end of the day. There is no better way to honour those who were killed than to prevent another workplace death or injury.

Ms. Hanson: I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to commemorate Canada’s National Day of Mourning. April 28 is a day of remembrance. It is a day of mourning for workers who have been killed, injured or suffered illness due to workplace hazards and toxic exposure, and it is a day of recognition that, for each worker killed on the job or who dies from a work-related illness, there is a family, there are friends — a community left to mourn.

As was mentioned, the motion to establish a National Day of Mourning was passed at the 1984 convention of the Canadian Labour Congress to honour workers in Canada who were killed, injured or disabled on the job or who suffer from occupational diseases. The date was chosen because it was on April 28, 1914 that Ontario proclaimed the first comprehensive workers’ compensation act in Canada — 70 years later. The Canadian labour movement lobbied for legislation to identify April 28 as National Day of Mourning. Their efforts were rewarded in February 1991 when the federal Parliament passed a Democratic Party private

member's bill, Bill C-223, which became the *Workers Mourning Day Act*. The idea caught on as labour organizations around the world adopted April 28 as a day of mourning. Today more than 100 countries recognize April 28, although many refer to it as the Workers' Memorial Day. Today, the Canadian flag on Parliament Hill will fly at half-mast. As we did today in the foyer of this building, workers, family and employers light candles. A moment of silence is observed.

April 28 monuments are often inscribed with the words, "Fight for the living. Mourn for the dead". As much as it is a day to honour the dead, today is also a day that reminds us that we need to protect the living. As we mourn the five Yukon workers killed on the job in 2014, we realize that the fight is not over.

Bill C-45, also known as the Westray bill, was created as a result of the 1992 Westray coal mining disaster in Nova Scotia where 26 miners were killed after methane gas ignited, causing an explosion. Despite serious safety concerns raised by employees, union officials and government inspectors at the time, the company instituted few changes. Eventually the disaster occurred.

Reaction to the Westray mine disaster in Pictou County, Nova Scotia, rebounded across Canada, including here in Yukon where the Westray mine owner also was involved in Faro. One legacy of the Westray disaster was a song, *Pictou County Coal*, co-written by Bob Hamilton and our colleague here in this House, the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. Part of the chorus expressed the anger felt by many: "How the hell can a man be dealing for the money, when 26 are buried in the mine?" The fact is that after the accident, the police and provincial government failed to secure a conviction against the company when three of its managers led Parliament to pass another legacy — the Westray bill — which amends the *Criminal Code* so that all organizations and individuals who direct the work of others anywhere in Canada are covered.

I raise this, Mr. Speaker, because, while I pray that there is never a situation in Yukon where a lack of worker safety leads to criminal charges being laid, I am mindful as I drive down Fourth Avenue and I glance at the injury tally where there is a daily increase in the numbers or I look at the statistics on the workers' compensation website regarding workplace safety violations in Yukon — many of them serious and potentially life-threatening — I am reminded that we all, too often, take workplace safety for granted. There is no room for complacency.

The statistics are chilling. In Canada, every year approximately 1,000 workers die — every day three workers die across this country. Every year, Canadian workers suffer from 250,000 workplace-related injuries or diseases and every day workers suffer from 680 work-related injuries or diseases. Five of those Canadian statistics in 2014, those fatalities, were Yukoners. They did not come home at the end of their work day.

I rarely share this, but I too, form part of these statistics. Like many little kids, I loved to get up early when my dad was

going to work, just as I did that day — a few days before Thanksgiving. My dad was a flight instructor, a pilot and an air traffic controller. He went to work; he was killed on the job. He left me, my three sisters, my brother and my mom — who was pregnant with my little brother. Worker deaths have impacts that last long beyond the headlines. As we vow to fight for the living, we know that in the hearts of those left behind, the mourning never ceases.

Mr. Silver: I rise as well today on behalf of the Liberal caucus to pay tribute to the National Day of Mourning. On April 28 every year we come together to remember the workers whose lives have been lost and those who have been injured while on the job, and to renew our collective commitment to healthy and safe workplaces.

Today we join the rest of Canada and countries around the world to honour the millions of lives that have forever been changed by workplace injuries. Although we continue to make gains toward stronger health and safety regulations, workplace injuries and work-related illnesses are still way too common. One workplace injury is still too many injuries in the workplace — although this year, 360 people have reported workplace injuries already.

The Day of Mourning reminds us how critical it is to enforce and to follow all health and safety regulations. All workers have the right to work in a safe and healthy environment and no one should ever become a victim of an unsafe workplace. One of the messages that we heard today from union representatives at the ceremony was: "Take these safe practices that you learn at work and take them home and share them with your family."

Workplace health and safety is a shared responsibility. It is up to both employers and employees to follow workplace safety procedures and to report any unsafe conditions immediately. Even something that may seem small could have catastrophic effects if ignored. By working together, then and only then can we not only prevent and reduce, but eliminate, workplace injuries.

As we gather to renew our commitment to preventing further workplace injuries, we also pause to reflect and to honour all workers who have been injured or killed on the job, and mourn with the families who have been left behind. As we pay our respects, we must not allow the memories or suffering of these workers to be forgotten. We remember the tragedies suffered and the triumphs achieved.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Graham: I would like all members of the Legislature to join me in welcoming the social studies 11 class from F.H. Collins Secondary School, along with their teacher, Michael Toews, who is a teacher and the vice-principal at F.H. Collins. I hope that your time here at the Legislature leaves you with a positive impression of the proceedings. Thank you for coming.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I would like to introduce to members today a couple of people from my riding. Mr. Dan Poelman has joined us. Dan is a friend and neighbour. He is also heavily involved with the judo association here in Yukon, and he is a pilot with Yukon's airline, Air North. I would like to ask all members to welcome him today to the gallery.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I would also like to introduce Michael Swainson. Michael is also a friend and neighbour who has been actively involved in ensuring that Yukoners and people who are involved with providing support services have a better ability to deal with some of the challenges they face. I would like to invite everybody to welcome Michael here as well.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming someone to the gallery. We have with us today big, bad Jon Rudolph, who is a defenceman with the Whitehorse Huskies senior men's hockey team.

Applause

Ms. White: I ask the House to join me in welcoming a constituent of the Member for Mountainview, my friend, Steve Hahn, who has taught me a lot of things that I think will be brought to light for him today. Thank you so much for being here, Steve, and thanks for the lessons and the guidance you have shown us.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 106: *An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act, with Respect to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* — Introduction and First Reading

Ms. Hanson: I move that a bill, entitled *An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act, with Respect to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition that a bill, entitled *An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act, with Respect to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 106 agreed to

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue working with the Yukon Outdoor Sports Complex Association to develop the proposed soccer fields and running track in Whistle Bend that would address a sports infrastructure gap in Yukon and be a valuable public investment for children and other users.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to examine the causes, effects and implications of post-traumatic stress disorder in the workplace, with a focus on the impact of traumatic stress in high-risk occupations and professions, with a view to creating a comprehensive, proactive, education, training and prevention framework to give workers the tools and supports they need to cope with traumatic stress in the workplace.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Before proceeding with today's Question Period, the Chair will make a statement regarding yesterday's Question Period.

During Question Period yesterday, the Leader of the Official Opposition asked the Premier a series of questions about lobbying legislation. The Chair is not going to repeat in detail what was said yesterday. A point of order was raised by the Government House Leader. The Official Opposition House Leader responded and the Chair ruled on that point of order.

Instead, the Chair will speak more generally about parliamentary language. On page 618 of the 2nd edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, we are advised that parliamentary proceedings — and I quote: "... are based on a long-standing tradition of respect for the integrity of all members."

Furthermore, annotation 487(2) of the 6th edition of *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms* says — and I quote: "Words may not be used hypothetically or conditionally, if they are plainly intended to convey a direct imputation. Putting a hypothetical case is not the way to evade what would be in itself disorderly."

The phrases "access to government is for sale" and "ethical lassitude", which the Leader of the Official Opposition used yesterday, are disorderly. Saying that these charges represent perceptions held by others is procedurally irrelevant. The member is responsible for having used those phrases in the House. In other words: you say it, you own it.

As the Chair said in his ruling yesterday, the facts are not at issue. The Chair has, on a number of occasions, said that he is not in a position to determine the facts that underlie questions and responses. What is at issue and what the Chair can rule on is the manner in which the members express

themselves, particularly when members speak in ways that question the ethics of other members.

The Chair does not wish to obstruct members in asking questions or in providing responses; however, members must be careful of the words they use to express themselves.

We will now proceed with Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Post-traumatic stress disorder support

Ms. Hanson: Today is the National Day of Mourning, a day upon which we commemorate workers who have been killed, injured or suffered illness due to their work. It is our duty as legislators to ensure that workers have the supports they need to do their jobs without the risk of injury or illness.

Today I tabled a private member's bill that would add a presumptive clause to the *Workers' Compensation Act* for first responders with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder. Under this legislation, if a first responder suffers from PTSD, the disorder would be presumed to be a workplace injury unless proven otherwise. We ask first responders to do a tough job. We have a duty to give them the supports they need.

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier support the principle that first responders dealing with PTSD should be covered by presumptive legislation?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: As the minister responsible for Community Services — obviously we oversee the work with first responders, whether they be EMS or otherwise. Presumptive legislation has been something that has come forward previously with regard to fire, and that's obviously in place in a number of places throughout the country as well as here.

With regard to other first responders like Emergency Medical Services, I should first of all note that Yukon government certainly has a great respect and appreciation for all of our EMS professionals and volunteers, whether they are professionals paid in the department or volunteers throughout the Yukon communities.

Community Services' focus has been to promote prevention and early incident stress management. This approach has been proven to reduce the need for after-the-fact treatment or the use of legislative benefits. Protective Services has a phased program in place to support all emergency staff and volunteer responders exposed to traumatic events, including post-traumatic stress and critical incident stress. This support includes defusing and debriefings, counselling services, and workplace accommodation where required. CS and the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board continue to work together to prevent and identify stress reactions and to provide affected individuals with the assistance to deal with these types of stresses.

I can't comment on the actual bill that the member has put forward today as I haven't had a chance to read it yet, but of course we'll give it due consideration upon reading it.

Ms. Hanson: When we reached out to leaders within the first responder community, we were told that while there are some government supports for first responders, when it

comes to dealing with PTSD, they are mostly reactionary in nature. That is to say that they are available after first responders come into contact with traumatic stress situations.

First responders receive hours and hours of safety training for dealing with dangerous situations, but dealing with traumatic stress is often left out of that training. As I am sure the minister is aware, many in the first responder community have been advocating for a more proactive approach to education and training when it comes to PTSD.

I asked if the government supported the notion in principle that first responders dealing with PTSD should be covered by presumptive legislation. I'm also asking the minister if he agrees that a more proactive approach to providing first responders with support and training for dealing with PTSD is needed.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, we would like to express on behalf of the Yukon government the great respect and appreciation that we have for Yukon government EMS professionals as well as our volunteers throughout the territory.

I believe that we do try to take a proactive stance with regard to this issue in providing prevention and early incident stress management. As I indicated previously, this approach has been proven to reduce the need for after-the-fact treatment or the use of legislative benefits. If we look across the country, we see that most jurisdictions — in fact, I believe Alberta is the only one that has presumptive coverage for first responders. We see that that's the similar approach taken by other jurisdictions. We see that's the similar approach taken by other jurisdictions, except for Alberta, across the country.

Of course we're willing to explore options when it comes to providing enhanced supports if necessary and as I said, once we read the bill provided by the member opposite we will have a chance to analyze it and understand what it's saying. One of the concerns or issues associated with this type of legislation is if there is a significant cost to it. That's not to say it's not justified, but it's something we have to take into consideration, as the department operates within a finite budget.

We do have supports in place. We do take a preventive approach to this and we try our best to ensure that Yukoners — professionals and volunteers who are first responders — have access to the tools they need.

Ms. Hanson: The Official Opposition does recognize there are some supports for first responders and workers who have experienced traumatic stress and I commend the government for having those policies in place, but more can be done.

We have heard from first responders that a greater emphasis is needed on providing education and training to workers on an ongoing basis so that, should the day come when they experience serious traumatic stress, they have the tools they need to deal with it. We need to support those who are there for us 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Is the minister willing to move forward in a constructive way to create a comprehensive training and education program for dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: The short answer is yes, of course we're willing to work with EMS professionals — both professional and volunteer EMS individuals throughout the territory — to ensure that they have the adequate tools to address these challenges.

As I have said, we do have a number of tools in place and the member opposite did reference that so I thank her for that. It is something we will have to give some consideration to as to whether or not we want to go to the presumptive model. As I've indicated, the only jurisdiction in Canada to do that has been Alberta and that is something that came with a fairly significant cost. I'm not saying the cost isn't warranted, but it's simply something that we do need to take into consideration as we do operate our departments within a finite budget, so we have to determine whether or not that's an appropriate step forward.

As I said before, there are tools in place, there is training available either through the — there are certain services that are available at the Yukon College or through the Public Service Commission. We have taken steps to ensure that volunteers throughout the territory have access to the counselling services that are available to Yukon government employees so that if they need to call on those services they can with ease. As I've indicated previously, we do provide a number of other preventive measures to try to address this, as well as ex post facto services. We do have a fairly comprehensive suite of programming, but we are always interested to see if we can move forward in other ways.

Question re: Whistle Bend development

Ms. Hanson: Last night, the Member for Klondike and I had the opportunity to attend a city council meeting and saw a rather heated debate on the proposed zoning amendments for this government's new outdoor sports complex. Ultimately, the city decided not to approve the Yukon government's request to rezone the area in Whistle Bend. Council members raised concerns that government had not articulated their plans clearly enough nor given the city strong enough assurance that they would not be saddled with operation and maintenance costs if the complex ran into financial difficulty.

The outdoor sports complex was a major plank in this year's budget with plans to spend \$7 million on the project. The city's refusal to pass the zoning change put the brakes on the project. What is the plan now and what is the government's next step?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: First of all, I should correct the record for the member opposite that this budget contains a line item of \$400,000 for this project, not the amount she specified.

Obviously the vote that was held last night at city council was very disappointing to Yukon government. I have expressed that to the city. We are very much disappointed for two reasons. First of all, I feel it is very unfortunate that the grassroots group of sports organizations that came together to address an identified gap in Yukon's recreational infrastructure had their proposal shot down by the mayor and a few councillors without what I felt to be an adequate

explanation as to why. Obviously the Yukon government, those sports organizations, and I personally have provided information, explanations, and assurances that responded to each and every concern raised by the mayor and council about this project. I have done so verbally; I have done so in writing; and I have done so at other meetings.

Also we have had ongoing discussions with the city about this for over a year now — since this time last year — when there was an appropriation in last year's budget for this, and we have been working with the city very closely. Obviously we are disappointed at the direction they've gone with regard to denying this request from the local sports organizations for this wonderful facility that would come at no cost to the City of Whitehorse.

