



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 214

1st Session

33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, May 19, 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
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Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Community Services; Public Service Commission
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Hon. Mike Nixon	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, May 19, 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 Aboriginal Awareness Week

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: It's a pleasure to rise today to pay tribute to Aboriginal Awareness Week in Canada.

Aboriginal Awareness Week was first introduced in 1992 with the purpose of increasing awareness of aboriginal peoples within the federal public service. Since that time, it has evolved into a week for all governments to honour the contributions made by aboriginal public servants across Canada, including Métis, Inuit, and First Nation people.

Here in Yukon, I am happy to say that First Nation representation in the Yukon public service has risen from 13 percent to 15.4 percent over the past 10 years. This is largely thanks to our aboriginal recruitment and development program, which provides First Nation people with employee opportunities within Yukon government. Our Aboriginal Employees Forum was established in 2008 to help new aboriginal employees as they transitioned into working for Yukon government. Over the years, our group has transformed into a tool for recruiting and retaining aboriginal employees and for supporting the objectives of the final agreement representative public service plan.

Our government also provides cultural workshops, such as the seven grandfather teachings workshop that will be held later this month — a chance for First Nation employees to share their cultures with each other and with their co-workers.

Every fall, the Aboriginal Employees Award of Honour recognizes the accomplishments of aboriginal public servants who provide outstanding service or contributions to the Yukon government, fellow employees, or to the Yukon public. The awards showcase the talents of aboriginal employees, strengthen the pride in the public service and call attention to the good work of aboriginal employees in the Yukon public service.

Mr. Speaker, we do not limit the celebration of aboriginal culture to this week alone. Every day, our cooperative efforts with all Yukon First Nations demonstrate the importance of First Nation peoples and their culture to the territory. Yukon aboriginal people are a crucial part of the fabric of Yukon society, its history, and both its present and its future.

Yukon First Nations are national leaders among modern-day treaty and self-government negotiations. Yukon First Nation self-government is not only unique in Canada, but

internationally as well. Yukon First Nation accomplishments are models for the rest of the country, something that we should all be extremely proud of.

By supporting First Nations, we are investing in Yukon's future. Along with Aboriginal Awareness Week, Yukon celebrates National Aboriginal Day on June 21. I invite all Yukoners to join us in celebrating these special days. Together with Yukon First Nations, we continue to build strong, adaptable and healthy communities to create a better Yukon.

Mr. Silver: I also rise on behalf of the Liberal Party and the Official Opposition to pay tribute to Aboriginal Awareness Week. This week serves to honour the many cultures and languages of Canada's First Nation communities. Aboriginal Awareness Week is a time to celebrate and reflect on the contributions of aboriginal Canadians to Canada.

Yukon First Nations have had an extraordinary impact on our development as a territory and have been leaders nationally in the development of self-government agreements. Recently we celebrated the 20th anniversary of self-governance and today 11 of Yukon's First Nations have signed self-government agreements. These will form the cornerstone of our economic and social development for generations to come.

The cultural impact of aboriginal people is all around us and it is increasingly becoming a reason for why people visit the Yukon. Many cultural centres that have opened in the last decade are fitting tributes to stories and experiences of our First Nation communities.

In recognition of Aboriginal Awareness Week, I encourage all Yukoners to take a moment to recognize the impact Yukon First Nations have had on our culture, our society and political systems, both here in the Yukon and on a national level. We are very fortunate to live where we do, surrounded by so many distinct cultures.

Speaker: Are there any visitors to be introduced?
 Are there any returns or documents for tabling?
 Are there any reports of committees?

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling the first report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Speaker: Are there any further reports of committees?
 Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 21 — received

Clerk: Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly: I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 21 of the First Session of the 33rd Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King on May 14, 2015.

Petition No. 21 meets the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare Petition No. 21 is deemed to be read and received. Pursuant to Standing Order 67, the Executive Council shall provide a response to a petition which has been read and received within eight sitting days of its presentation. Therefore, the Executive Council response to Petition No. 21 shall be provided on or before the first sitting day of the 2015 Fall Sitting of the Legislative Assembly.

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to have meaningful consultation with health care professionals, including the Yukon Medical Association and Yukon Registered Nurses Association, with regard to the proposed 300-bed continuing care facility.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to use the protection area provisions provided in the *Lands Act* to protect and manage the eight sensitive areas identified and proposed by the Trails Only Yukon Association.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to live up to a commitment made by the former Minister of Tourism and pave the Dawson City Airport runway.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Hydraulic fracturing

Ms. Hanson: The Premier's rationale for opening Yukon to fracking is based on the myth that fracking will serve as a long-term boost for the economy. Yukoners know there is no evidence proving that fracking provides direct long-term jobs for locals, but what many Yukoners may not know is that fracking has not proven to be economically viable for the industry itself.

The evidence is growing that shale gas is yet another boom-bust industry. David Hughes, a geoscientist and shale gas energy expert, spoke recently at the Beringia Centre. His analysis of production data from 65,000 wells across North America proves that the economic potential for shale gas resources has been greatly overstated. In fact, proven marketable reserves — what can be taken to the bank — are five to seven times smaller than originally estimated for B.C. — so why is this government tying the economic energy future of the Yukon to another boom-bust industry?

Hon. Mr. Kent: This government believes that a strong and robust oil and gas industry will help to diversify our economy. We have seen significant royalties from the existing gas production in southeast Yukon. From 1993 to 2013, we received royalties of over \$45 million from those wells alone.

The First Nation portion of the royalties was almost \$10.5 million, which all governments were able to use to strengthen some of the social programs that we offer in the Yukon Territory — also to invest in health care, to make investments in education and to make investments in critical infrastructure.

Again, as part of the recommendations that came from the select committee, the Department of Economic Development will undertake an economic analysis that assesses the potential economic impact of developing shale oil and gas resources in the southeast Yukon. We have heard from scientists — our own scientists at the Yukon Geological Survey — that this is a world-class basin that holds significant potential for shale gas and as a government we're looking forward to moving forward — but only with the support of the affected First Nations — when it comes to shale gas development in the Liard Basin.

Ms. Hanson: You know, Mr. Speaker, financial and energy experts warn that fracking results in an ever-escalating drilling treadmill with high financial and environmental costs. All shale gas wells have short lifespans. In B.C., the average well produces two-thirds less shale gas three years after it is drilled. Industry must constantly drill and frack more and more wells in greater and greater areas of land just to maintain initial production.

Mr. Speaker, many U.S. shale gas plays are considered middle-aged after only five years. This means the economic benefits of an entire shale gas basin, if it is one of the few with substantial marketable reserves, will peak within just five years and then fall sharply. Shale gas is not sustainable.

Why is this government opening the Yukon to fracking when the industry has not been proven to be either economically or environmentally sustainable?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Just to correct the member opposite — she would have Yukoners believe that we're opening the entire Yukon to shale gas development. I would remind her and other members that only 15 percent of the Yukon land base has geology favourable for oil and gas development and the Liard Basin only comprises two percent of Yukon's land mass — in fact, it's lower than that — I believe the number is around 1.3 percent of the land mass.

Again, when it comes to the economic potential of shale gas development, the Department of Economic Development will be undertaking an economic analysis that assesses the potential economic impact of developing shale oil and gas resources in Yukon. Of course there will be reliance on experts and scientists from the Yukon Geological Survey in determining the potential of shale gas reserves in the Liard Basin. We look forward to not only the potential for additional royalties accruing to the Yukon government, but the jobs and opportunities for Yukoners who are working outside the Yukon in this industry right now to come home — to be able

to take advantage of opportunities in this industry in the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the oil and gas industry, we support a strong and robust industry here in the territory that provides benefits to Yukoners, among which are jobs and opportunities, as well as royalty benefits to our territory.

Ms. Hanson: That's a pretty tired mantra.

A 2013 economic analysis of shale gas found production costs exceed current gas prices and required increased capital investment and increased drilling to maintain production.

Last summer, an international financial paper reported that the debt carried by 61 shale gas drillers doubled to over \$160 billion over four years while revenues stagnated around five percent. All this debt leads to financial tailspins. For instance, one company operating in B.C. lost 45 percent of its revenue to debt-service payments.

When an industry is financially unsustainable, it puts everyone at risk; just look at what happened with Wolverine. The company fell on hard times and Yukon and Yukon businesses were left holding the bag.

Does the government agree that a boom-and-bust shale gas industry will put Yukon at risk for serious financial and environmental liabilities?

Hon. Mr. Kent: When it comes to the oil and gas industry, we support the development of this industry because we believe it can strengthen the Yukon's economy. It's about diversifying the economy beyond just what we have currently, which is mining, mining exploration, tourism and IT, among others, including agriculture and forestry. There are a number of different sectors of the economy that contribute to the way of life that we have up here.

Again, when we first made our position clear with respect to oil and gas development — in particular shale oil and gas development — here in the territory, we mentioned that we wanted jobs, opportunities and contracting opportunities for Yukon businesses and for Yukoners — to return home to the Yukon — those who are working in British Columbia and Alberta and Saskatchewan in this industry.

We also mentioned at that time that we believe that this provides us with an opportunity to become a net contributor to this country, not relying on the hard work of British Columbians and Albertans and people from Saskatchewan to carry the load for us when it comes to oil and gas development. We have a very small potential — I mentioned the 15 percent of the landmass that is favourable to oil and gas development — but we believe that moving forward in a cautious and responsible way is an opportunity for us to develop these resources and hopefully become a net contributor to the country.

Question re: Social housing

Ms. White: We've been asking for information on the use of long-stay hotel rooms as part of the social assistance program. We know that the Yukon Party government has neglected the affordable housing file to the point that Yukoners are being given long-stay hotel rooms — rooms that are often without basic amenities like a kitchen, bathrooms

and even, in some cases, windows — and then they are turned out of those rooms in the spring, ahead of the tourist season.

Long-stay hotel rooms are meant to be an emergency stop-gap in the housing continuum, not a stand-alone permanent measure.