So we will continue to work with YOSCA, the Yukon Outdoor Sports Complex Association, to find out the next steps forward.

Ms. Hanson: Anybody who has attended the city meetings will know that the City of Whitehorse's refusal to approve the zoning changes is a reflection — and it is a perfect case study — of how not to engage in intergovernmental relations. The City of Whitehorse invested time, money and many hours of consultation work in developing their official community plan, only to have the Government of Yukon drop this outdoor sports complex into their laps as a fait accompli. This government has put city councillors between a rock and a hard place when it comes to the outdoor sports complex. The result of that is yet another Yukon project being delayed. This government needs to realize that municipalities are a level of government. They need to be respected.

Does the minister realize that a top-down approach to dealing with the City of Whitehorse is disrespectful and causes more problems than it solves?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: We know that the NDP have been against this project for some time. They passed a press release a few weeks ago criticizing the Yukon government for moving forward on these soccer fields for Yukon children and Yukon athletes, but I need to correct the record as well. The member opposite is suggesting that Yukon government is the initiator or the primary initiator of this project. That is not the case. This is an example of the sports community approaching governments — both the Yukon government and the city — seeking support for, what is, in their opinion, a very much-needed piece of infrastructure for this territory.

They approached Yukon government over two years ago and received CDF funding to do the work to plan for this project and to work with other sports organizations to develop the case for this building — and they did that. Now they have come forward to the Yukon government and received our support when we indicated that last spring in last year's budget. Over the course of the past year, we have collaborated at the political level, at the administrative level and through the sports organizations with the City of Whitehorse. We have provided every bit of information we can to them and provided answers to every single question they have asked.

I don't know how we could have been more clear. I know the member opposite is suggesting we weren't clear enough. I provided answers in writing and verbally to the mayor about this, and we're very disappointed that they chose to move in a different direction against this project. I'm also very disappointed that the NDP is against this wonderful facility.

Ms. Hanson: Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker. The New Democratic Party is not against the facility or the idea — it's how it is being imposed upon the city, without a business plan, without a needs assessment.

One of the concerns that was repeatedly raised last night was that the city did not want to be left holding the tab for the O&M costs for the outdoor sports complex if the user groups could not cover the costs. That was not demonstrated by the business plan. Despite some assurances from the minister that Yukon government would cover the costs, they were not convinced — and you can't blame them, given the current state of disrepair of some of the Yukon government's own soccer fields in Whitehorse.

The current poor state of Yukon government soccer fields is the responsibility of this government — all 14 of them. They are Yukon government property. Why does the minister expect the City of Whitehorse to trust the assurances that they will cover the O&M costs of the new sports complex when the government does not adequately maintain —

Speaker: Order please. Minister of Community Services, please.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: First of all, I should note that, as the sports community has identified, Yukon has never had an adequate regulation-size soccer pitch in this territory. In the case of the track, my understanding is that that facility is also inadequate.

The sports community has clearly identified a need for this facility. It has identified that it would be a wonderful addition to our recreational assets. Obviously there are challenges with our existing fields, given the fact that we are in the Yukon and we have a challenging growing season for grass that's comparable to the rest of Canada. That's why we took the direction we did in moving toward an artificial-turf system, because that would reduce our operation and maintenance that would be necessary on that. You don't have to water, fertilize and mow artificial turf.

With regard to the operation and maintenance, I made very clear in writing and verbally to the city and to the mayor that we would own this facility. It's on Yukon government land. We would enter into a lease agreement with the YOSCA sports organization to run the facility and that we weren't asking for a dime from the City of Whitehorse.

When the member opposite and the NDP muddy the waters around this, they do a disservice to Yukoners. The fact that they are against this project has been evident throughout the past number of weeks when they have opposed this vociferously.

Mr. Speaker, we'll sit down and meet with YOSCA and find a way forward for this wonderful facility for Yukoners.

Question re: First Nation education

Mr. Silver: As mentioned earlier, visiting in the gallery today is Mr. Toews and his grade 11 social studies class from F.H. Collins. They provided the basis of the questions that I am going to ask the Minister of Education today.

The Auditor General's report of 2009 stated that, for the 2007-08 school year, the average graduation rate for Yukon students was 58 percent, whereas the Yukon First Nation students' graduation rate was 38 percent. The Yukon Department of Education annual report for 2010-11 found that half of rural First Nation students didn't graduate, whereas graduation rates for other rural students were at 72 percent.

What is the government doing to ensure that the educational issues among Yukon First Nation students are being addressed in order to improve graduation rates?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I would like to first of all thank the students for providing the basis for these questions. I would like to thank the member opposite for giving me a little tiny bit of advance notice so I can provide some meaningful information.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that there are achievement gaps between Yukon First Nations and non-First Nation students, and we're working to provide those First Nation students with meaningful opportunities to engage in learning so they can improve their success at school.

Just to give you an idea, Mr. Speaker, Yukon Education is developing specific curricula, educational resources and awareness programs to address the legacy of residential schools. We have integrated learning outcomes with on-the-land experience to engage learners, especially young aboriginal boys. We have developed high school accreditation for culture camps delivered by First Nations, and we're enhancing opportunities for skills training and trades in rural areas at the high school level.

Mr. Speaker, we've also developed a program specifically for First Nation students called the CHAOS program. The community, heritage, adventure, outdoors and skills program, more commonly known as CHAOS, runs out of the Wood Street School and it enhances opportunities for First Nation students in the secondary school system.

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

Mr. Silver: For the minister's sake, welcome to the wonderful world of opposition. We hit the ground running and the minute that I got the question ready, I went to his office.

Mr. Speaker, I can agree with the minister that some good work is being done — absolutely. However, the most recent statistics we have available show that little progress is being made. In 2013, the graduation rate for non-First Nation students was 77 percent. For First Nation students, it was only 47 percent — a gap of 30 percent. We know that the government has introduced some new programming to try to close that gap. However, we can see by the statistics that there has been no improvement in the graduation rates, so what mechanisms, if any, are in place to assess the outcomes of the new programs that the government has brought in?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, a couple of the new programs are self-evident already — the rural education action plan that we have recently introduced, as well as the tripartite education partnership agreement between Canada, Yukon and the CYFN and Yukon First Nation governments to develop an education action plan.

The partnership agreement commits all three parties to create and implement a joint education action plan designed especially to produce successful rates for Yukon First Nation students. The education action plan working group held a series of meetings to move forward with the plan. The MOU for the development of this plan included the potential for all 14 Yukon First Nations as potential signatories as well as CYFN. Currently, CYFN and 12 First Nations, Yukon and Canada have signed the MOU. I'm looking forward to taking a look at the draft joint education action plan so that we can move forward in working with First Nations and First Nation students to improve the situation in Yukon.

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, it's worth noting at this time that the actual graduation rates are actually lower than what's reported by the government. The rates are calculated as a percentage of students who graduate from the total number of students who were enrolled that year in grade 12. In other words, they don't even include those who have dropped out before grade 12.

They also include those who depart after a leaving certificate. These graduates who have a leaving certificate would actually have to complete a GED type of program if they wanted to do any post-secondary education. It is just that — it is a leaving certificate.

One of the ways to improve graduation rates would be to work with those First Nations who are interested in drawing down responsibility under their self-governing agreements for education. It is a great way to provide a culturally inclusive education for Yukon students.

Will the minister consider adapting the way that his department collects graduation statistics to include not only students registered in grade 12, but also all graduation-age Yukoners, and not include leaving certificates in that total?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Certainly, just to elaborate a little bit on what the Minister of Education has said, we certainly do have bilateral agreements with many of Yukon's First Nations when it comes to education. Two Education ministers ago, we were in Dawson City signing off on some unique parts of their self-government agreement that now other First Nations have been very eagerly involved in — in terms of partnering with us.

What I wanted to say was that during the budget speech, I did articulate a vision that this government has for education — a vision that is focused on Yukon students' success. We said that, over the coming months, we would begin to engage with all of the stakeholders who are involved and chart a path to achieve that vision. That includes such things as the creation of a new Yukon curriculum as opposed to using a curriculum from British Columbia. We look forward to working with all stakeholders. We look forward to finding the path to achieve that vision, and it is my hope that all parties in

this House will put away the politics and the partisanship because they understand how important this is and to support that vision.

Question re: Workplace safety

Ms. Moorcroft: Every year on this day, we pay tribute to the National Day of Mourning, but is that enough? On their morning drive to work, Yukoners in Whitehorse saw the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board tally reporting 360 workplace incidents already this year. That is an average of three incidents per day reported in 2015. We can say that work is safer today than it was 100 years ago, but it doesn't make these figures acceptable. We are failing people at work, but we and all Yukoners have the power to ensure safe working conditions and to do more to prevent injuries and deaths.

What is the minister doing to bring Yukon closer to the goal of no injuries, no disabilities and no workplace deaths?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: This government continues to work with the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board to address issues around the territory. This health and safety board does a terrific job at education and reaching out to employers across the territory to try to minimize the amount of workplace injuries and fatalities in the territory. I would like to give them credit for the hard work that they do and the relationships that they build with the large number of employers in the territory. There is good work being done and we will continue to work with those stakeholders.

Ms. Moorcroft: According to the most recently available WCB annual report, there were 1,164 workplace incidents in 2013, and 974 workers required time away from their jobs to recover from injuries. Yukon workers in trades, transportation and equipment operation were far and beyond those at highest risk of injury. Workers under the age of 30 were also at higher risk.

This is not about costs. It is not about penalties, lost time at work or claims paid out. What we are talking about is the right to come home safe and sound from a hard day at work.

Last December, we were told information was forthcoming on why Yukon WCB does not have legislated timeframes within which to respond to requests to reactivate or reopen a claim. Does the minister have that answer now?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I was — the word I want to use is "delighted", but it's not delighted. I was honoured to be able to provide some remarks in the gallery of the legislative building here today for the National Day of Mourning ceremony. We certainly heard comments from a number of stakeholders and groups from around the territory and there is a clear message that people want to work together to ensure that we reduce the number of workplace injuries and fatalities in our territory. So we'll continue to work with the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. As I understand it, they will be here as witnesses in the fall, but I can commit to following up on that question from the member opposite with the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board and will provide a written answer to the member in the coming weeks.

Ms. Moorcroft: I would like to thank the minister for his pledge on behalf of government to keep workers safe in the ceremony this afternoon.

There is a saying in wilderness training that three mistakes lead up to every tragedy. You can survive one or maybe two, but not three. This government says they're putting Yukon workers first, but too many Yukon workers are being killed by their jobs. Last year was the deadliest year in recent history for our workers with five deaths.

It should never be the case that when you go to work in the morning you don't go home. Yet over 60 Yukoners have died as a result of events in their workplaces in the past 30 years. These deaths may have been prevented if hazards in the workplace were caught earlier.

How does this government integrate the findings of its investigations into workplace incidents into their work on an ongoing basis?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I just want to cover off a couple comments I made in the tribute today; one being that Yukoners and Canadians mark this day because we seek earnestly to set an example of our commitment to the issue of health and safety in the workplace. Also, we know that when a worker is injured or killed in the workplace, it has deep-reaching impacts in our homes and our communities and on the territory as a whole. But we need to be vigilant. As workers, we need to use a high level of common sense and we need to protect ourselves and our colleagues in the work sites around the territory. This government takes this matter very seriously and I do thank the member opposite for the question. We will continue to work with the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board on this very issue and determining the next steps.

Question re: FASD diagnoses

Ms. Stick: Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is a permanent, lifelong disability. An individual with FASD can have cognitive, physical and social challenges throughout their lifetime. I have asked in this House previously about the number of assessments being completed by Health and Social Services.

In the 2013-14 fiscal year, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon managed to coordinate and complete seven assessments for under \$80,000. In the last fiscal year, this funding was not extended to FASSY, as the department determined that they would be completing these assessments with a new diagnostic FASD team.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell this House how many FASD assessments have been completed by the department in the last fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I don't have those statistics at my fingertips right now, but I can certainly commit to looking into that with the department. We're very excited about the new FASD diagnostic treatment team that is being put in place — very important work across all government departments. This issue reaches all Yukon communities.

We're proud of the work the Department of Health and Social Services and Yukon government does on this issue and we look forward to continuing on with this good work.

Ms. Stick: Over a year has been lost when FASD assessments could have been completed. FASSY had a proven track record of completing these assessments in a timely and cost-effective way. From 2006 to 2013, FASSY completed 67 FASD assessments, with follow-up case conferences.

Why wasn't FASSY allowed to carry on with the coordination of these assessments while the department recruited and trained their own team?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: The member opposite raises a good point. FASSY — Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon — does tremendous work and we pride ourselves in having an ongoing relationship with that organization. Health and Social Services continues to fund and/or provide a comprehensive range of initiatives, services and programs related to FASD, in partnership with others.

For example, Health and Social Services provides prevention programming, including public awareness campaigns, priority admission to detox and alcohol and drug treatment for pregnant women, and development of a new healthy relationship curriculum for Yukon students.

The department also provides a range of support services for children and adults with FASD to address the individual needs of clients as part of our overall approach to supporting individuals with cognitive disabilities and their families. Health and Social Services also is developing a local team, as the member opposite alluded to, to assess and diagnose adults with FASD. These assessments will provide valuable information about the individual's strengths and their needs.

The department partners with a number of organizations around the territory on this very issue, and we will continue to work on those relationships and with those organizations on the very good work that is being done.

Ms. Stick: To date, FASD assessments completed have been focused on individuals in Whitehorse. We know there are a number of individuals living in the communities awaiting assessment too. Communities are also looking for support for their community members — supports like supported independent living workers, group homes and employment training. These do not exist in most communities.

Will individuals from the community be able to be referred for assessment to this team? What will the follow-up be for these individuals, once a diagnosis and recommendations are made?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Certainly with the diagnostic team that this government has put in place, we are very proud of the work that will be happening in the future years. I think there will be some great work and meaningful data, and obviously seeing individuals with a final diagnosis so they can move forward in treatment. The department also partnered with the Yukon Housing Corporation and Options for Independence to support the development of a new housing complex for persons with FASD, which opened just last year, as you will recall. We also worked with the Department of Justice — and I would like to thank the Minister of Justice — to develop a

protocol agreement that sets out a process for case coordination for common clients with complex needs, including those affected with FASD or by FASD.

Mr. Speaker, you will see that there is good work being done across a number of different departments — the Department of Education and many different departments — within Yukon government and we will continue to break down those silos, work department-to-department and work with the good stakeholders doing the good work in this territory.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of opposition private members' business

Mr. Silver: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, April 29, 2015. That is Motion No. 893, standing the name of the Member for Klondike.

Ms. Stick: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, April 29, 2015. They are Motion No. 792, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South, and Motion No. 892, standing in the name of the Member for Riverdale South.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 86: *Act to Amend the Income Tax Act and the Yukon Child Benefit Regulation — Third Reading*

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 86, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Pasloski.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I move that Bill No. 86, entitled *Act to Amend the Income Tax Act and the Yukon Child Benefit Regulation*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 86, entitled *Act to Amend the Income Tax Act and the Yukon Child Benefit Regulation*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: It is indeed my pleasure to introduce Bill No. 86, entitled *Act to Amend the Income Tax Act and the Yukon Child Benefit Regulation*, for third reading.

The bill continues our legacy of providing tax relief to Yukon taxpayers. In fact, this tax relief is the 13th and most comprehensive since the Yukon Party began its mandate. We are quite proud of our ability to provide tax relief; therefore, before I discuss Bill No. 86 specifically, I would like to recap the highlights of our 12 previous efforts.

First, on May 1, 2003, Yukon government extended the temporary Yukon mineral exploration tax credit until April 1, 2004.

Second, on May 18, 2004, we further extended the Yukon temporary mineral exploration tax credit until April 1, 2007.

Third, on December 14, 2004, Yukon government lowered the small business tax rate from six percent to four percent, effective January 1, 2005, and raised the small business tax deduction limit to \$400,000 from \$300,000, effective January 1, 2007.

Fourth, on December 6, 2005, we provided a one-time energy rebate of \$150 effective January 1, 2006 to low-income Yukon families that were entitled to receive the quarterly GST rebate.

Fifth, on December 9, 2005, the Yukon government harmonized the Yukon tax brackets with the federal brackets, representing an annual savings to taxpayers of approximately \$473,000 a year.

Sixth, on May 24, 2006, a minor amendment to the Yukon mineral exploration tax credit set a cap on the maximum entitlement to \$300,000 for the last year of the program.

Seventh, on December 13, 2006, we doubled the pension income credit, increased the personal exemption credit and the eligible dependent credit and introduced credits for adoption expenses, public transit passes and employment income.

Eighth, on December 13, 2007, the Yukon government introduced the Yukon child fitness credit and the Yukon child tax credit.

Ninth, on December 31, 2007, we increased the Yukon child benefit from a maximum of \$37.50 per child per month to \$57.50 per child.

Tenth, on November 9, 2010, we modernized the dividend tax credit provisions of the *Income Tax Act* and increased the small business tax deduction limit to \$500,000 from \$400,000 effective January 1, 2010.

Eleventh, on December 6, 2012, we established the children's arts tax credit.

Twelfth, on May 8, 2014, the Yukon government lowered the small business tax rate from four percent to three percent, effective July 1, 2014.

Mr. Speaker, that brings us to today. When this bill is fully implemented, we will be providing in excess of \$5.5 million in annual tax relief primarily from lowering rates. The lowest three tax brackets are being reduced, resulting in a tax savings of \$4.9 million in 2015. The first bracket, which covers income up to \$44,700, sees the largest percentage decline at 9.1 percent. The rate will fall from 7.04 percent to 6.4 percent. The second bracket, which covers income from \$44,701 up to \$89,400, sees the second largest percentage decline at seven percent. The rate will fall from 9.68 percent to nine percent. The third bracket, which covers income from \$89,401 up to \$138,585, sees the rate fall 4.7 percent from 11.44 to 10.9 percent. The fourth bracket, which currently covers income in excess of \$138,586, sees the rate rounded up from 12.76 percent to 12.8 percent in order to move to a single-decimal tax rate consistent with the other brackets.

Mr. Speaker, I am extremely proud to stand here today in the Legislature to close debate on Bill No. 86. This bill is a testament to our government's ability to manage the public purse in a fashion expected by Yukoners. Taxpayers expect

excellent service from their government, but at the same time, they need and they deserve a break.

Again, I'm very happy to be able to provide that tax break. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Hanson: I'm not going to reprise the comments I made at second reading or in Committee of the Whole. I would just note — as I had expressed at both of those opportunities — that the Official Opposition does support the notion of increased progressivity in the taxation regime and, as I had said previously, we are concerned that we see, in the way this legislation is crafted, that the treatment of incomes between \$138,000 and \$500,000 is exactly the same. It just seems passing strange.

I will not reiterate the cautions that were expressed, both by me, as the Leader of the Official Opposition, and by Standard & Poor's with respect to the challenges that the government has created for itself and with its lack of fiscal flexibility. Those are on the record, Mr. Speaker, and the facts will stand. The proof will be in going forward as we see how this plays out. The fact is, as Standard & Poor's pointed out for the government and for all citizens, that increasingly this government's approach is tightening the box, making it smaller in terms of the ability of governments to respond with nimbleness and with flexibility to changing circumstances, to challenges and to opportunities.

I'll leave that there, Mr. Speaker, and we'll move on to the vote.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: It is a pleasure to rise again at third reading to speak to this bill, the changes made to the *Income Tax Act*. I did provide some comments at earlier readings but wanted to reiterate my sincere support for this initiative and this bill. I'm very proud, as I said at second reading, to support a bill that will provide sweeping personal tax cuts to Yukoners across all existing income brackets.

This bill is obviously something that we feel will significantly enhance the quality of life for Yukoners by putting more money back in the pockets of those Yukoners.

As I mentioned previously, I had the pleasure of tabling changes to the *Income Tax Act* last year to reduce the small business tax rate from four percent to three percent. I should note that, in the most recent federal budget, the federal government has announced that they will be reducing their portion of the small business tax rate another two percent as well, which I think was actually a commitment made by the federal NDP so, for once, we see some convergence of policies between the NDP and federal Conservative parties, which is a rare occasion.

That bill I tabled last year, of course, was passed. I believe it was passed with unanimous support, and I am anticipating unanimous support again today for these comprehensive, sweeping personal tax cuts to all Yukon income brackets.

I'm also very supportive of the changes to the child care benefit and the child fitness tax credit. These are positive changes that will enhance the lives and quality of life of a

number of my constituents who enjoy access to these programs and, in the case of the fitness tax credit, the shift to making it refundable will negate the problem that could have perhaps existed previously with regard to someone's income being too low to receive that tax credit.

This is a very positive step forward, not just for the purpose of the financial health of parents, but for the encouragement of young folks to engage in sporting activity throughout the various opportunities that exist in Yukon.

I would also like to note my support for the elimination of the surtax that had been in place for some time now. I don't know when exactly that surtax came into effect, but I believe, as I said at second reading, that it was anachronistic and due to be removed. I am quite content to see it removed here today.

I will conclude my remarks at third reading but I simply wanted to get on the record again as being strongly in favour of these sweeping personal tax cuts and putting \$5.5 million back into the pockets of Yukoners.

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

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I am proud to close debate for passage of third reading of this legislation that, in fact, this government is very proud to do, and to talk about the fact that this is a government that understands how and what it takes to manage Yukon's finances.

There certainly are two ways to manage. One is through growth of revenues. The opposition feels that growth in revenues is done by increasing taxes. We believe that by growing the private sector economy, it creates revenues for governments to provide programs and services.

There is another option, of course. Governments, just like homeowners and people who live in this community — if their revenues go down, the other opportunity is to ensure that they can live within their means. Definitely there was a reason that the Yukon *Taxpayer Protection Act* was implemented in this territory after the results of the opposition's governance in this territory. It was to ensure that tax-and-spend politics would not occur again unless there was support from Yukoners on that.

I appreciate the comments by my Cabinet colleague and the Minister of Community Services highlighting as well the Yukon child benefit, which is also amended with a 35-percent increase in that program. Also, the child fitness tax credit will be mirrored — the federal government's — and also will go from being non-refundable to refundable, meaning that even those families whose income is low enough that they don't pay taxes can still receive the benefit of this credit.

I would also just mention that we are also matching, or becoming consistent with, the federal government when it comes to political contributions. That way, when people are willing to donate with consistency to the federal government, it doesn't leave one to be deciding to donate, for example, federally instead of territorially simply because there is a better tax break with the federal. We will now match that. A

note to that, too, is that the greatest impact will be on those people who don't donate a lot of money — will see the benefit of that.

I also just wanted to comment for the record again, as I had said previously, that we are reducing the tax rate across all brackets. I did mention in the fourth bracket that, with rounding, it's going from 12.76 to 12.8, but, for the record, every taxpayer in the fourth bracket benefits from the changes in the lower three brackets and will therefore see lower tax bills despite the rounding adjustment in this bracket — meaning that everybody will see tax relief as a result of these amendments.

In closing, with this new rate structure, Yukon taxpayers, whether they earn \$50,000 or \$100,000, will face the third-lowest tax bills in this country. Only the other two territories — Nunavut and Northwest Territories — are lower. However, those other two territories implement a two-percent payroll tax in addition to their income tax, which effectively eliminates any tax advantage that Nunavut or Northwest Territories have.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. Stick: Agree.

Ms. Moorcroft: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Barr: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for third reading of Bill No. 86 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 86 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): I will now call Committee of the Whole to order. The matter before the Committee is Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in 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* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 18, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2015-16*.

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources

Hon. Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, before I begin with my remarks with respect to the EMR mains for 2015-16, I would like to again welcome Ms. Shirley Abercrombie to the Chamber here to provide assistance to me, as acting assistant deputy minister of Mineral Resources and Oil and Gas Resources. I would also like to thank Deputy Minister George Ross and the entire team at Energy, Mines and Resources throughout the Yukon for all of their work that they put in on a daily basis to ensure that we're leading the responsible integrated management of Yukon's natural resources.

It's my pleasure to introduce the 2015-16 main budget for the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. We fulfill the mandate that I mentioned by continuing to modernize and clarify resource legislation, regulations and policies to maintain a positive investment climate and foster sustainable development. We facilitate orderly land development through planning and zoning and we make land available for community, residential, agriculture, recreation and industry purposes.

EMR also supports responsible development and use of Yukon's resources to meet the energy needs of Yukoners. Another important mandate of EMR is that we work to ensure Yukon receives net economic and social benefits for the use of our resources. This goal is partly accomplished through increasing awareness of Yukon's land, agriculture, forestry, oil and gas, mineral and energy development opportunities.

Our work in this regard is to ensure accessibility of our natural resource knowledge, programs and services with our

partners and the public. EMR's accomplishments span across the Yukon and I look forward this afternoon to talking about how this department contributes to our economy, our quality of life and protection of the environment.

This budget provides details on how EMR allocates funds and collects revenue in carrying out this important work. The overall budget for the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources for 2015-16 is \$92.758 million. Of that, the operation and maintenance budget is \$85.335 million and the capital budget is \$7.423 million. Revenues this year are estimated to be \$51.043 million, including \$45.103 million in transfers from Canada and \$5.94 million in taxes, fees, royalties and others. I would like to take a moment to share some highlights of EMR's main budget and outline some key initiatives the department is leading, starting with Land Management and Land Planning.

Under Land Management, the Yukon government recognizes the high demand for land over the last decade, which is in large part due to Yukon's economic growth and increased population. The demand for residential and commercial lots has been constant in most communities and high within the City of Whitehorse. Government continues to demonstrate its commitment to make land available to meet demand and we have an inventory of developed lots for sale in the City of Whitehorse and all rural communities.

The O&M budget for the Land Management branch is \$2.932 million and the capital budget is \$5.488 million. Land availability has increased in Yukon through the following: efforts of government working with municipalities, communities, First Nation governments and with the private sector; the agriculture planned land program, which provides land sales through multi-lot subdivisions and infill projects; government's work to identify additional remote recreational lots in southern Yukon for lottery; our spot land application program, which approved approximately 142 rural residential applications and approximately 96 successful agriculture spot applications from 2002 to 2014; and finally, creating over 130 new lots since 2009 through subdivision of private residential and agricultural land in the Whitehorse periphery.

As part of Yukon government's commitment to streamline community-based land-development initiatives, government has entered into land development protocol agreements with Dawson City, the Town of Watson Lake, Carmacks, Faro, Haines Junction, Mayo and Teslin. These protocols are assisting government and the communities in identifying lands for development. As of April 2014, the rural land development program was transferred from Community Services to the Land Management branch in Energy, Mines and Resources. With land planning, development and sales now combined, the Land Management branch has been able to streamline the approach for identifying, developing and selling lands within the smaller communities throughout Yukon.

Of the total capital budget for the branch, there is \$4.95 million in capital budget for rural land residential projects. The Yukon government is following through on our commitment to make land available to Yukoners for a variety

of purposes, including recreational land. We demonstrated this through a successful lottery release of 19 recreational lots at Little Teslin Lake in 2009 and the September 2014 release of 19 recreational lots at Bennett Lake and Tagish Lake. These projects resulted from government's partnerships with the Teslin Tlingit Council and Carcross-Tagish First Nation.

Our government's relationship with the Carcross-Tagish First Nation has led to a joint memorandum of understanding on a variety of development initiatives, resulting in the previously mentioned release of 19 remote recreation lots, the pending extension of Tagish Avenue in Carcross to provide access to both settlement and Yukon land, and consideration of a potential eco-tourism development at Millhaven Bay through an expression-of-interest process.

Other land lotteries planned for 2015 include industrial lots at McCrae, lots in the Marwell industrial area, residential lots in Dawson City, recreational lots on Bennett Lake and Tagish Lake — six recreational lots that were not claimed in the initial lottery — and we'll be putting those back out for lottery, I believe, later on this summer once the ice is off the lakes and individuals are able to get out and view them — two lots in the Fox Lake area, and 50 additional residential lots in the Whistle Bend subdivision.

Under land planning, EMR's Land Planning branch assists communities in developing local area plans and zoning regulations to ensure orderly development. The branch also resolves competing land uses by providing residents and First Nation governments the opportunity to develop balanced land use policies that provide certainty over future land use. The operation budget for Land Planning is \$1.074 million.

Yukon government is continuing to prioritize planning and zoning initiatives in the Whitehorse periphery, where the population continues to grow and land development pressures are the greatest. An example of this work is allowing subdivision of rural residential and agricultural lots in Mount Lorne, approved in March 2014, similar to what has been approved for other areas.

The Carcross local area plan was approved in February 2014, and the Marsh Lake local area plan is expected to be recommended for approval by the steering committee later this year. Planning is also underway in Fox Lake and Tagish. All of these processes are good examples of First Nation, community and Yukon government collaboration, and we look forward to continuing these positive processes.

Madam Chair, when it comes to agriculture, the Yukon government supports our homegrown agricultural industry through policy, programs and enabling legislation.

The Agriculture operation and maintenance budget for this year is \$2.086 million; \$845,000 in capital funding has been identified specifically for agricultural land development.

Energy, Mines and Resources is in the process of developing a comprehensive local food strategy aimed at significantly increasing the production and use of locally grown vegetables, meat and food products. It gives me pleasure to announce that we have provided funding to the Yukon Agricultural Association to assist us with the development of that strategy, and I'll look forward to

attending their AGM coming up, I believe, a week from this Saturday here in Whitehorse and to getting an opportunity to talk to the many individuals from throughout the territory who are engaged in this important industry.