I'll ask a second time for those numbers. Can the minister tell us how many Yukoners on social assistance were in long-stay hotel rooms this past winter?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: The member opposite asked this question last week. I had indicated at that point in time that addressing homelessness is something that is common across this country and I'm sure in other countries as well.

Our government remains committed to ensuring that housing needs for all Yukoners are addressed. That's why Health and Social Services continues to work with departments like Yukon Housing Corporation and other community partners to provide long-term housing solutions and support services for Yukoners who could be considered vulnerable, but particularly persons who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

I would also indicate that this government continues to make investments — investments like the Salvation Army, the Fourth Avenue fiveplex, the St. Elias group home and Sarah Steele — and this government has also increased SA rates over the last number of years. As well, over \$150 million over the last decade has been invested in social housing. This government is doing exceptional work in this area and we are committed to continuing that good work.

Ms. White: I had hoped that the minister would have educated himself on this matter since last week. This is a very straightforward question. I'm wondering if maybe the government doesn't know the answer.

They must know how many long-stay hotel rooms they are buying year after year. At the very least, the government must have the financial data on how much the Yukon Party government spent last year on long-stay hotel rooms. Instead of investing in affordable housing, the Yukon Party government is leasing hotel rooms, often at the highest rates possible to be paid by social assistance in order to make up for its neglect of the housing continuum.

I'll ask for another set of numbers. Can the minister tell us how much money his government spent on long-stay hotel rooms this last winter?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Over the last 10 years, Yukon's population has grown some 20 percent. I believe that this is the case from this Yukon Party government doing such an incredible job at governing the territory.

Social assistance and shelter and utility provisions for a single person ranges from a minimum of \$911 to a maximum of \$1,033, depending on the season. Rental rates generally reflect social assistance amounts. Estimating the size of the homeless population here in the territory or in the city is inherently challenging — particularly in places with cold weather where there is likely a larger, perhaps hidden, homeless population — couch surfing or staying with friends. On average, hotels and motels have a monthly average of about 58 individuals who are recipients of Yukon government

social assistance. In the 2014 calendar year, this equated to approximately \$585,000 for client accommodations in hotels and motels.

In my previous answer, I spoke to the investments that this government has made in the housing market, the investments that we have made in the increased social assistance rates, and we will continue down that path.

Ms. White: I can only imagine how much money this Yukon Party government has spent on hotel rooms in the last 13 years. Hotel rooms with limited or no access to basic amenities like kitchens, bathrooms and sometimes windows are not an acceptable substitute for adequate housing. Think about it. These are low-income earners who have come to the government for help. Imagine their dismay when the government checks them into a hotel room instead of permanent housing and then, closer to summertime, every year, they are then asked to leave when the tourism season ramps up. It is just not good enough.

When is this government going to stop depending on inadequate housing in hotel rooms? When will they create the affordable housing infrastructure that is necessary to break the cycle of poverty?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: This government continues to move forward, helping all Yukoners in all continuums of housing. We have spent in the neighbourhood of \$150 million in the past 10 years. We continue to fund non-profit organizations because we appreciate the good work that they do in many regards. A lot of non-profit organizations help the government in various ways with housing issues. This government will continue to put money into housing to help all Yukoners.

Question re: Yukon Minerals Advisory Board annual report

Mr. Silver: The 2014 annual report from the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board made for interesting reading over the weekend. It opens with the board confirming the worst-kept secret in the Yukon — that there is no investor confidence right now. It goes downhill from there.

We know the Government of Yukon likes to pin this on low mineral prices, but there is no mention of low mineral prices in this report. The board lays the blame squarely on this government and laments the fact that the Yukon is now — and I quote: “predominantly an exploration jurisdiction” and not a mining jurisdiction. The report voices many of the same concerns that I have been raising this session — about this government’s inability to work with First Nations, regulatory uncertainty and our poor performance in the latest Fraser reporting on mining.

Does the minister accept the criticism from the board that the Yukon has become predominantly just an exploration jurisdiction?

Hon. Mr. Kent: While we do have a substantial amount over the past number of years that has been invested in exploration activities, we are also seeing continued production, of course, at the Minto mine, as well as opportunities for some of the other mines that have gone

through our permitting process and are awaiting capital from the markets to go back into production.

There is a very large production industry in the member’s own riding. The placer mining industry continues to be a constant producer and contributor to the economy. I believe the numbers that we talked about recently are approximately \$70 million, which that important industry provides for production here in the territory.

When it comes to the Minerals Advisory Board annual report, I would like to thank the members of the Minerals Advisory Board for producing that report. We are in the process of developing a response. We’re treating this as an opportunity to do things better. We’re engaged on mine licensing improvement initiatives and a mineral development strategy so we can emerge from this current down-cycle in better shape than when we went in, and that’s something we’ll continue to work closely on with the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board and other stakeholders in the months and years ahead.

Mr. Silver: The YMAB report opens by saying it wants to help regain competitiveness and investor confidence in the Yukon — regain. It obviously believes that under this government we are not as competitive as we should be and there is a lack of investor confidence in the Yukon right now.

This is strong criticism for this government from the industry itself. It comes on the heels of comments this winter from a mining executive that it is impossible to open up a mine in the Yukon right now. One specific criticism is of this government’s refusal to provide the Water Board with adequate resources so it can reasonably meet timelines in processing mining applications.

Why is the Premier refusing to adequately fund the Water Board so it can respond in a timely way to mining applications?

Hon. Mr. Kent: With respect to that particular recommendation that has been put forward by the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board, there has been approval of the hiring of two new permanent positions to be located in the secretariat — a licensing manager and a technical advisor. Those are now in the recruitment process.

As I’ve said, we’re currently preparing a response to the recommendations put forward by the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board. I would again like to take the opportunity to thank Mr. Mark Ayranto, the chair, and all the members of the Minerals Advisory Board, for providing us with advice. The member opposite mentions it as criticism, but I really want to assure members that we’re focused on this as an opportunity to do better through initiatives like the mine licensing improvement initiative as well as the mineral development strategy — regulatory improvements that we’re looking at. We currently have a working group established with First Nations to look at a number of different initiatives for the mining industry.

When it comes to this report and the Fraser Institute report, we see opportunities that are built in there for us to do better and that’s exactly what we’re focused on doing.

Mr. Silver: This minister has referenced the mine licensing improvement initiative several times; he has done this before as well and so does the board in this report. Despite the fact that the government is well aware of regulatory duplication and uncertainty when it came to office three and a half years ago, it did little to address it. Yukon is now paying the price for this inaction and we are now predominantly an exploration and not a mining jurisdiction, according to YMAB. The government should have been spending the last three and a half years addressing this concern.

YMAB is very critical of this government. This is a clear urgency to move past talking and actually implement some of the regulatory improvements the minister talks about and the reform he talks about. The situation has worsened, of course, because of this government's refusal to admit that anything is wrong in the first place.

So, Mr. Speaker, the final question would be: When will any of these reforms the minister speaks of actually be implemented?

Hon. Mr. Kent: When it comes to the mine licensing improvement initiative, we have a number of partners that we're also working with. This includes First Nations. It includes industry groups like the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board as well as other stakeholders. It also includes the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board as well as the Yukon Water Board. We're looking to make improvements to our licensing and regulatory system that, of course, won't compromise the high environmental standards that we know are important to all Yukoners, but again we want to make sure that it's a consistent and competitive assessment and regulatory and permitting regime with other jurisdictions across the country.

We hear constant criticism from the Member for Klondike with respect to this. We're focused on ensuring that we emerge from this current downturn in the mineral economy in better shape.

That said, Mr. Speaker, we still have producing mines. We still have the very strong and robust placer industry. The Minister of Environment, the Minister of Economic Development and I were able to see first-hand how exciting the placer industry is, and it has been a continual and constant producer. I'm surprised that the Member for Klondike wouldn't recognize that when asking questions. It's something that's very important, I know, to his riding. Once again, he does not recognize the importance of that segment of the mining economy to the Yukon and the territory as a whole.

Question re: Counselling in rural schools

Mr. Tredger: In the 2015 health behaviours report on school-aged youth in the Yukon, the authors recognized that school settings can be as great an influence on children as their home settings. In the words of one student, school is your second home because you spend so much time there. In other words, while schools are important to students' academic success, they also influence the health and well-being of our youth. Meeting students where they are is critical

to supporting youth. One effective tool is offering social one-on-one counselling in schools. Despite their acknowledged critical role, we have heard that rural schools across Yukon rarely have access to trained school-based counsellors.

Can the minister tell this House how many rural schools have regular access to trained one-on-one counselling?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, I would like to first of all maybe give a little context to the report that the member opposite is talking about.

"Health and health-related behaviours among young people in Yukon" was a survey carried out in — or the results were in 2015. The last was in 2010, I believe. It's an international survey administered every four years in 43 different countries around the world. It's sponsored by the WHO.

This year's survey provides a valuable snapshot of the health and well-being of Yukon students. As I said, it was only the second time that the survey has been undertaken in Yukon schools. The report was presented during the week of April 13 by Dr. John Freeman, who was the principal researcher for the HBSC survey while in Yukon. He also presented this report to various groups interested in helping education matters in the territory. One of the issues that did come up, of course, was the issue brought up by the member opposite.

Mr. Speaker, counselling resources are allocated to every school, and we're working with Health and Social Services to integrate counselling services for the benefit of students in all of the communities in the territory. We haven't quite reached that yet, but we're working on it.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for his answer. Yukon youth workers and community members point to mental, social and emotional health as among the biggest risks to youth growing up healthy in Yukon. In 2015, the healthy behaviours report found that Yukon students, especially our rural youth and young girls, report very high levels of mental health concerns, including depression.

If such problems are not addressed in school-aged years, they can have long-term impacts on their lives. Yet many rural students face significant wait times for mental health services and only sporadic delivery of such services in their home communities. We must ensure that students are not left behind in the absence of a mental health strategy for Yukon.

Will the minister tell rural families and youth what processes are in place in rural schools to support Yukon students when they are experiencing mental, social or emotional health concerns?