Some of the other branch programs that support the industry include: release of agricultural land by way of spot land sales for farming and livestock grazing; planned land sales through multi-lot subdivisions and infill projects — and those are planned agricultural land sales; expert services that provide professional education and technical services to farmers, along with research and demonstration projects designed to improve the economic delivery of northern agriculture; meat inspection services, including operation and maintenance of the mobile abattoir and animal health and testing programs; and delivery of the Canada-Yukon Growing Forward 2 policy agreement that will provide up to \$1.48 million per year on a 60-percent federal/40-percent territorial cost-sharing basis to deliver programs.

I would like to talk a little bit about the forest industry and where we see opportunities there. Energy, Mines and Resources' Forest Management branch supports the forest industry, provides services to industry and continues to develop operational tools and products to assist industry operating under the *Forest Resources Act*. The operating budget this year is \$3.592 million. There is \$350,000 in the capital budget dedicated for forest road engineering. To support continued investment in the forest industry, the Yukon government is committed to ensuring that wood is available through new timber harvest planning areas in all communities. The Forest Management branch is also working collaboratively with the Yukon Wood Products Association, Economic Development and Forest Innovations program, which is a national non-profit advisory group, to stimulate industry development. Our government has successfully developed forest resource management plans for Haines Junction, Dawson and Teslin regions, with full First Nation collaboration and planning input. Having in place these plans provides certainty for the land base, identifies sustainable forest management practices and fosters economic opportunities for all Yukoners and First Nation partners.

Forest planning in new areas continues to be prioritized. Key examples include partnerships with the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, the Kwanlin Dun and Carcross-Tagish First Nation to advance planning in the Whitehorse-Southern Lakes region.

To support economic development, timber harvest plans for commercial harvesting of fuel wood are continually prepared for all regions of Yukon with the most recent approvals in Haines Junction, Mayo and Dawson. Yukon government's continued efforts to find new fuel-wood opportunities near communities and along existing and new travel corridors aim to reduce operator costs and increase the supply of fuel wood for commercial and personal use. Personal use fuel-wood permits are free and available over the counter, with over 1,200 permits being issued annually. New personal fuel-wood opportunities have been made available throughout the territory, including Haines Junction, Carmacks and the Fox Lake area.

Madam Chair, the forest industry has an annual economic impact of slightly over \$3 million. I believe it's about \$3.3 million that that industry drives and is able to deliver for the territory and we look forward to growing that industry and growing opportunities for that industry. Again, the recent release of the biomass strategy for consultation will assist with that. What we're seeing right now is that there's an estimated \$3.3 million in economic benefits annually related to commercial fuel wood. That estimate is based on 30,000 cubic metres harvested, which equates to 13,215 cords of wood at an average cost of \$250 per cord.

Madam Chair, when it comes to the Mineral Resources branch, the budget is \$4.482 million and this budget supports a wide range of initiatives for Yukon's cornerstone resource industry. The Yukon government is committed to set a long-term vision for the mining sector by producing a mineral development strategy. This will set a course for achieving a revitalized mineral industry in Yukon by positioning us to take advantage of a turnaround in markets. This is one of the top priorities for our government and the strategy will indicate paths of success for regulatory certainty, and First Nation relations, and will stress the importance of geoscience, infrastructure, business climate and environment.

A multi-step process will be used to guide the strategy, which will include early engagement with First Nations, the mineral industry and stakeholders, followed by consultation on a draft. I did sign off on letters to all the First Nation leaders as well as a number of industry stakeholders yesterday and attached a very high-level document that will serve as the starting point for the development of this strategy. The final mineral development strategy is expected to be completed by early 2016.

The mineral development strategy will also provide the context for the mine licensing improvement initiative, which is working to improve our regulatory system. As part of the larger mineral development strategy, the mine licensing improvement initiative — or, as it has become known, as MLII — is streamlining and building certainty in Yukon's regulatory regime, providing direct benefits to claimholders, mine developers, First Nations and Yukoners.

We are working with official regulatory bodies, including the Yukon Water Board, the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board and First Nations to address regulatory and procedural improvements. The consultations on this project are expected to take place over the spring and summer of this year. The initiative has support from the Yukon Chamber of Mines and the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board, which of course is an industry-led organization that provides advice and recommendations to the Yukon government regarding mining and mineral development in the territory.

In addition to our regulatory work, we also conduct strategic work. We are also preparing for new mining projects in the territory. The proposed Casino mine is a large mining project by Yukon standards. Development expenditures are forecasted at approximately \$2.5 billion. As a comparison,

this represents development costs that are approximately 10 times higher than those associated with the Minto mine.

If approved, the project's development phase is expected to run from 2016 to 2019 and production from 2020 to 2042. Again, these are estimates that I believe the proponent has put forward as far as timelines. This project is still in the early stages of a YESAA review. I know they have not been deemed adequate to start the executive committee screening that will take place.

The project will require approximately 1,000 personnel during construction and will employ 600 permanent mining personnel during operations. An additional 100 to 200 contract support personnel will be on-site throughout all phases of the project. The company expects to generate annual GDP of \$274 million in Yukon during the operation of the mine and anticipates that approximately 69 percent of operational spending will occur in the territory. Several Yukon government departments are working to ensure that this proposed mine will have maximum benefits for Yukon and will proceed with minimal environmental risk.

There are a number of other projects that are also in the queue, such as Victoria Gold's Eagle project, a number of deposits at Alexco's property in and around Keno City — the Mactung project has also gone through the environmental assessment phase, and we have many projects in advanced exploration and early exploration.

When it comes to the mining sector, the pipeline is in very good shape, from grassroots exploration and the success that we have seen in exploration coming out of the most recent exploration boom. Again, we'll see some additional projects come on. In addition to the ones I mentioned, there's also the Selwyn project that is moving quite rapidly and seeing tremendous expenditures. We're very supportive of that project and proud of where we are with respect to the mining industry.

Finally on minerals, I would like to emphasize that, along with First Nations, it's also important to involve our industry partners in ensuring our success in this sector. On this front, we have put in place an enhanced funding agreement with the Klondike Placer Miners' Association to ensure their regulatory issues are addressed and to enable long-term success and vitality in Yukon's oldest mining industry.

We have also increased funding for the Yukon Chamber of Mines so they can provide advice and expertise to Yukon government as we move forward on a number of important projects.

Madam Chair, I know I'm just about out of time and I would like to turn the floor over to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun. I'm about halfway through my opening remarks, but perhaps I'll pick them up after I turn the floor back over to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun.

Mr. Tredger: Thank you to the minister for his introduction. I'll be brief so he can conclude before we begin our discussion on the various topics. I did want to mention and thank Ms. Abercrombie for coming to the Legislative Assembly again — much appreciated and thank you to her

and the officials for the very instructive briefing that I received prior to our debating that. It was very helpful.

Over my years as the Energy, Mines and Resources critic, I have had occasion to meet quite a few of the public service members who are supporting this department. I must say that I have been very impressed by their enthusiasm, the knowledge that they demonstrate, their care and concern. I did want to express that, because it's a very big department. It covers a lot of things that are going to be very important to Yukoners today and Yukoners in the future. How we go about getting our energy, producing our resources, developing agriculture and energy solutions will have a lot to say about what our territory will look like in five, 10, 100 years down the way.

My hats are off to them for the work they do. I have mentioned in the past the Yukon Geological Survey, which, to my mind, is one of the best in Canada. I have talked to colleagues in different jurisdictions, to people in the industry who have spoken highly of the information they get from there and to people who are working with the industry, the Agriculture branch, the many farms in my area. I'm a small gardener myself. I live next door to the Pelly River Ranch, which is the oldest operating ranch in the territory, and I found that the information, openness and willingness to help from the people in the Agriculture branch — they make agriculture important. Their efforts on behalf of agriculture and our burgeoning agriculture community — we can see that when we go to the farmers market, whether it is in Whitehorse or whether it's in Mayo or Dawson City. The seed library is a prime example, and I have heard many people talking about that and saving their tomato seeds. I even found out what a stupice tomato seed was, and I was assured by Bob Sharp that that was the best tomato to grow. I recently attended a Yukon College and agricultural symposium on greenhouses. The energy and enthusiasm from the department officials as well as the farming community was infectious. I thank them for that.

The Energy Solutions Centre continues to do excellent work and works with people looking for ways to produce and use energy more efficiently. The compliance monitoring inspections group has a challenging job and a balance to maintain, and my hats are off to them.

So having given my thanks, I thank them again for putting forward this budget and the work they have done on that. I will turn the floor back over to the minister so he can finish his remarks and we'll go from there.

Hon. Mr. Kent: This is obviously an important budget and there is a lot to be proud of in Energy, Mines and Resources so I'll continue with my opening remarks. We're on to Assessment and Abandoned Mines right now.

The Assessment and Abandoned Mines branch directs and oversees planning, care and maintenance and closure of type 2 mine sites identified under devolution. The branch enters into funding arrangements with the Government of Canada to carry out this work. This year's budget for Assessment and Abandoned Mines is \$44.115 million.

Yukon government's project team at the Faro mine complex is currently executing a five-year remedial plan. This

plan includes a series of capital works designed to address emerging risks to human health, safety and the environment, the further development of a long-term remediation solution, and ongoing care and maintenance activities.

Major works executed at the Faro mine complex offer opportunities to promote aboriginal and community participation through training, employment and business opportunities. We are also actively managing care and maintenance activities at the Mount Nansen site. We continue to work with Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada to responsibly address water management at the site. The Yukon government, Government of Canada and Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation agreed on an option for remediation of the Mount Nansen site in 2012. The option is currently being developed into a formal plan for future implementation.

Also, Assessment and Abandoned Mines branch is working with the Government of Canada and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to develop and implement a cost-effective approach to remediating the Clinton Creek site. Due to health and safety concerns identified through the 2012 annual engineering review, Assessment and Abandoned Mines branch has closed the site to public access. Site access will remain prohibited until such time that remedial work is completed in order to adequately protect human health and safety. Our officials are working with the Government of Canada to undertake an engineering review of site risks to develop a short-term care and maintenance plan for Clinton Creek. This plan is intended to aid in the management of the site until remedial work can be completed.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention that, under this branch, eventually the Ketza mine site will be the responsibility of the Assessment and Abandoned Mines. Of course, as a type 2 site, in devolution it fits into that category, and the care and maintenance will eventually be turned over to Assessment and Abandoned Mines. I believe officials are working on a timeline as we speak with respect to when that will be transitioned over to Yukon government to manage on behalf of the Government of Canada.

Yukon's Oil and Gas branch oversees regulations that are robust, modern and designed to regulate all oil and gas activities that protect the safety of people and the environment. It has a budget of \$2.913 million for this year. In addition to the important day-to-day work the branch undertakes in regulating and managing Yukon's oil and gas industry, this government has recently come to a pivotal point in seeing a responsible future for the sector. On April 9 of this year, the Yukon government announced its response to the Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing and outlined a clear position on future shale gas development in the territory.

Yukon government is open to responsible shale gas development opportunities only in the Liard Basin, and any shale gas development activity must have the support of the affected First Nations. In this case, those First Nations are the Kaska First Nation, as well as Acho Dene Koe, which is a Northwest Territories First Nation that is based out of the

community of Fort Liard, which is the closest community, I believe, to the actual Liard Basin.

That basin is located in the far southeast of Yukon, or sometimes what we refer to as the "toe" of the Yukon. It comprises less than two percent of Yukon's land mass. My understanding is that it is about 1.3 percent of the land mass, but the resource potential and existing infrastructure make the basin the most viable option to develop for shale opportunities.

In specific response to the select committee, the Yukon government agrees and is addressing the 21 recommendations put forward and accepts all of them, of course.

As a result, government is committed to learning more about the risks and benefits of hydraulic fracturing. We intend to address the recommendations through existing activities, as well as through new projects.

Much of the baseline data collection and research will support projects in other natural resource sectors as well. Yukon government will continue to work government-to-government with First Nations regarding their concerns around hydraulic fracturing. We will also continue to meet our legal obligations to consult affected First Nations on matters relating to oil and gas exploration and development.

As I mentioned earlier, the Yukon government will require the involvement and support of affected First Nations prior to any potential oil and gas development that would require the practice of hydraulic fracturing. The select committee recommends that more knowledge and meaningful engagement are needed. We intend to participate in and expand the dialogue around shale gas development with First Nations, the public and industry.

We support the development of a strong and robust oil and gas industry in Yukon and recognize that the development of these resources could contribute to significant economic growth and diversification of our economy. Consumption of oil and gas continues to be a significant component of Yukon's energy use and the development of a local supply could help to meet Yukon's energy needs, as outlined in the *Energy Strategy for Yukon*. We remain focused on how to best develop Yukon's resources in an environmentally responsible manner. It is important to note that approximately 15 percent of Yukon is underlain by eight sedimentary basins which have the potential to contain oil and gas. Roughly one-third of these basins, corresponding to 5.4 percent of Yukon, are currently available for oil and gas disposition. The Liard Basin and Eagle Plains Basin currently have active dispositions and are the most accessible.

Madam Chair, I'm going to turn my talk now to the Yukon Geological Survey. This is a survey that continues to provide information on our geology and mineral potential. This supports mineral exploration efforts and land and resource management decisions. The survey also conducts important research on landscape hazards, permafrost and other community-based projects.

Their operating budget for this year is \$6.56 million. The YGS also manages the Yukon mineral exploration program. Yukon government has increased its assistance to the mineral

exploration industry by maintaining its funding commitment at a level of \$1.4 million for YMEP in 2015-16. The intent is to sustain exploration activity and the economic benefits it provides for Yukon.

YMEP is the oldest continuing prospectors' assistance program in Canada. For the 2014-15 fiscal year, the \$1.4-million program supported 51 projects. From their original YMEP funding, companies running these 37 hardrock and 14 placer projects leveraged an estimated \$2.1 million in industry investment.

Another key component of YGS is to deliver publications of direct relevance to the mineral sector. Some recent publications include the bedrock geology maps of the Rakla belt, Bear Creek area and south coast belt area, new stream sediment geochem data for nine 1:250,000 scale map sheets, and the release of the 2010-14 placer industry report.

Projects underway that will be published in 2015-16 include: bedrock mapping in the Aishihik Lake, Frances Lake and Tay River areas; an evaluation of the gold fertility of the Selwyn Basin; compilation of a new surficial geology map for the eastern Coal River map sheet and placer potential studies in selected creeks; new interpretive maps of stream sediment geochem data for 14 map sheets; and a new airborne magnetic and electromagnetic survey over the Kluane Range in the Burwash Landing area.

This project was recently announced and the survey work is already underway. The important thing I think to mention about this is that it is a partnership with the Kluane First Nation. They are investing some of their own resources so that their settlement lands can also be included and they get a better understanding of the mineral potential on the settlement lands that they have in the Kluane ranges — again, in the Burwash Landing area.

Madam Chair, with respect to Compliance Monitoring and Inspections, this branch works diligently to ensure that all requirements under natural resource legislation and regulations are enforced in a timely and professional manner. Careful scrutiny by qualified inspectors is applied to activities authorized under mining, water, timber and lands legislation and regulations. Their operating budget this year is \$7.109 million. EMR inspection and enforcement activity is governed by policy and principles and is consistent with the practices of all modern regulatory law enforcement agencies. EMR is organized to ensure that the Compliance Monitoring and Inspections branch can fulfill its mandate neutrally and objectively. The branch provides service to the public and maintains an effective field presence by staffing offices in eight Yukon communities. In general, compliance monitoring and enforcement activities adhere to the principles of education, encouragement and enforcement.

A major project for the branch this year is to undertake a five-year review of the fish habitat management system for Yukon placer mining. Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Yukon government continue to work collaboratively on fish habitat management matters related to placer mining. This system was implemented in April 2008 and has replaced the

Yukon placer authorization in 16 watersheds in the Yukon River Basin.

DFO has reviewed the authorizations and determined that they are entirely consistent with amendments made to the *Fisheries Act* on November 25, 2013. A review of the results of all monitoring programs is forthcoming and will include engagement with stakeholders and First Nation governments. This review may result in improvements to our regulation, which will be based on five years of data collection and communication with those who are involved the most.

Madam Chair, the Energy branch develops and delivers energy policy projects and programs, which increase the sustainability of energy use in the Yukon. The 2015-16 budget for the Energy branch is \$2.441 million. Our storefront at the Energy Solutions Centre currently offers a comprehensive suite of energy-efficiency programs and services to Yukon's public to encourage energy conservation and efficient energy use in the Yukon.

For fiscal year 2014-15, approximately \$202,000 in good energy rebates were issued. Approximately 10,000 rebates have been issued to almost 7,000 clients since the inception of this program. In January of this year, I was very proud to launch the new good energy residential incentive program, which provides an incentive to install HRVs, windows and doors, rebates on homes that achieve an EnerGuide rating of 85 or better and assistance with existing home air sealing and home insulation, as well as renewable energy systems, which are part of the microgeneration program that we announced last year. Since January, 52 clients have received \$155,496 in total from this program. On April 15, we announced the commercial energy incentive program, which makes energy-efficiency upgrades in larger, multi-family and commercial buildings more accessible and affordable. All of these incentive programs will not only work to make Yukoners and Yukon businesses more energy efficient; it will also save them money and create less impact on the environment.

Yukon is in an excellent position already with regard to its energy generation and use. Most of Yukon's electricity — approximately 94 to 95 percent — is produced from renewable sources, primarily hydro, with a small portion coming from wind and an even smaller portion coming from solar.

We are investigating a number of new renewable and clean energy technologies and new energy-efficiency initiatives. As was recently announced, the Yukon Geological Survey and Energy branch are working with the Canadian Geothermal Energy Association to develop geothermal favourability maps to support exploration for geothermal energy resources in Yukon. This project received \$126,000 from the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, or CanNor, and the research undertaken from this project will build the knowledge base required for companies that have an interest in geothermal energy production. The initial mapping will decrease the costs associated with geothermal exploration and help promote development of this renewable resource. Information learned from this project will advance commitments in the Yukon government's *Energy Strategy for*

Yukon to increase energy production from renewable sources. In the long term, we expect Yukon will benefit from geothermal energy, which is a clean, renewable resource that can provide dependable and economic base-load electrical capacity.

Later on this year, we are expecting to introduce or release the independent power producers policy and program. As well, just recently, on April 27, Energy, Mines and Resources put out a press release that we are currently seeking public feedback on a draft strategy for the development of a biomass energy sector here in the Yukon. Six key action areas are being proposed for that strategy: using biomass energy for government infrastructure; developing regulations, policies and programs for a biomass energy industry; managing air quality to protect public and environmental health and safety; facilitating the development of a biomass energy industry in Yukon; ensuring a sustainable timber supply; and ensuring biomass fuel quality and security.

I am very excited about this initiative, as next year — in 2016 — the Yukon will be hosting the federal/provincial/territorial ministers responsible for forestry. I am very excited to showcase what we are looking to do on value added through biomass energy and the other opportunities that exist in the forest industry here.

In conclusion, what you have heard today are many, but far from all, of Energy, Mines and Resources' important initiatives for this upcoming year. More importantly, what I have described is Energy, Mines and Resources' role in responsibly building a strong and diversified economy that benefits all Yukoners. I would like to take a moment to again recognize the professionalism and expertise of the staff at Energy, Mines and Resources, thank them for their commitment and thank those who participated in putting this budget together. It is no easy task to achieve responsible development that balances economic opportunities with environmental protection and human health and safety. Again, I would like to thank all Energy, Mines and Resources staff for the hard work that they put into achieving this goal.

That concludes my introductory comments for the 2015-16 main estimates for the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, and I look forward to questions from the members opposite.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for his opening remarks.

I might as well start with relationships with First Nations and some recent and some not-so-recent developments.

One of the key points of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* was land use planning. In the last, I guess, 12 or 13 years, we have developed one land use plan, the *North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan*. The *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* seems to be bogged down in legal wrangling with opposition coming from the territorial government to the final recommended land use plan. That is in the courts. The land use plan for the Dawson City area has been suspended.

If the minister could give us an update on land use planning — what he sees as the challenges, why we aren't able to proceed as neighbours working within the context of

our final agreements and our treaties, and why the minister feels it is necessary to resort to taking our treaty partners to court and are there any plans to proceed with any new land use plans.

The concern I have, of course, is that by not having a land use plan in place, we're crippling many of our industries. We're creating a lot of division among our citizens. Much of the territory — I talked to one of the First Nation chiefs in my area and he said it's almost too late for land use planning because it has all been staked already. I talked to a number of tourism operators who were contemplating building lodges and developing their opportunities but they were concerned that the land they chose was going to be staked, and indeed one of them explained to me how his land had already been staked after he considered investing in a lodge.

I guess I would like some direction from the minister — what his plans are. Are we going to sit back and let the courts decide what is best for Yukon, or will the minister sit down with our partners, with the governments that are involved in our treaties and our constitutionally protected agreements and in a way of respect to consider today and the future?

Hon. Mr. Kent: With respect to the Peel watershed case, I know the members opposite are supportive of the final recommended plan that was brought forward by the Peel Watershed Planning Commission and we were not. Certainly the government side was not supportive of that recommended plan.

We believe, again, that it's not only important for the Peel watershed, but it's also important for other land use planning areas that the democratically elected government retains the authority to make final decisions with respect to public lands.

These plans that come forward from the commissions are recommended and, with respect to the Peel watershed, a vast majority of the land up there is Crown land, or public land. We disagreed with the recommended plan that was brought forward by the planning commission there. Efforts were made earlier on in this mandate to modify the plan. The First Nations, as well as a couple of environmental NGOs, took us to court on that and we've appealed that decision. The goal is very consistent for us — that, as an elected public government, we need to retain that authority to make final decisions on public lands.

When it comes to additional land use planning exercises, the Dawson regional land use plan — the governments of Yukon, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation mutually agreed to suspend the Dawson regional land use planning process. The three parties decided to take this step prior to the recent Peel watershed land use planning court decision and subsequent appeal. The parties agree that, since the eventual outcome of the Peel challenge could impact current and future regional land use planning processes, it would be prudent to receive clarity on that process from the courts prior to moving forward on the Dawson process.

The parties will re-engage when there is a final resolution in the Peel watershed court challenge to determine how best to proceed with the Dawson regional planning process. The commission's records are being looked after by the Yukon

Land Use Planning Council until such time as the commission is active again. The commission members' terms will remain in effect until they expire, at which time the parties will determine whether to continue with appointments to the commission. The expiry date, I understand, is in 2017.

The Yukon government is reluctant to enter into a new regional planning process prior to a revised common land use planning process being approved and supported by the parties. We're optimistic that a revised process and the clarity provided by the outcome of the Peel court case will establish the framework to develop approvable regional land use plans on time and on budget.

We continue to collaborate with the Yukon Land Use Planning Council and CYFN on a third party review of the common land use planning process currently used by the commissions and the council, and Yukon government has stated our support for a revised process with a focus on producing approvable plans in a cost-effective manner.

We look forward to the resolution of this with respect to the court action that is currently underway. Our main goal is to ensure that not only our government, but future governments, retain that right to make decisions with respect to what happens on public lands. We think that's very important for us, and we think it's important for future governments to have that ability to not be bound by a recommended plan put forward by a planning commission.

Mr. Tredger: I guess I wouldn't argue with the ability of a government to retain their authority to make final decisions on land; however, those decisions must be respectful and honour our final agreements and our treaties. Those decisions must follow the law and the Constitution of Canada in order to be valid. Those treaties and agreements were negotiated over a long period of time with considerable thought and energy put into them. They were built on a basis of respect and trust. They were built on relationship-building and they were put in place with the understanding and the hope and the trust that people and future governments, this one included, would be respectful of what was put forth, respectful of all the governments and would work together — neighbour to neighbour, friend to friend, steward to steward — so that together, we can work these out. That was the genius of the agreements and the treaties.

So yes, there is a retained authority, but it must be respectful of the law. Nothing in our Constitution gives any government the authority to break laws, treaties and agreements. I guess my concern is that it doesn't have to be this way. I believe — the NDP believes — in the ability of the people of the Yukon to come together to work together, to come up with solutions and to meet the challenges. That was the genius of the land claim agreements, the self-government agreements and our treaties — so we would work together.

The minister mentioned a mineral development strategy and a mine licensing improvement initiative. Is his intention to go ahead with those before working with the First Nations on successor legislation, as recommended coming out of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*? I know we had successor legislation in one area. Last year, the First Nations were

asking and looking for successor legislation. Now it appears we are looking at a mineral development strategy and a mine licensing improvement initiative. It sounds like the minister has already had discussions and consultations with the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board as well as the Yukon Chamber of Mines and Chamber of Commerce and he is taking what they have developed with him and then putting it to — sent out a letter yesterday, I believe he said, to Yukon First Nations.

Part of the final agreements and treaties was that the governments work together to initiate — I think that is where we are running into a bit of trouble. Is this current Yukon Party government coming up with an almost-finished product and then taking it out to consult? That doesn't capture the spirit and intent. So I guess I'm asking the minister if he has had discussions with the First Nations around successor legislation and whether this has flowed from that or whether it is his intention to have a mineral development strategy and a mine licensing improvement initiative done prior to successor legislation?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I'll just briefly touch on and make my concluding remarks with respect to the Peel court case. Again, we're looking forward to the court resolution. We felt that all along throughout the process that we were following the process and the laws with respect to how that process should be undertaken. I know that my predecessor — the previous Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and now the Minister of Justice and current Minister of Community Services — worked tirelessly to try to find modifications that would work. We weren't able to reach those and now we'll be going to the Yukon Court of Appeal. Again, while we feel we followed the laws to a T — the process to a T — we'll look to the courts to determine whether or not that was indeed the case.

Madam Chair, when it comes to the mineral development strategy and the mine licensing improvement initiative, I can't remember exactly when it was, but the Premier and I were at leadership and we introduced this concept — I believe it was perhaps in February, I think, of this year that we were there. I'm not 100-percent sure of the timing of that, but we did go to leadership and we talked about a number of things that are underway with respect to mining, including the mineral development strategy. What we're looking forward to with that strategy is to set a course for achieving a revitalized mineral industry in the Yukon. It's part of our overall goal to ensure that Yukon is competitive on the global stage for investment. We'll also be looking at the 2014 Fraser Institute report and what other jurisdictions are doing to provide input into this strategy.

There's a multi-step process that's envisioned. Right now we are at step one, which is early engagement, so there will be meetings one-on-one with key representatives of First Nations, the mineral industry and stakeholders, which include industry groups and conservation groups, to obtain background information and identify initial issues for the strategy. So the timing of that is, again, this month and into May, perhaps early June 2015. We want to conclude that before the summer hits and Yukoners take their time to enjoy

our beautiful summer. Consultation is normally not at the top of the agenda for many of them in the June, July and August months — and even into the fall traditional harvest season.

The second step of this process is document preparation: developing background documents seeking Cabinet approval of a draft of the strategy for consultation. That work will be done in June and July. Step three is the formal consultation: conduct First Nation, industry, stakeholder and public consultation on the draft strategy. Opportunities for general public consultation will be focused around websites and on-line opportunities, so the timing for that — we are anticipating — is mid-August to mid-October. Step four is to finalize the strategy: review consultation input, prepare the final mineral development strategy and develop an implementation plan. We are looking at a timing of November and December of 2015 and, if all goes well, we will have an approved mineral development strategy and implementation plan in January of 2016, but in my experience, sometimes those timelines will slip for various reasons. We are hopeful that we are able to meet these timelines, but I think it is more important to ensure that we have a strategy that positions us to be a top destination for investment dollars when the markets come back, and we know that they will come back.

With respect to the mine licensing improvement initiative — sorry, just stepping back to the MDS — and I guess this is more of an answer to one of the member's questions. We did need to put together a document to take out for this early engagement. We have had consultants and officials from Energy, Mines and Resources put that document together. As I mentioned earlier, letters went out to all First Nation chiefs, as well as the Grand Chief, and we have included some of the transboundary First Nations. The Taku River Tlingit, the Acho Dene Koe and the Tetlit Gwich'in have also received them. I am not sure if it went to the Inuvialuit or not, but that is something that I could look into. Again, to industry stakeholders, environmental NGOs, industry NGOs — the letter and this document went out. I signed off on it yesterday so those organizations and First Nations should be receiving that initial document for early engagement soon, whether it was e-mailed out or put in the mail yesterday or today.

With respect to the mine licensing improvement initiative — or MLII — this initiative has the Yukon Water Board, the YESA board and numerous government departments meeting to determine ways to better coordinate the regulatory process, with the main goal being to reduce overlap and duplication during the mine licensing process. When complete, this initiative will provide more certainty for companies wanting to do business in the Yukon. This initiative will help ensure that Yukon's management systems around exploration and development are comprehensive, responsive and predictable for all parties involved, and we are looking forward to having it help boost industry confidence and revitalize the mineral sector in the territory.

I should also mention that work is currently underway with respect to class 1 activities that are regulated by the operating conditions described in schedule 1 of the quartz mining land use regulation. Class 1 programs can be

characterized as including activities defined as grassroots exploration and activities generally having low potential to cause adverse environmental effects. The work and reclamation is expected to be completed within a one-year time frame. These programs do not require government approval, and the operator must comply with the operating conditions.