Hon. Mr. Graham: As I said before, we are working with Health and Social Services, but every school is allocated counselling resources. I have real difficulty with the member opposite focusing only on the negative aspects of this report, because this report did have some very positive aspects as well.

Causes for celebration, according to Dr. Freeman, included parental support because he believed, as a result of this report, that the majority of Yukon youth described positive relationships with their family. Boys and mental

health — over three-quarters of the Yukon boys spoken with rate their health as excellent or good.

One of the areas of concern was in grades 9 and 10 rural girls, as the member opposite found. They experienced not only increased incidence of smoking, drinking and cannabis use, but they also had reported low self-esteem. That is one of the indicators that we had already suspected and we had been working toward. That is why I said we're trying to work with Health and Social Services to provide the services needed by these young people, especially in —

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

Question re: Ibx Valley shooting range

Mr. Barr: Last week, the Minister of Justice brushed aside concerns from his own constituents in Lake Laberge over the proposed expansion of the Ibx Valley shooting range. The minister told us that he took part in a local area council meeting and that he understands the situation, but his constituents are telling a very different story.

In one letter, one of the minister's constituents writes — and I quote: “We are seriously opposed to the proposal for a 1,000-metre rifle range expansion in our residential area in the Ibx Valley.” It's time for the Minister of Justice to tell us how the Yukon Party government feels about the proposed Ibx Valley shooting range expansion.

Does the Yukon Party government support the proposed shooting range expansion: yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Minister of Justice, the MLA for Lake Laberge, for fielding this question last week — obviously an MLA who is very much in touch with his constituency and works very hard to represent it.

Just by way of additional information: the Yukon Handgun Association has been operating a handgun shooting range on leased land in the Ibx Valley since 1986. This is located at approximately kilometre 1448 of the Alaska Highway. The association has recently applied to EMR's Land Management branch to enlarge their lease area so that they can expand their activities to include a 1,000-metre long-gun range and an archery range. The lease application has just begun an initial review. Applications of this type generally require three to six months to process. Local residents will be provided the opportunity to comment on this application as part of the land application process and it's also expected to trigger a YESAA review, which will provide an additional public consultation process. Again, thank you to the Member for Lake Laberge for the work last week in initially addressing this and thanks to department officials for providing me with this more recent information.

Mr. Barr: It's disappointing that the minister won't actually answer the question this week and the other minister steps in.

Ibx Valley residents are raising valid and significant safety concerns about long-range rifles in their backyards. Let's take for example the .338 Lapua sniper rifle that's becoming increasingly popular with big game hunters and

long-range sports shooters. It has a proven effective range of almost two and a half kilometres. So what happens if the bullet goes over the man-made berm? Unlike the Whitehorse Rifle and Pistol Club, there isn't a mountain to stop that bullet over the rest of its 1,500-metre trajectory, and the range is uphill from the Takhini River. How can the Justice minister face his constituents at Ibx Valley and tell them that he's taking their safety concerns seriously?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I'm answering this question today because this is something that is the responsibility of Energy, Mines and Resources. Again I would like to thank the Member for Lake Laberge, as an MLA who is very familiar with issues in his constituency, for stepping up last week.

Again the specific concerns outlined by the NDP MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes — he will be able to provide concerns about certain types of weapons to the Land Management branch. As I mentioned, the lease application has just begun an initial review. Applications of this type generally require three to six months to process. Local residents as well as the Member for Lake Laberge, as a gun expert, will be provided the opportunity to comment on this application as part of the land application process.

This application, as I mentioned earlier, is also expected to trigger a YESAA review, which will also provide an additional opportunity for a public consultation process. The Yukon government Land Management branch processes land applications based on zoning suitability and acceptability. Should this land application be considered, the operators would be required to adhere to the federal law governing shooting ranges as well.

Again, this is something that is in due process and, rather than run into one side or the other of the application, we'll allow that due process to proceed and conclude as set out in the existing processes that we have.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has elapsed.

Notice of government private members' business

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(7), I would like to inform the House that the government private members will not be calling motions for debate on Wednesday, May 20, 2015, in the interest of expediting debate on the budget and legislation.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

Speaker: It has been moved by the Deputy 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 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, 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 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 18, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2015-16*.

Department of Highways and Public Works

Hon. Mr. Kent: Before I begin my opening remarks, I would like to take the opportunity to welcome two department officials — Mr. Paul Murchison and Scott Milton — who are here to provide support to me throughout debate this afternoon.

The Department of Highways and Public Works, or HPW, is committed to responsible construction, maintenance and management of Yukon's roads and highways, airports and government-owned and -leased facilities. HPW faces many challenges in meeting our responsibilities, such as extreme weather conditions, permafrost, vast distances between communities, aging infrastructure and limited resources.

We're reminded, Madam Chair, as we are every year, of just how important a functional transportation network is to ensure the continued flow of goods and services. Yukon's transportation network enables the movement of resources this territory relies on in order to thrive, and it connects our northern communities together.

A territory as vast and remote as Yukon requires strategic planning and the ability to rank capital projects in a manner that best uses public funds and meets the needs of our Yukon infrastructure. We do this while ensuring that Yukon transportation networks, buildings and other resources are maintained in a safe, effective and efficient manner.

These responsibilities and challenges are reflected in the initiatives identified in this budget. As an overview, the budget provides: \$67.7 million for transportation capital maintenance, planning and infrastructure; \$12.9 million for capital building maintenance, planning and infrastructure; and \$6.749 million for information technology infrastructure, systems development and support.

Under Transportation, HPW is committed to providing safe and efficient transportation infrastructure to maintain the vital transportation links for residents and visitors in the territory. The department has allocated almost \$4 million for

such work as engineering, pre-design, mapping, surveys, industry analysis, policy development, feasibility studies and airport development plans.

I'm happy to discuss some of our capital transportation work that's planned for this year.

The Nares River bridge, located in the community of Carcross — this project will be upgraded. Initially, the project involved the replacement of the existing structure with the new bridge, designed to handle current and future heavy vehicles. I believe it is only one of two bridges in the Yukon that still has wooden decking as part of it.

Replacing this aging bridge would ensure that the south Klondike Highway is well-prepared to serve public, tourists and commercial traffic, such as the heavier industrial traffic serving Yukon mines. We have allocated \$350,000 in preliminary design work and anticipate an estimated \$10 million to be spent over a two-year construction period, beginning next year.

The Partridge Creek bridge upgrade — we have recently gone to tender for the reconstruction of the Partridge Creek bridge. Replacing the bridge deck approach and guide rails is now necessary. The existing deck has deteriorated to the point that replacement is the best-value option, as continued patching would be expensive and impractical.

We are beginning our preliminary planning for the deck replacement of the Yukon River bridge in Carmacks and \$250,000 is allocated for this design work. As well, within the community of Carmacks, we are finishing our work on the Tatchun Creek bridge that started last year. We have allocated \$200,000 for asphalt surfacing of the approaches and road reconstruction at this point. We are also completing our water quality monitoring, as required by the Yukon Water Board.

The bridge and culvert management system on the Pelly Ranch road as well as the Minto bridges is used to determine bridge rehabilitation and replacement needs for our transportation network. This program identifies investment requirements and priorities. Deficient bridges represent weak links in the transportation system; adequate bridges permit heavier trucks and bulk hauls in both directions for industrial and re-supply shippers.

Many Yukon bridges were built in the 1950s and 1960s and are at an age where major rehabilitation efforts are required to keep them in service. This year, we are rehabilitating the Minto bridge at kilometre 64 on the Silver Trail and \$1 million is budgeted to complete this work. The existing bridges on the Pelly Ranch road at Willow, Grayling and Caribou creeks are single-lane, girder-type bridges that rest on timber-wall abutments. Each of these bridges will be rehabilitated starting in June of this year. It is estimated that each bridge will require 15 days of work this summer. These timber decks will be replaced and the existing abutments will be replaced with steel-bin type walls. Detour routes will be constructed at each bridge to minimize the impacts of construction and allow for normal traffic flow on the Pelly Ranch road. This is important, as it is a route used by trappers, agricultural producers and tourists for access to Fort Selkirk.

We have a presence throughout the Yukon in every community, hamlet and bump in the road. We live in the areas where we work at Highways and Public Works and we care about where we live. Highway maintenance camps are an important element in maintaining Yukon's transportation network safely and effectively. We have allocated \$3.3 million to replace the living quarters at Swift River and Stewart Crossing maintenance camps because deficiencies with the current facilities are creating health and safety risks for our dedicated employees. As part of this allocation, we are also replacing two seasonal bunkhouses at the Klondike and Ogilvie camps on the Dempster Highway. We are improving the living facilities at our maintenance camps in order to best support the men and women who live there, while maintaining Yukon's highways and roads.

Work continues this year with existing funding for the Shakwak project. This is a partnership with the governments of Canada, the United States and Alaska to ensure a safe and modern highway corridor leading to Alaska.

The Shakwak agreement originally signed in 1977 has always envisioned that the roads rebuilt under the program would be paved. Funding for the Shakwak agreement was not included in the current U.S. transportation bill. The remaining funds are focused on rehabilitating sections of the road that are impacted by permafrost thawing. Funds of \$9.9 million will be focused on construction projects that will maintain the road to as high a standard as possible; however, without dedicated funding in place, paving is no longer included in this work.

The Government of Yukon, together with the Government of Canada, will continue to make representations to U.S. legislators to restore funding for the Shakwak project in any new bill. Highways and Public Works is continuing to work closely with the U.S. federal highway administration to determine how to best spend the remaining funds and the time frame over which such spending should occur.

The Alaska Highway is one of our most critical highways and has likely seen the most changes since its construction in 1942 when more than 7,000 pieces of military equipment were used to build it. There are several locations on the Alaska Highway where settlement continues to development due to permafrost degradation and consolidation of soft soil. Crushing work to provide aggregate for this restoration work that was started last year will continue into the upcoming construction season. We have allocated more than \$2 million in funding for this important work on a significant stretch of road that connects us to our Alaskan neighbours.