Of course, members will know that last year, I believe it was, we added the Ross River area to an area that required notification. We have also included First Nation settlement lands and the traditional territories of the other two unsettled First Nations in the Yukon — the White River First Nation and the Liard First Nation — and our goal is to bring class 1 notification in, territory-wide. There was a meeting in early 2014 between me, the Premier and a number of chiefs that resulted in an initiative to develop an MOU between the parties — Yukon government and settled First Nations — to establish a process to facilitate consultation on proposed amendments to the class 1 threshold regulation.

Chief Alatini of the Kluane First Nation and former Chief Champion of the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun and I were designated as advisory committee members. We then met with First Nation officials in early 2015. I felt that the process — while it took some time to get to the MOU development process, there was a willingness for First Nation officials to meet with our officials. I'm very pleased with the work — I should mention Bryony McIntyre, who is one of our EMR officials, and I have heard great things about the work that she is conducting at this table to identify potential thresholds.

I met recently with members of the Yukon Prospectors' Association and let them know that we have adjusted our deadlines with respect to this. We wish to meet the goal of completing the discussions by the end of 2015 for new rules to be in place for the 2016 exploration season. We have prepared a letter and I believe it perhaps hasn't gone yet, but it will be forwarded to all First Nations and industry providing rationale for a revised implementation date. While we had hoped to have it in for this exploration season, the timing and a few extenuating circumstances did not allow that to occur.

When it comes to successor resource legislation, the member opposite I think mentioned the UFA, but it was actually the devolution transfer agreement that triggered successor resource legislation. The first legislation to go through that process was the forestry act. It took quite some time and we were concerned that the forest industry — hopefully with the implementation of the value-added opportunities through biomass energy, increased fuel wood opportunities and some of the incentives that we hope to provide Yukoners so that they can burn fuel wood to provide heat for themselves will kick-start that industry, but we didn't really see the successor resource legislation with respect to forestry grow the industry. In many respects, it contracted it. I'm not saying that that is solely because of the successor resource legislation, but certainly we don't see a strong or robust forest industry coming out of that.

That said, I believe that the next piece of legislation that was agreed to by the parties was work on the *Lands Act*. That

work hasn't started yet but, again, we look forward to working with First Nations on successor resource legislation there. There are always opportunities, we find, to improve the *Quartz Mining Act* and the *Placer Mining Act*. There have been several changes to both of those pieces of legislation over the past number of years, and we feel they are changes for the better, such as the class 1 notification and other aspects that were recently brought in. I know there were some royalty changes, I believe, that were done and some other changes that were made to the act that have improved it. It certainly has undergone a number of iterations since its implementation.

Again, we look forward to working with First Nation partners, not only on identifying areas through the mineral development strategy where we can improve what we're doing here, but work on the mine licensing improvement initiative, the class 1 initiative and a whole host of other initiatives across Energy, Mines and Resources and, indeed, across government where we're cooperating and collaborating with First Nation governments.

Mr. Tredger: The class 1 activities and notification — can the minister tell me what areas are now off-limits to staking and what areas we have agreement on the class 1 notification? We'll just leave it at that. What areas are now off-limits to staking? What areas are under class 1 notification with an agreement with First Nations around notification? Which areas are not affected by that but, as the minister suggested, may come under the auspices of this new agreement?

Hon. Mr. Kent: There are a couple of different issues that the member opposite has brought on with his question. Just so we're clear and we don't confuse them, the first issue that I'll talk about is class 1 notification. I did spell out what class 1 activities looked like. They are grassroots exploration generally having low potential to cause adverse environmental effects, work and reclamation expected to be completed within a year — programs that do not require any type of government approval, so there's no permitting that would trigger a YESAA assessment.

This was one of the declarations of the Yukon Court of Appeal decision of a couple of years ago. What we're doing now is working to phase in class 1 notification requirements to cover the entire territory. As I've mentioned, we had hoped initially to have that notification in place for 2015. It now looks that, in order to meet our consultation requirements and the internal requirements of our government, we will not be able to have that territory-wide until next year.

However, currently there is class 1 notification that exists. It applies to the Ross River area, the Peel watershed region, class 1 notification areas that encompass the traditional territory of First Nations without final agreements — including the Taku River Tlingit and their asserted traditional territory in south-central Yukon — as well as category A and category B settlement land. Right now, discussions are underway with First Nations and industry to clearly define the class 1 thresholds with the intent to amend the mining land

use regulations to clearly define which level of activity would trigger a notification requirement.

As for areas that are currently not available for staking, there are a number of different classifications, including, of course, national parks and territorial parks — the Ross River area. There is work underway on the other declaration that was brought forward by the Yukon Court of Appeal to identify areas within their traditional territory that will be made available for staking. We recently extended that deadline. That particular aspect is being led by the Executive Council Office, and I am sure the Premier would be happy to provide an update to members opposite when we get to Executive Council Office as to the status of those negotiations.

Again, there are a number of different areas that are not available for staking. There are a whole bunch of different designations for where lands are withdrawn. Actually, we have a land status map on our website. It shows which lands are withdrawn from staking — a very useful tool for prospectors and those who are engaged in the industry.

Mr. Tredger: One of the concerns that was expressed by the First Nations that did not have self-government agreements and weren't party to the UFA was capacity, of course. I am just wondering how that was expressed by Ross River, certainly. I believe the minister said that class 1 notification was in effect in all unsettled, traditional areas. That would include White River, Ross River, the Liard First Nation and the Peel River watershed.

Is there a process in place for potential prospectors to stake? Is there a contact person and has there been some effort to ensure that White River boundaries are clarified so that a prospector knows where they can go and not go? I know in the case of White River, certainly, there are areas that overlap with some settled areas. What decisions are made there? What can we tell the prospectors — where they can go, who they have to notify — and have there been allowances made or efforts made to ensure that the First Nations have the capacity to receive the notification to assess whether it is acceptable to their other land use plans and that it meets their requirements for exploration on their land?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I don't have the exact number with me. Perhaps I'll be able to bring it back at a future date when Energy, Mines and Resources is up for debate.

We do provide capacity funding for the First Nations to participate in a number of initiatives, including the class 1 initiative.

Just to be clear, the amendments that we brought in through Bill No. 66 in December 2013, the mining land use regulation describes a 25-day review period following receipt of a notification. The chief of mines has the discretion to extend the review period, if necessary. If any regulatory requirement prevents an operator from performing assessment work within the required time frame, consideration can be given to providing relief under the *Quartz Mining Act* or the *Placer Mining Act*.

The notification from the prospectors is provided to First Nations through the Yukon government. They would notify us

— that is my understanding of the process — and we would notify the First Nation, but I should say that we live in a very modern mining jurisdiction, and whether it's prospectors, grassroots prospectors, or even some of the junior mining companies that conduct class 1 activity or any type of activity, we always encourage them to ensure that they maintain good lines of communication and relations with First Nations whose traditional territory they're operating in.

In June 2014, White River First Nation and one of the junior mining companies entered into an exploration, communication and cooperation agreement, which will guide the relationship between the company and White River First Nation during the exploration phase of the project.

Madam Chair, these companies, prospectors and explorers are very sophisticated and they spend an awful lot of time on community engagement. They should be commended for the amount of time they spend. Many of them are recognized yearly at the annual geoscience banquet for the work they do in the community. One of the recent examples was Casino Mining Corporation providing salmon to the elders of, I believe, Carmacks and Pelly Crossing when the fishery was closed last year.

It's things like that that these companies do, not for a lot of fanfare, but they certainly do these types of things to ensure that they have the social licence to operate in the traditional territories. They're good corporate citizens. I meet regularly with mining companies, as the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and now the Minister of Highways and Public Works. It's important to recognize the good work that the prospectors and the mining companies do to engage First Nations right from the outset. Many of them have tremendous working relationships with the First Nations whose traditional territory they operate in.

Mr. Tredger: I too would echo that many of our resource extraction companies are very proactive and work with the First Nations. Casino mine and Kaminak Gold Corporation in my area are two — Casino, Kaminak and Minto are mines in my area that have gone to work with very well with it, but I am concerned about the initial notification. We don't have a lot of staking going on right now but, as the minister mentioned, it is very cyclical. While we are in a low time, it is beneficial to work some of this out, so my questions are related to how it is working.

There is a 25-day limit, and are the First Nations able to respond in that time? Have there been any for which they have requested extensions? I know that when it was initially proposed, they were very concerned about that, especially absent land use planning. They wanted to ensure that they had the resources and the capacity to meet the timelines as well as to assure their people that they were being responsible stewards of the land and addressing the potential multiple uses of the land. I guess I am asking the minister how many notifications have happened in the last — I guess we are just entering another prospecting season. But since it has been installed, has he consulted and talked to the First Nations about their ability to meet the deadlines? Are they happy with the process? What manner of consultation or discussions or

agreements has he had with, say, the Ross River Dena or the White River First Nation? I know there have been individual companies that have signed agreements. I am more concerned about people moving in and wanting to prospect on land and not wanting to have that delayed by wrangling like we have seen over Bill S-6 or the Peel land use plan, which does nobody any good because it slows all the process down and it creates a lot of division. The class 1 notification — it is important that we put the work in ahead of time so that it's effective for a long time.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I don't have the exact number of notifications that have taken place, but I understand that there have been less than 10. The areas that currently require class 1 notification are the Ross River area, the traditional territories of First Nations without final agreements as well as anything on category A and category B settlement land, so there have been less than 10. I know that 25 days isn't the number that we landed on with respect to the legislation. I can tell you that the industry wanted much shorter and First Nations wanted a much longer time, so that was really splitting the difference and meeting in the middle with respect to what that notification would be.

Of course First Nations' concerns were, I'm assuming, with respect to being able to provide a response, but industry — we have a very short exploration season here, Madam Chair, as you know, and they also need to have timely responses to what they're looking for so that's why we landed on that 25-day period.

Again, there is the ability for the chief of mining land use to extend that if they feel it's necessary, but again we haven't heard from First Nations with respect to how this is working. As I said, there is a very small number of class 1 notifications that have been going out or that have been done.

Again, if First Nations do have concerns, I haven't heard them personally from the chiefs of the affected areas, but again as we move toward next year's exploration season and look to bring this in territory-wide, I'm sure that we'll hear more and more about the time frame and the ability of First Nations to respond within that time frame and how it's affecting industry — whether it's having a detrimental effect on industry or if they're able to adjust what they're trying to do to ensure that the notification doesn't affect what they're trying to accomplish in the field. Hopefully the revised thresholds that we're looking to bring in will also allow them to do some of the less impactful activities associated with class 1 in the field without any notification being required, and then the more impactful activities that are currently under class 1 will require notification.

I haven't heard from any of the chiefs with respect to this. I talked of course very recently with Chief Ladue on a couple of the files that were active in his traditional territory and this was not something that was brought up at that time.

Mr. Tredger: How has the minister determined what the traditional area for White River First Nation is? I know there is some dispute certainly between Yukon government and White River, as well as between the various First Nations. When a person goes to prospect, they would like to be sure

whether they are in a class 1 notification area or whether they can go in otherwise and whether that has been arrived at through discussions with not only White River First Nation but the adjoining First Nations.

The second part of that is that I would encourage the minister to — given the amount of concern that was raised by the affected First Nations around the class 1 notification and the fact that it had to go to court and was a court decision — rather than wait for a complaint to be brought forward or a concern to be brought forward, to reach out as a partners and say, “Are there problems? You had mentioned these instances in situations and were concerned about that. Have we come to something that is going to be workable? Is this going to work for you or not and what can we do?” So this — rather than wait until it is a problem, because as the minister again has said, we are in a low cycle in terms of the industry and we have an opportunity to work on it, to discuss it and get it right while the big pressure isn’t on us. When we end up getting thousands and thousands of claims being staked in a year or two, it is too late. Now is the time to reach out and say, “Is it working?” So that’s just a question on White River and around reaching out to First Nations.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I think the most useful tool for prospectors with respect to areas where they can stake or not stake is the land status map. Also included in there, I’m assuming — and I would have to confirm this — is where notification is required with respect to class 1 activities. Class 1 activities are much more than just staking out a claim. I did outline some of the activities that would be caught up with respect to class 1. As far as the asserted traditional territory of the White River First Nation. I think that is a question that I would ask members opposite to direct to the Premier when we are up in Executive Council Office. That is something that his department, of course, has responsibility for — Aboriginal Relations.

Talking about reaching out, I think the sample size is so small with less than 10, so it is hard, not only for us, but probably hard for First Nations to determine whether or not the 25-day period is adequate. As we move to next year and territory-wide class 1 notification, that number will surely increase and we’ll be able to get a better idea of whether or not the 25-day period is sufficient to do what we’re intending to do as far as notification with respect to class 1 activities.

I think that it is important to note that all members on this side of the House and I, whether Cabinet ministers or MLAs in the ridings, meet regularly with First Nations on a variety of initiatives and I certainly am no exception to that. First Nation governments are extremely important to advancing what we want to accomplish here in the territory, not only on the economic side, but on the environmental and social side as well. Whether it is Education, or Health and Social Services, or Highways and Public Works or EMR, First Nation engagement is something that we all do and we have many different files where we are talking to First Nations about different initiatives.

Mr. Tredger: I will just switch from this aspect to agriculture for a few minutes. Agriculture has been very

important to the Yukon. It fed our early peoples in many jurisdictions. It certainly fed the mining community. I know a number of First Nations were gardeners and, as I mentioned earlier, I am neighbour to a farm that has been there since 1897.

Lately we’ve become increasingly aware of food security and working very hard to increase our ability to produce local foods. In this, I would like to recognize the department of agriculture and the work they’re doing, the outreach they’re doing to farmers, and the training sessions that are happening. As I mentioned, I attended a couple and I’ve been part of a couple of gardening courses that department of agriculture personnel have put on. I want to also recognize the Growers of Organic Food Yukon and the Yukon Agricultural Association for the work that they’re doing, and the education and work they’re doing to involve all sorts of people. Whether it’s the people in their backyard growing gardens, people on small market gardens or larger farms, like the Yukon Grain Farm, it’s a real treat to see Yukon produce being in our grocery stores and in our markets. I know it’s exciting times in our office when the egg man shows up with farm eggs.

Just a question for the minister — the land on Mayo Road — there have been a number of different suggestions as to how that’s going to be developed and what the plans are for it. I know I’ve asked about that over the last several years since it was allocated. There has been talk about it being an abattoir — or a place to bring your animals and drop them off. It has also been talked about as food storage — or a dispenser of food.

I’m wondering if the minister has any firm timelines on the development of that. What are the plans? What is the decision-making process around that? Who’s being consulted? I know different farmers have different needs and different ideas. The farms that come from a further distance would like a central area where they could drop off their produce, where it could be a distribution centre, where it could be taken — allowing smaller farmers who can’t meet the entire demand of a restaurant or of an institution, but are able to then bring in and contribute, without having the pressures of being unable to meet the demand.

I guess my first question on agriculture is asking the minister to please update us on that land — what it’s going to be used for, what it’s currently being used for, and the planning process around that.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I have to apologize to the member opposite. I know the Yukon Agricultural Association was leading the strategic planning for that particular parcel of land, but I don’t have an update with me here today. Obviously their AGM is coming up — I believe it’s next weekend. It’s a week from Saturday. I’ll be attending and looking forward to hearing some of the initiatives that are underway.

In the meantime, I will commit to get back to the member opposite with an update on exactly what’s happening on that Mayo Road land and get a status update. It may be very brief. I may just flip him an e-mail or something when I hear from the department, but hopefully that will suffice. Otherwise I can do that in a more formal process through a letter. I

apologize for not having that information with me here today. I know that that process was being led by the Yukon Agricultural Association, so I will get an update for members on what's happening with that particular piece of land on the Mayo Road.

Chair: Before we go to another question, would members like to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

We're going to resume general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Mr. Tredger: As I mentioned, it is nice to see more Yukon food products at the grocery stores than in the past. I am wondering if some of the new Growing Forward 2 funding is going to help our local producers and our local consumers get together. Are there any plans for marketing eggs, meat and vegetables? Is there a plan to get more Yukon food into the stores, to have the government — internally and key institutions like the hospital or Copper Ridge — buying local produce? Is there a plan to use some of the Growing Forward 2 money that is coming in to facilitate that, either through a distribution centre or a working arrangement with our producers and our consumers?

Hon. Mr. Kent: This gives me an opportunity to give members an update to where we are with the Yukon local food strategy. I think members will know that we debated two motions — one government private member's motion, I believe, and an opposition motion — with respect to local food. What came out of that was the choice to pursue a Yukon local food strategy. Promotion of local food production and consumption in the north will provide fresher, higher quality food that uses less packaging, conserves energy, supports local farmers, builds community and economic diversity, and creates durable farms and farm support businesses.

The member opposite is quite right. There are a number of businesses, including the Yukon Grain Farm. That was one of the farms that I had the opportunity to visit last summer. A lot of their product, of course, is on the shelves of two of our bigger retailers. I believe they actually get some of their product into most of the local food retailers here in the City of Whitehorse. I am not sure what type of exposure they have in the communities as far as their product. It is a great farm, and it is a real testament to locals and how they are able to build a business and get some of their product into stores and accepted by some of the national retail chains.

An analysis of our agriculture industry shows that production and consumption of local food in the Yukon could be improved. Objectives for a local food strategy could be met through a variety of tools that will make the agri-food sector competitive, resilient and responsive, give local food producers opportunity and profit, make local food

conspicuous and widely available, and make consumers appreciate and therefore choose local food.

There are a number of initiatives that have been considered that would lead us toward our objectives. Some are expected to be inexpensive with significant potential while others will require an investment of funds to increase production. Concepts are under development and will be presented as a draft policy or strategy to the public and stakeholders. I can't remember the exact amount, but we have provided some funding to the Yukon Agricultural Association to participate and help us to develop this local food strategy.

What we expect the strategy will do is augment our existing policy and program tools, including the Yukon government agricultural policy, the multi-year development plan and the Growing Forward 2 program that the member opposite mentioned.

There are a number of different opportunities that we're looking at. I know the Member for Klondike — I believe it was his motion that was brought forward — called for a local food act, but having reached out to Ontario — officials reaching out to Ontario — they felt that much of the things that were in the act could be accomplished through policy or programs so that's why we decided to go down the road of a local food strategy rather than a local food act, as suggested in a motion by the Member for Klondike. I can't remember when that was. It was in May 2012 — sorry, second motion, April 2014. I believe that was the Member for Klondike's motion.

I think there are some real opportunities with the local food strategy. Just to commend the farmers — I think there are farm-fresh eggs that are delivered to our offices on a weekly basis as well, and I know from talking to many of the officials in the Agriculture branch, much of the product that they use on a day-to-day basis is sourced locally from meats to vegetables and other opportunities.

Working with our partners, the Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee, which includes Growers of Organic Food Yukon, the Fireweed Community Market, Agricultural Association, Yukon Young Farmers, and Yukon Game Growers Association — these are opportunities to address the food security issues and enhance the industry that is here with respect to providing more opportunities for local food to be consumed by Yukoners.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that and would encourage him to work and push this forward as quickly as we can. I know it has been a hope and dream of many producers for many years, and consumers are realizing how wonderful it is to get locally grown carrots and vegetables and produce. It is a real treat and special to the Yukon.

Central Yukon has been a breadbasket for the Yukon. I must commend Yukon College. I know that in Pelly and in Mayo they are running gardening courses. The First Nations there are running greenhouses there as well as in Carmacks, and they are starting to produce quite a bit of locally grown produce, and the community has really bought into that. I also congratulate the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Yukon College for their farm initiatives in Dawson City.

Has there been an effort to increase land availability and to work with the First Nations in central Yukon to take advantage of some of the prime growing conditions that are there and the opportunities to develop an agricultural industry? I know First Nations have talked to me about interest in it, and I'm just wondering whether the minister has reached out and looked for ways to make land available and to work with the First Nations to develop that industry — as well as non-First Nation people — to be able to have land that they could either lease or buy, where they could farm or become market gardeners or produce products.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Some of the current agricultural land initiatives — I know I highlighted a number in my opening remarks that have taken place or are taking place but, in the communities, there are two phases of planned land sales for the Haines Junction agriculture subdivision. Those are complete. Access road construction for phase 3 is underway. Public consultation is complete, I believe, on planned agricultural lots on lands designated for agriculture in the Sunnydale/West Dawson local area plan. One inventory lot at Upper Liard will be released, as demand occurs.

I think there are a number of different land options that we're looking at. Work on directed spot land application areas is taking place with the cooperation of First Nations in both Na Cho Nyäk Dun and Selkirk First Nation traditional territories to meet anticipated future demand in central Yukon. As I mentioned, since 2002, approximately 94 spot agriculture applications have been approved.

The summary of land sales since the start of YG agricultural land program, 1982 to — this is the end of February of this year. Sold and titled lands equal 34,071 acres. There are currently 47 agreements for sale for agricultural land. Land sales are predominantly in the Whitehorse area, with over 70 percent of agricultural lands within 60 kilometres of the City of Whitehorse.

When it comes to the disposition of agricultural lands, I know we're looking at some other opportunities and options within the Agriculture branch of Energy, Mines and Resources, including opportunities for leasing land and how that would work. I think there are some tremendous opportunities to partner with First Nations, as mentioned.

The higher cost of some of these land parcels is a bit of a disincentive, I guess, particularly to some of the young farmers who are trying to get into the market. I know one of the people who spoke at the North 60 agricultural conference and banquet that was held this past fall was from Alberta agriculture. He was there to talk about a number of things, but I think one of the topics was with respect to land leasing.

There are a number of things we can do to increase the access to land for individual farmers, making sure that we continue to make opportunities available to them to have agriculture-producing land, whether it's soil-based or non-soil based agricultural opportunities.

Mr. Tredger: Just a quick question on genetically modified organisms. There has been some discussion around that and I believe that the department of agriculture, or the minister, has developed a policy. Is that policy in effect now

and have there been any — if he could just describe where it's at in terms of the development stage and whether or not there have been any applications to bring GMO crops into Yukon, and subsequently gone through the policy?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Currently, the Agriculture and Land Planning branches are working on a consultation strategy for implementing this discretionary use for all development areas that have an agriculture zone. I know that we were going to reach out to the LACs in particular, as to whether or not they were looking for a public meeting with respect to these discretionary opportunities that were going to come out with the GMA. Genetically modified alfalfa seems to be the one that is getting the most attention.

What the proposed regulatory amendments would allow for is the development for zoning areas to regular genetically modified organisms as a discretionary use, if farmers and citizens within the area decide that is how they want to proceed. I know this has been a very difficult issue and the MLA for Lake Laberge, the Minister of Justice, is very well-versed in it and I thank him for his help and assistance as the previous Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources in getting this very difficult issue, I think, to a place where individuals can move forward comfortably on it.

The Yukon is working proactively with the industry through our Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee and that is where we are exploring regulating these GMOs in Yukon. It is unlikely, though, according to my officials in Agriculture — it is unlikely that this genetically modified seed release will have an effect on Yukon farms. We grow only small acreages of alfalfa and the genetically modified varieties are unlikely to be suitable for our production system in the Yukon. The alfalfa has been genetically modified for herbicide resistance and is approved for use in Canada, with the first variety registration completed April 26, 2013, but as I mentioned, according to Agriculture officials, it is unlikely that it would be suitable for our production system in the Yukon.

Mr. Tredger: Is there a process now in place for a grower who wants to bring in GMO seeds or are we still working on developing that process?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Yes, we are still working on the process. As I mentioned, the Agriculture and Land Planning branches are currently working on a consultation strategy for implementing this discretionary use for all the development areas that have an agriculture zone. As I mentioned, we have been working proactively through the Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee and these proposed regulatory amendments would allow for zoning areas to regulate GMOs as a discretionary use, if farmers and citizens within that area decide that is how they want to proceed.

My understanding is that there hasn't been any use of this in the territory yet, and we are going to be working on this consultation strategy so that we can identify areas where there could be a discretionary use — again, allowing the farmers and citizens within that area to decide that that is how they want to proceed.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that. Just to jump back to land quickly, I have an Energy, Mines and Resources document on Yukon government lots for sale. I know that has been a concern of communities in my jurisdiction for some time, and I have heard it from other communities as well that in order for the communities to grow, they need to have lots for sale. I know a number of people have been transferred within government and then turn down jobs to go to the communities because there was no land or housing available. The concern, certainly from Carmacks and from Mayo, is that as we proceed with mining operations, unless we have available land, people are not going to move to our communities. When I look at Carmacks, for instance — and this is as of March 30, 2015 — they have two commercial lots, two industrial lots and three residential lots. When I talked to the Village of Carmacks council about that, they said it was a long and involved process to get those three lots. In fact, they mentioned about five years working with Energy, Mines and Resources. The three lots are not in an entirely desirable area, which is why they haven't been picked up yet.

I look at Dawson City and they don't appear to have any residential lots. They have 16 industrial lots. I see Destruction Bay has three country residential lots. Faro has four country residential lots. There are certainly a lot in Grizzly Valley available — 17 lots — and the price on those is rather exorbitant. I can see why the 17 lots are still there. As I recall, there was quite a to-do around the expense and the building of those lots in that area. Haines Junction has more lots, and it looks like it is well-ready to go. Teslin has 18 country residential lots. I don't see any just residential lots. Watson Lake has only one residential lot, while they do have seven country residential lots. I don't see anything for Mayo and for many of the other communities.

My concern is that we have been — both from the government and from the opposition — talking about the lack of lot availability in our communities and the opportunity for people to move into those communities because of that. We've been talking about it.

I know that occasionally lots do come available, as those three lots in Carmacks have just come available. My concern is that we're in a down cycle but, as things pick up, if our communities are going to benefit, if our children are going to move back to our communities, if we want people to move from various departments to our communities, we need to have lots available. I'm not sure — I know there have been a number of initiatives started and changed but, after 10 years, that's a real concern.

I hear it in virtually every community I go to — that we need lots. Would the minister make that a priority? Does he have some timelines? When can I tell the residents of Mayo or Carmacks or Dawson City or Beaver Creek or any of the other ones, "soon"? How soon — within a year, within five years? In Yukon, one thing we do have is land, so how soon can we expect some lots on those lands?

Hon. Mr. Kent: As I mentioned during my opening remarks, Energy, Mines and Resources is responsible for land development, particularly outside the City of Whitehorse. Just

to give a little bit of background, the Yukon government's approach to providing planned land development over the period of 2002 to 2015 is demonstrated through the creation of approximately 1,353 lots. Of those, 729 were residential, 119 were townhouse lots, 19 were agricultural lots, 50 were rural residential, 32 were multi-family lots, nine were commercial lots, 234 were country residential lots, 44 were recreational lots, 73 were industrial lots and 44 were duplex lots.

Those are spread out, not only through Whitehorse, but also developments in many of the communities mentioned, including Dawson City, Haines Junction, Carmacks, Teslin — to name a few. There are opportunities for the development, we believe, of new residential lots in Dawson and Mayo that we need to consider.

I agree with the member opposite that, as some of these projects that progressed quite significantly during the more recent upturn in the mining cycle move toward eventual production, we're going to need to ensure that we have land opportunities in our communities, in particular, for people who choose to live in those communities to take advantage of, so they can own their own homes or even for potential landlords to build rental accommodations.

The recent announcement by the minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation with respect to the northern housing trust money will hopefully facilitate rental development, not only in Whitehorse, but in the communities.

Energy, Mines and Resources has signed land development protocols with Watson Lake, Carmacks, Dawson City, Faro, Haines Junction, Mayo and Teslin. What these protocols do is outline a proactive and collaborative approach to fostering planned development to meet community needs for affordable lots.

We've seen a number of partnerships with First Nations, including Carcross-Tagish First Nation and Teslin Tlingit Council, to get different land opportunities out to citizens who live there or are interested in moving to those communities. There is work to be done. I think there has been quite a bit accomplished over the past 13 years, as I mentioned, but I do agree with the member opposite. We do need to continue to look for land opportunities.

He did mention that the one thing we have a lot of in the Yukon is land, but I don't think there is any land development without some sort of controversy or some individuals who either live in that area or have a particular lifestyle that they have become accustomed to in that area and who have concerns. Many of those concerns are legitimate concerns about their lifestyle and what they appreciate with the type of accommodation they have chosen, but it's always difficult.

Most recently, the McGowan lands out on the Carcross Road have received quite a bit of scrutiny from area residents as far as developing those opportunities out there. That would be another significant development and add quite a bit of land, but we also have to be respectful of the people who live in that area.

I just wanted to mention that it sounds easy to get land and develop it, but it's often a very long process and there are

people on either side of the issue when you're working on these types of projects.

Mr. Tredger: I guess I'm just going over those numbers and the land that is available. The majority of our communities do not have lots available. They can't expand and that's a very serious problem. They are looking for the territorial government to take leadership and to develop those lands and to work with them.

I guess I just hope that the minister is serious and that we may see some action in the near future on that. To me, it's critical. If we want to build our communities and build our infrastructures, we need to support them and we need to work with them.

Part of that would be to sit down with the communities and see each one as unique. What are their ideas and how can they work? Yes, there is often some controversy around it, but the way to avoid that is to sit down with the communities, with our municipal governments, and talk about it and say, "What are your ideas? How can we go forward?"

So —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Tredger: Pardon me?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Tredger: Okay. I just wondered what the member opposite had said. I'm not sure what's wrong with sitting down with municipal governments and talking and trying to find resolutions to problems. Maybe that's why we are where we are — that people find a problem with that. Certainly the NDP would be sitting down and talking about it and looking for solutions.