Reconstruction and resurfacing of the Campbell Highway — which of course will be very important to the MLA for Watson Lake, as this is taking place in her riding. Work continues this year with reconstruction of the section of highway up to kilometre 190. The department has allocated \$9.7 million toward improvements that include: realignment to meet the 90-kilometre-per-hour design standard; reconstruction of the roadbed and resurfacing, drainage improvements and right-of-way clearing for future years' construction. The Campbell Highway improvement work will

be carried out in collaboration with the department's engineering branch, private contractors and private equipment rentals. The commercial trucking industry, private citizens, as well as tourists will benefit from these upgrades. Our engineering branch has also allocated \$335,000 for a functional plan for this highway from kilometre 190 to kilometre 414 to support longer term planning initiatives.

The Dempster Highway is Canada's only all-season public road that crosses the Arctic Circle. Starting near Dawson City, this 736-kilometre unpaved two-lane highway traverses northern Yukon all the way to Inuvik in the Northwest Territories. This year's funding of \$750,000 will go toward restoring and rehabilitating the highway, including the driving surface road sub-grade, safety barriers, and adjacent draining structures. Erosion control work is another project on this stretch of road, and this will include placement of protective rock blankets, or rip-rap, on the side slopes of the Dempster Highway when routed along the shoreline of the Blackstone and Ogilvie rivers and Engineer Creek. It will also include: investigation and development of a quarry site; production of suitable armour and filter materials by drilling and blasting, as well as placement of these materials; and replacement of undersized and severely damaged culverts. This is ongoing preventive maintenance work that will reduce the flooding, erosion and the impacts of washouts. We have allocated \$2.9 million for this work to be done.

The Klondike Highway experiences erosion and drainage issues that compromise the structural integrity of the highway. Ongoing preventive maintenance is required, and the department has allocated \$770,000 for this important work on that highway this year.

In this year's budget, we have identified \$650,000 for work on the Silver Trail to rehabilitate and restore this road's surface condition to support the safe and efficient passage of traffic. As part of this, work will be completed to ensure the area at the Mayo River, near kilometre 49.5, is protected from erosion of the embankment. We've also allocated \$171,000 toward a functional plan for the Silver Trail that will help us to assess longer term requirements and prioritize improvements for this piece of infrastructure.

A project that has received significant attention during this current Sitting of the Legislative Assembly is the Whitehorse corridor project — improvements of the Alaska Highway through Whitehorse from kilometre 1401 to kilometre 1441. This represents an area just south of the Klondike Highway intersection, or what's more familiar to Yukoners as the Carcross Cut-off, to just past the Mayo Road turnoff, or the north Klondike Highway where that intersects the Alaska Highway.

Long-term project costs and scope remain to be determined. We just recently closed the public consultation period on this, and I'm sure we'll look forward to additional questions once we get into debate later on this afternoon about this. \$1.3 million has been allotted in this current budget for this project to complete planning and the necessary advance design work required for such a significant initiative. This is a long-term initiative that also relies on meeting certain

population thresholds. I know we've talked about that as well. I know it received significant interest from Yukoners during the consultation phase. I believe there were close to 500 hits on the website, coupled with some of the questionnaires that were returned to government, and we're still receiving written responses from a number of different organizations and associations.

Some of the essential items anticipated to bring the corridor to a uniform and modern standard include upgrading the roadway to accommodate the potential for increased traffic volumes, improving major intersections, consolidating accesses, and establishing better traffic control signage. Going back to 2013-14, a consultant was hired to analyze existing data and evaluate potential engineering options. A draft functional plan was developed that recommends and prioritizes the improvements needed to support a safe and efficient corridor into the long term.

Discussions with stakeholders included local businesses along the corridor, as well as First Nations and the City of Whitehorse. The public participation component, as I mentioned, began on March 16 and lasted 60 days, concluding on Friday of last week. That information gathered will be used to refine the plan and produce a more comprehensive development program that will be brought to Management Board for implementation approval.

We also continue our work on the Atlin Road. This year, the department has allocated \$660,000 to ensure that this road continues to be able to service commercial traffic, Yukoners who enjoy travelling to that community for the many recreational and cultural activities that take place there, as well as business opportunities for some of them that take place in that area.

Reconstruction of the road this year includes earthwork, drainage improvements, base course construction, guide-rail placement, BST surfacing and crossing upgrades. The resulting road will meet an 80-kilometre-per-hour design standard with a light-duty surface. This work will be carried out by contractors under the supervision of our engineering branch, and BST will be placed by our maintenance branch. This work also involves preliminary engineering and environmental studies for those portions of the highway that will require improvements and upgrades in the future.

Typical advance work includes: gravel, rock and borrow source location, test pits and material testing, stream flow and recharge area estimating for culvert sizing, stream and lake sampling for aquatic life, and an initial assessment for archaeological sites of interest and artifacts that exist.

Revegetation of newly constructed areas is typically done on an ongoing basis. Integral to this stretch of road are the bridges that are at Snafu and Tarfu. The decks will be replaced with concrete to maintain their structural integrity. Earthwork at the crossing approaches and bridge replacements at these crossings are planned for 2015-16. The funds allocated for this work total \$4 million, of which \$3 million is recoverable under the Building Canada fund program.

When it comes to pavement rehabilitation, the preservation of our existing infrastructure is of critical

importance. A comprehensive pavement management system has been in place for a number of years. This system indicates that much of our asphalt pavement is long-overdue for rehabilitation. Over \$7.1 million has been assigned to the rehabilitation of existing pavements by full pavement overlay, recycling the pavement into base course, and resurfacing with BST or other rehabilitation procedures at locations throughout the Yukon.

When it comes to airports and aerodromes, at the Whitehorse airport, in order to support the Yukon economy and our growing population, we continue to manage and improve the services of the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport. We have expanded the airport terminal building, improved the parking lot, replaced the apron panels in front of the air terminal building and enhanced services for our tenants. The major projects planned for 2015-16 include: pavement overlays to the parallel runway and taxiways A and E to preserve the integrity of the infrastructure; and the development of 20 lease lots on the south side of apron 2 to address demand from the aviation industry for smaller lots at the Whitehorse airport. \$2.5 million is in our budget this year to continue our work to ensure the Whitehorse airport is able to support Yukon's economy. \$4.9 million has been designated for continued improvements at various community aerodromes. Work scheduled for this year for the Dawson aerodrome includes upgrades to the south apron, application of dust-control product, turn-button lighting, navigational aid purchases and installation, airside improvements, security system upgrades, pavement patching and guard lights. A substantial portion of this \$4.9-million budget will go toward the continuing upgrades at the Watson Lake aerodrome, which will receive pavement overlays this year.

When it comes to Property Management Division — I will move away from Transportation — this division is the manager of Yukon government buildings. Facilities such as schools, office spaces, highway camps and nursing stations are part of the critical infrastructure necessary to fulfill the various mandates of government departments and agencies. Many of our buildings are aging and in need of substantial upgrading. Poor insulation and inefficient design and heating systems make them more expensive to operate.

This is something to bear in mind when considering the costs of upgrades versus replacements. Property Management Division advocates a holistic approach to planning, managing and maintaining our facilities. This means looking at various departments' facility needs as a whole and identifying opportunities to achieve economies of scale, energy savings and program delivery efficiencies through coordinated initiatives.

HPW is committed to enabling Yukoners to enrich their lives by providing them with high-quality, affordable and energy-efficient government facilities.

Seeing as my time is running short — I still have a few things I would like to speak about in my opening remarks, starting with updates on some of the building upgrades that we have, but I'll just turn the floor over to the Member for Copperbelt South and just beg the indulgence of members so

that I can conclude my opening remarks the next time I'm on my feet.

Ms. Moorcroft: I would like to thank the minister for the first portion of his opening remarks and welcome the officials to the Assembly to help during the budget debate on Highways and Public Works. I would also like to thank the officials for the briefing that we had earlier this spring and for the detailed responses that they provided. I think that will expedite the debate here this afternoon.

I have a number of questions related to the Alaska Highway corridor as well as other parts of the budget, but I want to start with the Alaska Highway corridor — the public consultation just completed on Friday of last week. I want to commend the minister for the fact that he intervened and made some corrections around some of the contentious issues with planning on the Alaska Highway corridor. He talked to business owners and provided assurances that they wouldn't be forced to move and he said that the plan is subject to change, based on the will of the Yukon public.

The minister said that he had made no decision with respect to how the project would proceed and what areas would be of priority until hearing from the Yukon public, and he indicated that once the public consultation period was closed, the department would come forward with some options and be happy to present them.

I would like the minister to provide more clarity on what he means. In Question Period, I made the representation that I wanted there to be a public consultation on the construction plan. I understand from the officials that it would be very expensive to change the plan once the construction plan was put together. Can the minister answer whether he will in fact hold a public consultation on the construction plan itself or will it only be through the YESAA process that the public would be able to comment on the construction plan?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I would just like to take the opportunity to finish my opening remarks, and then I will get into the specifics about the Whitehorse corridor of the Alaska Highway with respect to a little bit more detailed information than I provided earlier.

One of the bigger projects when it comes to our own buildings is upgrades to the main administration building. The Yukon Legislative Assembly is housed here as well. We have allotted \$5.4 million in this budget for building envelope upgrades to enhance the building envelope performance. There is an interior reorganization project also in progress and additional work will proceed in coordination with it.

Some of the building envelope activities will include window replacement, the removal of the existing siding, re-insulation and that type of thing. Obviously this is one — I have talked about this before — of our least efficient buildings that we have in our building inventory and these types of upgrades will indeed, I believe, pay off over the long term in energy savings, as well as the environmental advantage of lowering the greenhouse gas emissions in the building inventory that we have.