I would like to move on to climate change. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, how we get our energy, how we use it and how it enables us to move forward are critical not only for today, but for our children and for our grandchildren. We can't leave today's problems for our grandchildren. Science has been very, very clear. Climate change is real. It is caused by humans and the largest contributor to climate change is the burning of fossil fuels. The largest collection of scientists in the world working on climate change, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, has come out with increasingly dire warnings. In their last report, they mentioned that two-thirds of our known fossil fuels must remain in the ground.

The world is waking up to that. The United States and China signed a major agreement. European countries — Germany, Norway, Sweden, Great Britain, Scotland. Each day we hear of advances in renewable technology. Each day we hear of countries receiving more and more of their production from renewable energies. In Yukon, due to the foresight of previous leaders, the majority of our electrical production is renewable, but we have sat and watched as our consumption has moved more and more close to our ability to produce, to the point where at times in the winter we exceed our capacity to produce electricity. Lately I have read a number of studies by acclaimed economists pointing to the jobs that are being created, the investments that are being made and the potential of jurisdictions moving to safe, reliable, renewable energy.

Indeed, the global economy is pivoting away from the burning of fossil fuels. From a situation a number of years ago where economists wondered whether or not we would be able to curb our appetite to now, where our demand for fossil fuels is slowing. It is decoupling from the gross domestic product, which means we have reached a point where we can move away from our dependence on fossil fuels economically. It will be a challenge, but we can do it.

As I said, the global economy is pivoting away from the burning of fossil fuels and those jurisdictions that remain invested or invest — those investors that invest in fossil fuels — will be left with stranded assets. We need to divert our public funds from supporting the fossil fuel industry to building renewable energy. The science is very clear. You can either protect our climate or you can frack and develop a new oil and gas industry, but you cannot do both. It is becoming increasingly clear that you cannot do both. The world does not need our oil and gas fracked. Economically, it makes no sense; environmentally, it makes no sense.

My question for the minister is: Will he heed science, heed the opinions of Yukon people and divest Yukon from the oil and gas industry and invest in a renewable energy industry?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Just to close on the rural land development — perhaps the member didn't hear one of my responses — but we have put in place land development protocols. They've been signed with Watson Lake, Carmacks, Dawson City, Faro, Haines Junction, Mayo and Teslin. What those protocols will do is outline a proactive and collaborative approach to fostering planned development to meet community needs for affordable lots.

I know when we put the news release out on this, there was a quote — I don't have the news release in front of me — from the president of the Association of Yukon Communities applauding our efforts. I think that's a great way to start to move forward because, as I mentioned, there has been a very high demand for land over the last decade, in large part due to Yukon's economic prosperity and growth and the increased population. The demand for residential and commercial lots has been constant. Again, over that period of 2002 to 2015, there was the creation of approximately 1,353 lots in the territory. We've also brought in initiatives to allow for subdivision in areas out in the Mount Lorne area that could bring in additional opportunities for people to purchase land.

When it comes to energy, I'm very proud of not only our government's record and our commitment with respect to renewable energy, but also previous Yukon Party governments, those governments that brought Mayo B on-line, those governments that expanded power capacity at the Aishihik dam, and our government of course is very committed to clean power. It's bookended with the next generation hydro project that is being led by the Yukon Development Corporation, and we're excited about that as a larger power project that has the opportunity to meet future generations' demand, not only for Yukon citizens, but to allow for Yukon industry and the economy to expand.

Some of the priority actions that were identified in the 2009 *Energy Strategy for Yukon* — the first one was to increase renewable energy supply in Yukon by 20 percent by the year 2020. We hit that target in 2013, or perhaps it was even 2012 — I can't remember the exact timing of it, but I know it was one of the first news releases that went out after I was shuffled into the Energy, Mines and Resources portfolio in the fall of 2013. Some of the other opportunities were to support and demonstrate renewable energy projects in communities off the electrical grid to reduce diesel use, and support the development of wind, hydro, solar, wood or geothermal projects in the diesel-powered communities.

In the supplementary budget, we did provide \$1 million to the Kluane First Nation. I know they're planning on a wind power project there, and we're happy to support them in that endeavour through providing capital assistance. I believe they're looking for capital assistance from other sources, including CanNor, but we feel that it is a solid investment we can make in that community.

In the community of Old Crow, they have solar panels on most of the government buildings, if not all the government buildings there, that provide that type of renewable energy. So we're looking at opportunities in these diesel-powered communities to bring forward cleaner energy.

Some of the priority actions in the energy strategy are to look at new or expanded district heating systems. The wood-chip-fired plant in Dawson City that I had the opportunity to visit earlier this year — it's working very well. It's an interesting tour for anyone who hasn't had the opportunity to see it working. The folks at Highways and Public Works who manage that project up there for us do a tremendous job. The late Bill Bowie, and now his family, deserves a lot of credit as well for supplying the chips that, I believe, heat the Dawson waste-water treatment facility, as well as heating the water lines in the community in the wintertime. It is a tremendous initiative for district heating, and I am looking for other opportunities in communities like Haines Junction, Watson Lake and Whitehorse to bring in similar types of opportunities.

There are a number of action items that are included in the energy strategy, but one of the things that we have been successful at introducing in the last year is the microgeneration program, which I mentioned in my opening remarks. It has had very good uptake, along with our new and expanded residential energy efficiency programs. So if you are looking to purchase a renewable system for your home, or to use as part of the microgeneration program, we will provide up to \$5,000 in funding through the residential energy efficiency program. There are enhanced rebates. I would argue that this is one of the best rebate programs and energy efficiency programs in the country, because we were able to take a lot of what was going on — cherry-pick, I guess — from other jurisdictions and pick some of the best things.

Obviously, there are incentives for windows, there are incentives for thermal wraps, and we have expanded that beyond residential, most recently into the commercial side. Some of the older, less energy-efficient multi-unit residential

buildings in the City of Whitehorse are eligible for — I believe — up to \$100,000. There is a percentage of expenditure that is associated, but a tremendous amount of rebates for them to take a look at with the commercial energy incentive program — so thermal enclosures, including up to \$100,000 in funding for air-sealing insulation in windows and doors, and a commercial building lighting upgrades incentive, with up to \$10,000 available for LEDs. One of my neighbours works for the Energy Solutions Centre and has told me that the uptake for the commercial program has been very good. There are a number of companies that have come in and asked about it.

Later this year, we would anticipate having the independent power producers program released. That is a step up from the microgeneration. It is the larger-scale power producers that are involved with that program, and the biomass program that we just announced that we are consulting on. The biomass strategy that we are consulting on is another great opportunity for us to enhance our renewable energy portfolio here in the territory and build an industry around that, when it comes to working with our Wood Products Association and the wood producers, to ensure that we can give them an opportunity to have and grow their industry.

Other opportunities that we're exploring or investing in — research to identify renewable energy sources such as geothermal. The Energy Solutions Centre and YGS are currently working with the Canadian Geothermal Energy Association to develop a favourability map and geothermal direct use of heat applications and opportunity report for the Yukon. The \$168,000 project will receive \$126,000 from CanNor and the balance will be contributed by various Yukon sources through direct cash contributions and in-kind contributions, I believe.

There are a number of opportunities that are out there, and I think that we're doing some tremendous things and we're really punching above our weight when it comes to renewable energy. In 2014, according to the Yukon Energy website, 99.6 percent of the Yukon Energy power was generated by renewable sources. That's something that we should be proud of as Yukoners. I think there are great opportunities but again, as I have said in the past, we also, for human health and safety concerns, need to ensure that we have reliable backup power and that reliable backup power has to be able to meet demand.

There was an incident, I believe last fall, where there was an ice buildup in the Whitehorse Rapids facility at the turbine and they had to take the hydro facility offline, and that's when the fossil-fuel-burning facilities around the territory kicked in and ensured that we were able to continue to have power and heat our homes and keep our families safe and warm during the winter months.

So as much as we would like to not be reliant on fossil fuels — and again that number that I mentioned of 99.6 percent of the 2014 power being renewable is tremendous. Yukon Energy does a great job and I know that recent announcements by the CEO of Yukon Energy — they are

looking at wind farm opportunities. I know wind monitoring equipment has been moved to Mount Sumanik here in Whitehorse. It has come from Ferry Hill — or Tehcho, I think is the First Nation name — that is by Stewart Crossing. So there are opportunities at both of those areas for potential wind farms to be developed, but again they will need that reliable backup power and that backup power is burning with fossil fuels.

I know I have mentioned before in the House that members opposite like to use the example of Kodiak Island, as far as renewable energy generation and I would be interested in their numbers — if they hit 99.6 percent with renewable — because they have a windmill there, but their backup is diesel generation. The solar arrays that we hear from members opposite that Northwestel has at their towers — there is still diesel backup. They still have diesel that they haul in and use at those sites. All their power needs are not met strictly by the solar panels. A number of colleagues and I had the opportunity to tour Northwestel's facilities earlier this year at a number of locations around town. We asked specifically about that, but again it has reduced their reliance on fossil fuels, but they still require fossil fuels to provide backup energy for what they are doing there.

I think we have been clear when it comes to oil and gas opportunities. It's one of the areas where we disagree with the opposition New Democrats and the opposition Liberals, as far as oil and gas development and the development of shale gas opportunities. We've accepted and are addressing the 21 recommendations of the select committee. The member opposite referenced that there's no economic case, but one of the recommendations from the committee he sat on was for us to explore the economics and to go out and look for what the economic opportunities are with respect to shale gas opportunities in the Yukon. The other is, of course, to enhance and continue the public dialogue, which we will do as well.

There are a number of research and scientific opportunities as well. Again, we feel that, by allowing shale gas development in a very small fraction of the Yukon — I believe it's 1.3 percent of the land mass of the Yukon Territory — it is something we can manage. There's existing infrastructure down there. The Liard Basin is a world-class basin. It's something we're very — as the Yukon Party, we believe this is an opportunity to diversify our economy beyond just the traditional mineral economy and tourism and other opportunities we have here in the territory. This gives us an opportunity to diversify and look for additional opportunities.

I've mentioned the conventional gas production at the Kotaneelee well, which has contributed, I believe, \$45 million in royalties to the territory, \$10 million of which was distributed to a number of First Nations with self-governing agreements. Again, that provides opportunities for them to invest in their communities and it provides opportunities for us, as Yukoners, to invest in what our priorities are, such as education, health care, housing infrastructure and other initiatives that keep us safe.

It's an opportunity, as I have mentioned a number of times, for us to be a net contributor to this country. We can't rely on the hard work and let people in British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan do all the heavy lifting with respect to oil and gas development. I think this issue is something that we spent, a couple of Wednesdays ago, all afternoon talking about — the Member for Copperbelt South and I. We talked about this extensively. It's something that we disagree on. We believe there are opportunities in oil and gas here in the territory and we believe that we can take advantage of those opportunities through shale gas. Of course we will not proceed without the support of the affected First Nations, and in the Liard, it's the Kaska First Nation and the Acho Dene Koe.

This is about bringing jobs and opportunities for Yukoners — bringing those Yukoners who are working in this industry outside of our borders — bringing them home and giving them opportunities to work within the Yukon. We feel that's important. Unfortunately the opposition parties don't believe in shale gas opportunities. The New Democrats don't believe in shale or conventional. I guess the Leader of the Liberal Party is guffawing over there. I know he's sort of on the fence, not unsurprisingly, but he supports conventional industry but doesn't support a shale industry. We support the oil and gas industry. We think it will be an important part of our economy going forward, and I know that the Member for Klondike — I think Hansard shows that he has chosen to flip-flop on this issue, so Yukoners will be the judge of that. We're a party that supports responsible resource development in the territory and we think it's important not only for our present, but for future generations of Yukoners.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that. There were a number of points there but, as the minister mentioned, we have debated it. I guess what I can say is that the science is becoming increasingly clear. We cannot continue to burn fossil fuels at the rate we have. Currently, the world knows of more fossil fuels and is able to produce more fossil fuels than we can burn if we are to avoid catastrophic events — looking for new fossil fuels, developing new sources of fossil fuels when we have the option to develop renewable. The minister talks about backup. Technology is showing us the way. Yes, we need some way to store energy. It is being developed, and by the time we come up, 15 years down the line, with another dam and hydro source, it doesn't make any sense to continue to develop an oil and gas industry that's going to be left stranded.

The world is waking up and, again, you can either believe in climate change and move to protect the climate and the future for our children, or you can develop an oil and gas industry, a novel one, and develop the infrastructure and spend the money to do so, but you can't do both. It doesn't work; it doesn't compute.

In the Yukon, most of our emissions come not from the production of electricity, but from transportation and home heating. This government is currently on a building spree. How many of those homes are taking advantage of district heating or biofuels or geothermal? We saw what happened at F.H. Collins. We had economists come in, we had engineers

come in — they proved the case that we could have geothermal heat at F.H. Collins. The payback period was less than 10 years, and our carbon emissions would be next to none. Yet this government went ahead and put in a fossil fuel —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Silver: I'm sorry for interrupting, but I would like my colleagues in the House today help me in welcoming in the gallery Mike Gallant and Maura Gallant.

Applause

Mr. Tredger: We are going on a building spree. We have options. The minister referenced today the district heating system installed in Dawson City — a good news story. The biofuels being used at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre — a good news story. We have examples already, yet the minister is going out and consulting on the wood industry again. We know it works; we knew it works; we knew five years ago it works. When I was in Pelly Crossing, we had biofuel. It employed local people, they brought wood into the building, we chipped it and it ran the school. Actually, it was 15 years ago.

We have options — F.H. Collins — now we're looking at the trades wing. Is it going to be biofuel? Is it going to be district heating? Is it going to be geothermal? The dwelling is already there. We continue to talk about making changes. We have watched our two windmills since 1993, while other jurisdictions have progressed. You can drive through Alberta and see windmills. We have two, still. We can continue to talk and we can continue to talk, but that is the equivalent of doing nothing. Quite frankly, we are at a position in climate change where we cannot afford to do nothing.

We need to aggressively move toward a renewable energy future. Other jurisdictions are doing it. They are proving it is economical. They are proving that it creates jobs. They are proving it can be done. Relying on commodities is putting us in a position where it's only going to cost more. Renewable energies are based on technology; technology is making advances all the time. We are looking at storage. I understand that storage is a problem, but it's being resolved. When I first looked at solar panels for my home on the river, it was in the neighbourhood of \$20,000. I was able to put in a system for which I have not used the backup diesel generator for two years, because I conserved energy and I have a battery system in place. I was able to put that in for \$12,000. The same thing would be less than \$10,000 now, and the price is going down. Renewable energy is long term and cheaper and better for our economy.

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

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Tredger 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 from the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

The time being 5:30 p.m., or close to it, this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.