When it comes to capital building maintenance, this program funds capital building maintenance and upgrades to

the existing inventory of Yukon government buildings. Typical projects include building re-roofing, interior and exterior painting, flooring and window replacement, lighting, insulation and energy upgrades. The majority of expenditures are via contracts to private enterprise. This year we have budgeted \$12.9 million toward this program and there are a number of initiatives throughout the Yukon that will be receiving funding. One only has to go on to the tender management system and take a look at the open tenders to see many of them already listed there. Some have obviously already closed, but these are important contracts for us to maintain the integrity of our building inventory and also provide economic opportunities for many small businesses and smaller contractors, and some of the larger contractors, that are here in the territory.

We have dedicated \$1 million in this budget to project management on behalf of external clients. This enables the project sponsors to achieve desired outcomes of projects in terms of quality, cost and timeliness. All dollars spent are on behalf of external clients and are 100-percent recoverable. Some of these clients may include the federal government, Yukon Liquor Corporation or the Yukon Housing Corporation, as well as the Workers' Compensation Board.

\$991,000 is allotted to manage, on behalf of government departments and agencies, an accountable process for planning, programming, designing and constructing facilities to meet the unique accommodation needs of our public programs. We do this by managing capital projects as a whole. We sponsor department initiatives to actively manage the outcomes. This helps us achieve best value in terms of function, quality, cost and timeliness. This program also involves procuring facilities or buildings and services necessary to meet the needs of projects through the use of both traditional and innovative market options.

HPW continues to focus its efforts on building and maintaining the foundations that enable Yukoners to get where they need to go and do what they need to do.

When it comes to our Information and Communications Technology Division, or ICT — this is another important service provider in my department. Information — or the ability to access it promptly where and when needed, to organize and manage it, to create and edit it and to analyze it — has become crucial in our current era.

Yukon government is the custodian of sensitive information that is of high value to our government and to its citizens for the effective delivery of health care and social services, education, justice, economic development, lands, environmental services, highways, properties and many of our other important programs delivered by each and every Yukon government department.

ICT's role is to work with and on behalf of government departments and put in place the base information infrastructure they need to effectively and efficiently deliver and continuously improve the services they provide Yukoners. E-government — in which government services and information can be more readily accessed directly by the public wherever and whenever it is convenient for them — is

of growing importance in an age in which digital access is broadly available in most places to most people. We are recognizing this opportunity in partnership with our fellow departments in Yukon government by redirecting some existing resources to create an e-services branch to accelerate our progress in this area. This is something of course that we don't do alone; we work closely with our local ICT industry to deliver in this complex area.

Yukon government has also recognized the opportunity to operate more efficiently through a shared-services approach to information delivery. We have already achieved some efficiency in the common corporate delivery of applications and infrastructure while continuing to look for additional opportunities for a strategically holistic approach to government-wide needs. This division provides cost-effective information management and IT and telecommunication support for internal government administration and the delivery of services to the public. ICT oversees Yukon government's access to information and protection of privacy intake office, through which it consults with the public on ATIPP-related matters and works with internal program areas to manage these requests while remaining a primary point of contact for our government with the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

There is a \$6.75 million capital envelope that is managed by ICT on behalf of the Yukon government. It makes recommendations, with the support of our client departments, for the introduction and ongoing enhancements to applications and systems that program areas depend on, as well as e-service initiatives for the public. In this budget, \$2.6 million is allocated for network infrastructure. These funds will be used to upgrade, replace and repair assets on an ongoing basis or as the need arises. It consists of: printer upgrades and replacement; server upgrades and replacement; data centres; the business continuity off-site facility and main administration building computer room; network connectivity and network security; and other hardware and network components. The ongoing capital maintenance of ICT ensures the continued availability and reliability of the government's corporate information and communication technology resources. Further, Madam Chair, as part of this ICT capital project, there is a \$3.5 million allotment for the purposes of system developments. These funds will be used for corporate applications, such as upgrades and/or enhancements and planning and project management support to YG departments.

A final component of ICT's capital budget is \$673,000, which is dedicated to workstations. It includes the lifecycle replacement of older PCs, plus the upgrade of PCs for technical staff requiring greater PC resources than the average user. ICT works with the local industry sector to build capacity that enables ongoing support and development of our systems applications and infrastructure, as well as helping the Yukon sector grow beyond Yukon government and beyond the Yukon.

Our information management unit — or IMU — provides client program-specific services for the Department of Highways and Public Works and provides insight into client

needs to ICT. The mobile radio system has been implemented and our department has allocated \$427,000 for this important initiative. HPW and the Department of Justice have been directed to continue additional activities to support the implementation of the solution to meet the long-term needs of emergency responders and other users of the MRS. Public safety mobile communications are essential to the well-being of the territory and all Yukoners, as they are vital for efficient and effective program delivery by the users of the system.

Last but not least, Madam Chair, \$12 million will be put toward the services HPW provides to its divisions, to other departments and to the public. These important services include policy and financial support, enterprise risk management and insurance, the management of 532 government vehicles, Queen's Printer services and goods and services procurement and management support.

That concludes my opening summary. I hope that provided members with a good overview of what the department will be providing this year through the 2015-16 mains. When it comes to the question asked by the member opposite respecting the Whitehorse corridor of the Alaska Highway — to get into a little bit more detail on this issue, I would just like to perhaps provide members with an update on the numbers received during the 60-day public consultation phase that concluded last week.

We saw that this drew attention from an organization in Washington, D.C., as far as the effectiveness of it, so I would like to congratulate all the officials who put this together, as well as the previous Minister of Highways and Public Works, as this was one of the files that had some overlap between us on the public consultation piece.

As of today, CH2M Hill, which was our consulting engineer on this project, has received 222 on-line submissions, 283 hard copies, approximately 30 e-mail submissions and comments from over 40 face-to-face meetings. There may still be some hard copies in the mail that have not been delivered yet. I've also heard from a number of organizations and levels of government. I believe, at the officials' level, there was communication between the City of Whitehorse, as well as the Department of Highways and Public Works officials, with their thoughts on this project. We've received submissions from a number of NGOs and associations that have interest in this corridor as well, and I met — as the member opposite mentioned — with some of the concerned business owners in the Whitehorse corridor with respect to some of the aspects of the plan that they felt would not be conducive to the successful operation of their businesses. Along with the Minister of Economic Development, I attended a lunch with the Yukon Transportation Association, so I had a good opportunity to talk to them.

As I have mentioned before, this portion of the Alaska Highway is one of our most important roads. It is used by almost everyone who lives or visits or works in Whitehorse and the Yukon.

While it has significance for residents of Whitehorse or those who live in and around the Whitehorse periphery, it certainly also has significance for those long-haul transport

trucks, traffic back and forth — whether it's tourist or resident traffic between the south and Alaska — and, of course, the commercial operators who access those aspects as well. While we welcome and take very seriously the concerns of organizations that exist within the corridor, this is about much more than that. There is a very wide range of traffic types and road users from, as I mentioned, personal vehicles to school buses to mining trucks and commercial carriers that use this important piece of our infrastructure.

The way we're proceeding is taking a phased approach to this project, developing cost-effective plans to update this key piece of roadway. Just by way of history, in 2013 an engineering firm — I've mentioned them before, CH2M Hill — was contracted to develop a functional plan to address safety, traffic efficiency and capacity in accordance with national guidelines and standards.

The draft plan established a framework to address the community's immediate needs and provides for additional capacity to meet the needs of a growing population. It recommends 10 individual construction projects, grouped into three implementation stages: immediate, medium and longer term. The prioritization and staging of the construction work was determined by performing a systematic assessment and evaluation of a full range of factors that considered safety benefits, travel time benefits, construction cost and environmental impacts.

Projects in this draft plan that are scheduled to be completed in the first five years are estimated to cost \$50 million and will address immediate safety and capacity concerns. Later phases will be scheduled only when Whitehorse's population and the Yukon's population or economic activity merits the work. The work has been identified but won't be completed until needed.

The public consultation, a 60-day period, on the draft functional plan concluded last week. I've mentioned the numbers and thank all those Yukoners and the organizations for taking the time to submit their thoughts on upgrades to this important piece of infrastructure. Public participation and feedback will enable all the factors to be considered and result in a long-term approach that meets a wide range of needs and users while ensuring road safety and cost-effectiveness.

The government is pleased to have a functional plan for this corridor that supports ongoing economic development within the territory and allows Yukoners to get there and back again in a safe manner, and we look forward to the consolidation of the results of the public consultation.

In some of the meetings that I had with specific groups, they indicated that they would be forwarding their comments. I'm not sure if some of them have had the opportunity to submit them yet — such as the business association that has sprung up as a result of these along the Alaska Highway corridor, and also including the Yukon Transportation Association — but I look forward to receiving them.

This is obviously a very important project that is important to all Yukoners and all those who use the Alaska Highway, and we need to give full and fair consideration to all of the comments that come in. I need to take those comments

and the plans going forward to caucus and eventually Cabinet colleagues so that we can make a determination on how we proceed. Safety is something that I have heard a lot on, and I have heard from the member opposite her thoughts on some of the aspects that were missing, and we can draw from those comments on the floor of the Legislature as well when we inform our decision on how to proceed.

When it comes to the construction plan itself, I think it would be premature for me to determine how we are going to be consulting on that once it's developed. I believe there will be a YESAA process required for this, so there will be opportunity for public consultation during that, which could change how the project is implemented from a socio-economic or environmental aspect. The public will be involved at that phase as well. Again, I think it is premature until we have had a chance to review the public comments and develop a plan going forward that we feel will meet the needs.

I can assure all members that it is not only me who is hearing from constituents and individuals and organizations concerned — obviously members opposite have heard — but other members of my caucus have brought forward concerns from their constituents or business owners who have approached them within the corridor as well, making suggestions for improvements.

We look forward to consolidating what we have heard and coming up with a plan that will hopefully work for Yukoners and address this important piece of infrastructure that we have here in the territory.

Ms. Moorcroft: I am going to stay with the Alaska Highway corridor plan for a moment here. It is the most important transportation link to our communities and to the world beyond our borders. The public needs to look very carefully at the proposals.

I do want to point out to the minister that there were a number of Yukon residents who did not receive the Alaska Highway Whitehorse corridor survey questions. I know people who had a “no admail” sticker on their mailboxes didn't receive them, but there were also a number of Whitehorse residents who simply didn't get it in the mail.

One of the concerns that has been brought forward is that, in looking at a justification for what would be medium-term and long-term population thresholds and what work would be done now in the immediate term, the government didn't seem to make the case that twinning the Alaska Highway between Robert Service Way and Two Mile Hill is needed now. When we look at the safety data that was provided in the de Leur report, that report looked at 3,100 accidents between 1996 and 2009, and the highest collision location was at the Two Mile Hill intersection. That intersection was reconstructed in 2007. There were separate turn lanes put in and large, raised-curb medians, and we don't know what impact those changes have had on safety. There is no safety data for 2010 to 2015. The plan itself — the Alaska Highway corridor plan — would see more curb barriers, more raised medians and more busy intersections. A number of additional traffic lights and the kind of complicated engineering that we see at Two Mile Hill is proposed in several areas throughout the corridor.

There have been collisions with the existing curbed barriers and the raised medians. I drive that highway almost daily and frequently the signs to mark the curbed barriers are knocked over. The costs associated with the operation and maintenance with the curbed barriers and raised medians is a question I have. I also would like to know what costs have been estimated for the operation and maintenance with the proposed immediate-term construction areas. There are 14 spots that have had numerous accidents, including fatalities, but only two of those would be addressed in the immediate term.

I am interested in looking at the accident record and knowing whether the department and the minister have any information on any accidents that occurred between 2010 and 2014. I'm interested in knowing how those safety records and that accident data compare with highways elsewhere in Canada. If the minister has looked at the nature of accidents, how many of the accidents reported in the safety report were to do with driver error or impaired driving, as opposed to being related to the road construction itself or the nature of the road having had a direct effect on the accident?

I think I will just add that I have asked a number of questions throughout this Sitting about the plan. As the minister said, I've heard a lot about it at the open houses that I attended, in my riding, and at local events. The minister indicated that some of the concerns I had raised were similar to the ones that he had heard. The minister referred to attending a lunch with members of the Yukon Transportation Association and talking to long-haul truckers.

I would like to ask the minister if he could respond to those questions related to safety and ask: What criticisms has the minister heard? What issues were identified by the Yukon Transportation Association, by other affected businesses or by residents of Hillcrest, Takhini and Porter Creek? If the minister can respond to that and indicate, not just what he heard, but what he has reflected on — on the basis of those comments.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I don't have the accident details that the member opposite is looking for. I can look into whether or not they are available. Of course when it comes to safety, this is certainly something that, for me, is the number one priority when it comes to this particular piece of infrastructure that we have here in the territory.

The O&M estimates — just for a little bit of clarity, perhaps when the member is on her feet next, she could just determine whether it's O&M during the construction phase or whether it's post-construction. Again, if there are savings associated with it, I'll have to get back to her with what's being estimated on that side of things.

As I mentioned, the engineering firm that put this draft functional plan together, working with officials from Highways and Public Works — the estimate is that, once these improvements are implemented, we can expect to see a 30-percent reduction in accidents in the corridor. Those are just estimates at this time.

I know the member opposite asked specifically about the Yukon Transportation Association and conversations with

them, but what I'll first do is provide a bit more detail on the consultation process and what type of activity was undertaken for that process. From December 2013 to February 2014, the engineering firm held preliminary discussions with some targeted stakeholders — Kwanlin Dun First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'an Council, utility companies, City of Whitehorse and private businesses. Those are stakeholders that have land adjacent to the highway right-of-way.

The purpose of the discussions was to meet with stakeholders early on in the process to let them know what work was about to begin on the development of the corridor plan and to identify any concerns or issues that they had. Meetings were held again with targeted stakeholders in February 2015 to share specific details of the proposed plan and obtain their feedback and input. HPW staff met individually with close to 35 stakeholders that may be affected by future changes and will continue to meet, as required, to answer questions, seek feedback and address any of their concerns.

In addition, the department sent out approximately 70 letters to individuals located along the highway to inform them of the consultation and to offer meetings for those who are interested in further discussions with the department. In March 2015 to May 2015, the 60-day public consultation phase was undertaken. As I've mentioned, the document, questionnaire and brochure that were provided were mailed to every mailbox in the territory. It's unfortunate if some mailboxes got missed. As the member opposite referenced, some have the "no admail" sticker on their mailboxes.

In addition to that, we also were very aggressive with an advertising campaign and a strong web presence. I believe I did some radio spots, encouraging individuals to participate in this consultation. I think, overall, the HPW officials who led this consultation phase did a very good job. As I mentioned, the PlaceSpeak site that we had, which did the animated flyover of the infrastructure and what it would look like, received recognition from an NGO in Washington, D.C. for the effectiveness of it.

Again, I don't want to understate the good work that HPW officials put into ensuring that we heard from as many Yukoners as possible.

Earlier today, I read into the record the number of submissions that we have received that was as current as this afternoon, I believe — a strong response for something of this nature.

We will be preparing a what-we-heard document and will share that with the public on the PlaceSpeak site later on this summer. The public will be notified at a later date on how their input will be incorporated into the refined plan. Maybe what I can do is provide a bit of a summary of feedback that has been analyzed so far from targeted stakeholders.

In general, stakeholders were in support of changes and improvements to the Whitehorse corridor. However, some feel the impact to their business may be significant during the construction period. I heard personally that some feel there could be longer term impacts to the success of their businesses as well.

Owners with potential property acquisition impacts were supportive and interested. One key concern with most businesses and some residents was to ensure that there were turning radiuses at intersections and access points to support large trucks. That was the key issue, I think, that came out of the Yukon Transportation Association meeting. For many of the long-haul truckers, in particular, they need access to points where they can park, fuel up and get meals. Many members in the House will know the truck stops that are along that route where many of the bigger trucks congregate overnight in the most part, or to refuel.

I think that protecting and ensuring that access and turning radiuses were sufficient in those areas, was the main thing that came up with the Yukon Transportation Association. We started the meeting talking about that and concluded the meeting talking about other important infrastructure throughout the territory.

I am looking forward to receiving a letter from the Transportation Association that identifies their response to this Whitehorse corridor of the Alaska Highway specifically.

We met with all of the businesses that will be impacted and have shared the specifics of the project. HPW is committed to working with stakeholders and all road users to find solutions that will address the objectives of the project. There has been an awful lot of work undertaken on this, and for that I thank the engineering firm as well as HPW officials and everyone who has taken part. We certainly value all of the input that we have received from all of the stakeholders and individuals who took the time. I think it is incumbent upon us now, as a government, to come up with a document that balances the requests that they have made with the needs for a safe and modern transportation corridor through the City of Whitehorse that will support future economic growth in the territory.

Hopefully that answers the member opposite's questions and we will look forward to continuing debate and questions on this corridor functional plan because I think it is incumbent on all of us to make sure that Yukoners are informed of very important projects such as this one.

Ms. Moorcroft: First, I will clarify the question I had for the minister in relation to operation and maintenance costs. The proposed functional plan sets out work in three areas — in three segments of the 10 segments — between the south Klondike Highway and the north Klondike Highway.

In the immediate term, what will be done is twinning most of the Alaska Highway between Robert Service Way and Two Mile Hill. My question about operation and maintenance is: What will the additional maintenance costs be if the road does go forward as proposed, with four lanes of highway plus several turning lanes? That's the question.

The other question that I would have in relation to operation and maintenance is — it has been pointed out that the raised medians and curbs make snow removal more difficult, and so I would like to know what impact that has had.

I do want to go back to some of the concerns that I have heard from constituents and from citizens at a couple of the

open houses on the Alaska Highway corridor that I attended. There were 14 sites of accidents identified in the safety report that looked at 3,100 accidents between 1996 and 2009, so there's a gap in data from 2010 to 2014. It would be good to know what the accident rate had been. I didn't hear the minister responding on whether there was up-to-date traffic safety data available or just that he didn't have it available with him this afternoon.

The Alaska Highway is also a main tourism corridor. I would like to ask the minister what analysis was done on ways to enhance the corridor from a tourism perspective. Were there terms of reference for the contract that spelled out what areas are covered and was tourism part of that?

Hon. Mr. Kent: We will have a better idea on the operation and maintenance expenditures when we get into the detailed design aspects. I don't have any of that information here with me, but once we get into those specific aspects, we'll be able to provide that information to members opposite.

The functional plan did use current accident data. I don't have that information with me here, but I can commit to get back to the member opposite with the current accident data.

Aside from the nature of the vehicles using it, there's nothing specific to tourism at this stage. That can be rectified going forward by working cross-departmentally with the Department of Tourism and Culture to get a better idea of the type of visitor traffic that most uses the corridor. Anecdotally, we've all been behind the odd tourism vehicle, whether it's a motor home or a larger RV or that type of vehicle. Again, that said, we'll get into more detailed discussions with the Department of Tourism and Culture and other departments, including Energy, Mines and Resources, with what we can anticipate as far as potential mining truck traffic going forward when it comes to the Alaska Highway corridor.

As projects enter the different phases and where they are in their development, we'll certainly have to anticipate additional truck traffic, whether it's ore coming from the potential mines or the goods and services that are required to go to the potential mines.

I think all of this will be pulled together once we enter into a more detailed design process — as well as the considerations that caucus and Cabinet will have to make with respect to this project.

Ms. Moorcroft: I guess the biggest question that I have is how the three priorities that are set out as immediate priorities that should be built at a population of 26,000 were determined. I have not seen the case made in the literature I've reviewed. I would like to thank the minister for a copy of the plan that he provided, although a number of pages of that document were redacted. I also heard quite a bit at the open houses and did the electronic drive-through of the proposed corridor, and I really haven't seen a rationale for twinning the highway between Robert Service Way and just north of Two Mile Hill. When the minister talked about the targeted consultations that the department had had with stakeholders — with 35 stakeholders and he named some of them — he said that he had indicated to them what work was about to be done and whether they had any concerns.

I want to point out that a lot of the morning and afternoon rush hour traffic largely bypasses the corridor between Two Mile Hill and the south access. Commuters tend to take the Robert Service way via Hamilton Boulevard or use Two Mile Hill to get between downtown Whitehorse and Granger and McIntyre and other areas there. There is little to suggest the plan will do much to alleviate rush-hour congestion.

We've heard a lot of local businesses expressing a concern about frontage roads and whether or not they're necessary. There are some concerns about closing access roads.

I would just like to know whether the minister has in fact made the decision to proceed with the immediate-term three segments and to twin between the south access and Two Mile Hill when he has indicated to some of the stakeholders what work needs to be done.

Whether or not that decision is made, what is the actual rationale for twinning those three segments of the Alaska Highway, as opposed to addressing the intersections of the Alaska Highway and the south Klondike Highway, and the Alaska Highway and the north Klondike Highway, where there's considerable commuter traffic in the mornings and intersections that need some work?

Hon. Mr. Kent: The draft plan recommended 10 individual construction projects grouped into those three implementation stages — the immediate, medium and longer term. Just to clarify, when I spoke earlier about meetings that had occurred throughout the consultation process, those were not all meetings that were personally attended by me. Officials and representatives of the engineering firm that conducted the work had many of those discussions with the individuals.

When the draft plan was developed, the prioritization and staging of the construction work was determined by performing a systematic assessment and evaluation of a full range of factors, which considered safety benefits, travel time benefits, construction cost and environmental impacts. It's not just as simple as one thing that informed a specific phase or what the order was for implementation.

My understanding was that the traffic volumes between Robert Service Way and Two Mile Hill were among the highest that we have in the corridor, given the infrastructure that we have in that area, such as the airport and the weigh scale and the fact that that's where most of the through-traffic goes for the highway. That said, I can assure members that we have made no decisions with respect to this project. We're evaluating the feedback that we received from the Yukon public. Earlier I provided a bit of a summary of what we had heard on this project. That said, there are still a number of steps that we have to take. The first one is to evaluate the feedback that we received with respect to this draft plan from Yukoners during the 60-day consultation phase. As I mentioned, later this summer we will be providing a what-we-heard document. We'll upload that to the PlaceSpeak website that contains the flyover that we talked about — the animated flyover of the area — and what it may look like.

We're not at a point right now where any decisions have been made. We're listening to Yukoners and we've heard

from many Yukoners, including members opposite representing their constituents and others, as far as the concerns go.

We will take all of these into account when we develop a plan moving forward, as well as developing specific options that I can take forward to my colleagues for their consideration in how we proceed with capital improvements in this corridor of the Alaska Highway.

Ms. Moorcroft: The corridor needs work to increase safety and to enable drivers to pass slower moving vehicles. One of the things that I have heard a lot about is a need for passing lanes to be built in. I have also heard people commenting that the multiuse trails could be a good way of enabling more residents to bike to work if they are well-designed and if they are a safer alternative than the current practice of cycling along the highway shoulder. I have also heard other cyclists saying that the shoulder is the safest place to be travelling and to be careful about putting in a lot of right-turn lanes.

I don't see that an immediate critical need for an expensive four-lane segment between Robert Service Way and Two Mile Hill has been proven, so I will leave it at that. I have put some comments on the record for the minister, and I will look forward to the what-we-heard document coming out later this summer. I understand that the City of Whitehorse is generally in support of investment in infrastructure, particularly where it will alleviate congestion and improve transportation and safety. I wonder, though, what has been taken into consideration related to accommodating multiple-occupancy vehicles and transit and biking and walking, rather than focusing almost exclusively on single-occupancy vehicles. I have also heard that there are concerns about possible increases in speed if there is an expanded and twinned corridor.

With those additional comments on the Alaska Highway, I know that the minister has seen a lot of comments coming from the public and that they will be summarized. We look forward to seeing that.

I wanted to turn to another transportation area within the City of Whitehorse. The Yukon government is responsible for new traffic assessments when they are putting in large capital projects. I understand the Yukon government did a traffic study when they were putting in the new F.H. Collins Secondary School. There is now a proposal for a new French school on the other side of the bridge to Riverdale, which would add more staff and student traffic to Riverdale over the Robert Campbell bridge. There is also the hospital expansion, which would result in an increase in traffic. I don't know if there has been a traffic study conducted that would take that into account.

Can the minister tell the House whether Yukon government will be conducting a new traffic study to assess the impact that a new French high school and the new hospital expansion would have on traffic in Riverdale and on the Robert Campbell bridge?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Just to close on the Whitehorse corridor — the issue of passing lanes and people requesting

that in some of the areas closer to where the north and south Klondike Highway joins the Alaska Highway — it is something that I've heard as well. I've received the submissions on the multi-use trails and the cycling concerns as well and some of the City of Whitehorse concerns with respect to — I think their sustainability plan is what they have referred to.

As I have mentioned, I think that all of these factors will be taken into consideration, but it's also important for those individuals who live in the Whitehorse area or live along the corridor or in the Whitehorse periphery to understand that this is an important piece of infrastructure not only for them, but also for our visitors and commercial traffic and others who are travelling. They're using the corridor to either access the port facilities in Skagway or to visit Alaska and other things. I'm looking forward to the what-we-heard document and the set of recommendations that comes forward from the department that I can take to my colleagues for consideration at some point later on.

When it comes to the traffic into Riverdale and out of Riverdale, it's certainly something that I and the Member for Riverdale South are probably quite familiar with — travelling that stretch of infrastructure every day. Obviously there are a number of facilities that are used by all Yukoners or a number of Yukoners or residents of Whitehorse that are located in Riverdale from, as mentioned, the Whitehorse General Hospital as well as the Department of Education, to some of the speciality schools — including F.H. Collins' French immersion, Christ the King Elementary and Vanier, in particular, that attract students from all over the City of Whitehorse. Even the other schools — Selkirk Elementary and Grey Mountain — have some students who attend there who don't actually live in Riverdale, and then a number of Riverdale students are bused out as well, whether it's to Whitehorse Elementary for French immersion or even perhaps to École Émilie Tremblay for French first language education.

When it comes to traffic studies, they will be an important part of the development. I had the opportunity to meet with the mayor and some of his senior officials with respect to what is taking place at CSFY and the relocation of the skateboard park. Of course, CSFY has chosen that skateboard park as the site where they would like their new school. We indicated to representatives of the Skate for Life Alliance as well as, I believe, city officials, that the skateboard park would have to be relocated and built before construction would start on a new school over there.

One of the things that came up from one of the officials at the City of Whitehorse during that time was the traffic studies. It's also something I have had discussions about with my department officials in Property Management Division — on what type of impact having the francophone school located in that site will have.

That work needs to be undertaken. It is my understanding that it hasn't been undertaken yet, but I look forward to getting the results of that, as well as other traffic concerns in the Riverdale area when it comes to the infrastructure that is

shared by many members of the Whitehorse community and the broader Yukon community.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Silver: I would just like to ask my colleagues to help in welcoming to the gallery an expat Dawsonite who I heard is going to be getting married in Dawson this summer and is now currently working with the White River First Nation, Mr. Gary Wilson.

Applause

Ms. Moorcroft: The question that I asked the minister was whether Yukon government would be conducting a new traffic study to assess the impact that a new French high school and the new hospital expansion would have on traffic in Riverdale and on the Robert Campbell bridge. The minister's response was that he was looking forward to the information. I'll ask him to confirm that it would be Yukon government that is conducting that new traffic study.

I also wanted to conclude remarks on the Alaska Highway corridor plan. The minister has just indicated that he would get back to opposition parties with the safety data that I had requested and that CH2M Hill did have access to more recent accident and traffic safety data than what had been reported with records up to 2009.

I would also like to ensure the minister has, on that list of questions for responses back — that he will respond on the accident rate on the Alaska Highway in the corridor area as compared to national rates, and that he would indicate how many of those accidents, if it was known, were related to human error or impaired driving as opposed to road conditions.

I'm aware that highway functional plans are being developed for other areas. The minister referred in his opening remarks to the Alaska Highway corridor, the Silver Trail, the north Klondike Highway and the Campbell Highway functional plans. There was a public consultation for the Alaska Highway corridor, so the questions I have related to those other functional plans are: Will there be public consultations for the other functional plans? Will the minister provide the schedule for highway functional plans to be completed and any anticipated timeline between the completion of the plan, and then how they would get to developing a construction plan and proceeding with construction?

Hon. Mr. Kent: The traffic volume studies in Riverdale associated with new construction will be done by the Yukon government in conjunction with the City of Whitehorse as one of our partners.

We do have on the record now the requests made by the member opposite as far as some of the information associated with the Whitehorse corridor. The Whitehorse corridor — I guess from a distance perspective — is relatively short compared to the functional planning that we've done on other areas. I mentioned that a functional plan is helping to inform the work on southern portions of the Robert Campbell

Highway. The functional plan was completed, I think, from kilometre 10 to kilometre 190, which is the turnoff to the Wolverine mine.

Of course work this year continues south of the turnoff to the Nahanni Range Road, which is where the Tuchtua camp is located — the highway maintenance camp is located there. My understanding is that within two or three years we hope to be at that turnoff with the work on the Robert Campbell Highway. Of course that is subject to budget appropriations and the like, but again, that is our plan.

Last year, we completed functional plans on the Freegold Road, the Nahanni Range Road and the south and north Klondike Highway, so obviously much larger and more distance covered than the 40-kilometre area of the Whitehorse corridor.

Functional plans for this year — as I mentioned in my opening remarks, we will be conducting a functional plan of the Silver Trail. That document, if it hasn't already been tendered, will be going out for tender sometime very soon. As well, we are looking at going from kilometre 190 to kilometre 335, I think, but I could stand to be corrected on that. I did mention it earlier today in terms of the exact location, but that's work on the Robert Campbell Highway north of the Wolverine mine turnoff to, I believe, close to Drury Creek, which is on the west side of the Faro turnoff — so functional planning will go there.

The degree of consultation with these will vary. It's going to lay out obviously a large volume of work that needs to be conducted. We won't be proceeding with an entire redevelopment immediately just because the associated costs would be quite high with this type of work, but again, specific projects emerge as a high priority, such as, for instance, as mentioned earlier, the Nares bridge redevelopment. That will get specific consultation on that project, so that's one of the things that was completed — or identified and completed — as part of the south and north Klondike Highway functional planning exercise.

It would depend largely on the degree that will, as I mentioned, vary from project to project. We won't be engaged in the same type of functional consultation on the Whitehorse corridor of the Alaska Highway, but there will be project-specific and other consultation done with respect to these other areas where we have conducted the functional planning.

Chair: 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 are going to resume general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works.

Ms. Moorcroft: I just wanted to put on the record one more information request on the Alaska Highway corridor — if the minister could get back to me if he doesn't have the information with him. What amount has been budgeted, if

any, for expropriation costs for expropriating any properties related to the Alaska Highway Whitehorse corridor functional plan?

The minister, in his opening remarks, referred to the Tatchun Creek bridge near Carmacks over the Yukon River and that there was water quality monitoring being done there as ordered by the Water Board. The concern about the Tatchun Creek bridge that led to water quality monitoring was the use of waste rock from Minto mine and whether there was copper that would present a hazard to the salmon in the salmon-bearing creek. Can the minister indicate what the results of any of the water quality monitoring have revealed to date?

Hon. Mr. Kent: As far as the request for information on the budget for acquiring lands with respect to the Whitehorse corridor, we haven't got into the detailed design phase or made any determination, so there wasn't any budgetary amount set aside for that. Once we advance the project further, that number may emerge and it may be as low as zero. I wouldn't want to speculate on what the top end would be, but we will be able to inform Yukoners at that time, should that become a necessity in what ends up being the final construction plan for the Whitehorse corridor.

With respect to the Tatchun Creek bridge, members will know that this is located just north of Five Finger Rapids on the north Klondike Highway, north of Carmacks. There was quite a bit of work done on the site — bridge work, earth work and rip-rap installation were completed on schedule even with the delays that were experienced in June. It was a real reflection of the high level of effort invested by all involved on this project and I thank them for that.

This project created 20 jobs across four local companies. As well, local businesses in Carmacks saw an economic boost with the additional workforce in the area. My colleagues and I stopped at the corner of the Campbell Highway and Klondike Highway on our way to the gold show at a very well-known refreshment area and he too — the owner of that business — was also talking to me about the impact that the work on the Tatchun Creek bridge had on his business last year. He is looking forward to the company coming in this summer to do the asphalt work in Carmacks, not only through town, but the approaches to the bridge as well, that I mentioned on either side of the Tatchun Creek bridge.

When it comes to water quality testing, the work that was completed by experts hired by HPW indicated that the copper concentration in the rip-rap for Minto will not have an impact on the salmon in Tatchun Creek. The rip-rap from the Minto mine contains less than 0.01 percent copper and is non-acid generating.

Ms. Moorcroft: Another area the minister referred to in his opening remarks relates to the Shakwak agreement of 1977, which covers the stretch of highway between Haines, Alaska and the border north of Beaver Creek. Over the past three decades, Washington has provided more than \$400 million for reconstruction of Canadian portions of the road, but funding disappeared from the American government's annual budget in 2013. The minister indicated in his opening

remarks that Yukon would continue to make representations to the U.S. federal highway administration. The Yukon government spent \$180,000 to hire a company from South Carolina to lobby Congress to reinstate the Shakwak funding.

I would like to ask the minister: How is he working with our Alaskan counterparts to reinstate Shakwak funding? How is the minister getting Canada to support claims for the U.S. to cover some of the costs associated with Shakwak and what has the \$180,000 for hiring a lobbyist brought us?

Hon. Mr. Kent: The Shakwak has been a very important project, obviously, for the Yukon Territory, both from an improved transportation infrastructure perspective, as well as in local economic benefits. Many local contractors have worked, and continue to work, on that portion of the Alaska Highway. In fact, between 1978 and 2011, the United States contributed a total of \$460 million to the capital improvement of the north Alaska Highway and the Haines Road. Of that amount, Alaska contributed \$38 million and the U.S. government contributed \$422 million.

In that same period, Canada and Yukon contributions for both capital and O&M expenses for work on the Haines Road and the Alaska Highway from Dawson Creek to the Yukon-Alaska border total \$1.54 billion. This compares to a combined contribution of \$460 million U.S. — that \$1.54 billion was in Canadian funds — from the United States and Alaska governments for that same period.

I think I mentioned in previous responses during Question Period that Canada and the Yukon have done their share of heavy lifting for this road. It's an important road for Yukoners and it's an important road for Alaskans, especially those portions of the Haines Road and the north Alaska Highway.

We have estimates for completion of construction of that portion of the highway ranging from \$280 million to \$340 million. The higher price tag can be attributed to the unique challenges of constructing a highway on destabilized and deteriorating permafrost. Some of the work that needs to be completed includes the following: pave remaining section of the Haines Road, which has a cost estimate of \$15 million; pave from Haines Junction to Destruction Bay — this section is not extensively affected by permafrost — and that estimate is \$65 million; stabilize extensive permafrost between Destruction Bay and the U.S. border, estimated at anywhere between \$60 million and \$120 million; and eventually pave from Destruction Bay to the U.S. border, which has an estimate of \$140 million. Depending on the level of paving activity desired and annual funding allotments of \$12 million to \$15 million are required to complete this project.

In 2014-15, the expected expenditures were close to \$14 million for completing Shakwak program highway improvements. This work should lead to a contribution of \$7 million to the GDP, coupled with the potential for 80 jobs for the Yukon economy. Our highway maintenance costs are over six times higher in permafrost areas than in non-permafrost areas. The area north of Destruction Bay and Burwash Landing is an area very susceptible to permafrost and the degradation that occurs there.

Thawing permafrost causes severe distortions of the road surface as well as significant cracking along the road shoulders creating significant safety issues for highway users and increased costs of all transported goods. Again, we believe that this is an extremely important piece of our infrastructure and that the agreement that we have had in place with the U.S. and Alaska governments to fund it has been very successful and of mutual benefit to our jurisdictions.

I believe the previous minister was engaged with the Government of Alaska specifically on this file, as I've mentioned previously. I have talked to First Nation representatives in Haines Junction as well as in Burwash Landing — also Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and the Kluane First Nation leadership — about the importance of this project as well. I think that one of the things that we as a jurisdiction need to do — and it's something that I'll be pressing forward on — is getting various levels of government — as mentioned, whether it's territorial or First Nation or municipal — together and briefed on what is required. We could reach out to our Alaskan counterparts. I think it's an important thing for the Yukon Chamber of Commerce and perhaps the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon to get briefed on and informed so that they can talk to their counterparts in Alaska as well. My understanding is that the Alaska government is quite supportive and the individuals in Alaska are quite supportive of this project funding continuing and of us being able to accomplish what we need to do there.

With respect to the contract with the firm in the United States, I think it's important for us to be part of the conversation in Washington, D.C. I think it has been mentioned before that the Premier has travelled down there to express the importance of this project. He will be able to provide more details on his travels there when we're in Executive Council Office discussions, but this is something that I think all Yukoners can get behind and again, it's an important investment that we can make in our transportation infrastructure to ensure that it continues to be safe and performs well for not only Yukoners and Canadians, but the many, many Americans who use that stretch of road.

Ms. Moorcroft: The minister referred to three different projects where improvements were needed on Shakwak that would have been over \$250 million. Is that budget sustainable without U.S. contributions? The minister just indicated that they were going to keep trying to convince the U.S. government to fund Shakwak again and to restore the funding. I would like to know whether the budget is sustainable without that, given the number of projects he referred to and their costs.

Hon. Mr. Kent: As I mentioned, the estimates for completion of construction of the Haines Road and north Alaska Highway range from \$280 million to \$340 million. This high price tag can be attributed to the unique challenges of constructing a highway on destabilized and deteriorating permafrost.

I also mentioned in my previous response that the contributions that the Alaska and U.S. governments have made to the Alaska Highway over this period, and you couple

that with the over \$1.5 billion Canadian invested by the various levels of government in Canada. Again, I believe that we've done our share.

This is an important piece of infrastructure and we hope that it's contained in the next U.S. transportation bill, but I guess, as to whether or not it's sustainable, we have over 4,700 kilometres of road that we need to maintain here in the territory, and this is an important part of it but it's not the only part. This year's transportation budget, I believe, is in the neighbourhood of \$60 million. If we're unsuccessful in getting this U.S. funding continued to complete this work, we'll have to make decisions at that time on what portions of Yukon's transportation infrastructure require the most attention — very similar to the decisions that we have to make today. Budgeting is of course about making choices and there are a number of factors that contribute to those choices, so we'll continue to work with department staff and move forward.

Again, our focus with respect to Shakwak is securing additional funding from the U.S. government to complete the work that was started in 1977.

Ms. Moorcroft: The minister referred to some project work on the Atlin Road. I would like to ask him whether there was any cost recovery from the B.C. government for any of the construction on the Atlin Road.

I asked the minister a question about the Takhini River bridge on May 11. That was in response to a serious collision on the bridge in February. The minister said there are a number of actions that they were going to take, including installing a curve sign and an advisory speed tab lower than what is currently there — the current speed is 90 kilometres an hour and that's going to be reduced — install a temporary mobile radar speed sign for a month or two, install recessed centreline reflective markers on the bridge, and install a centreline rumble strip through the curve north of the bridge.

I would like to ask the minister if any of those safety changes have been put in place yet. When will the speed limit be reduced and to what speed? Is the temporary radar speed sign up there now?

Rumble strips in the centreline are good to ensure that motorists do not cross the median into oncoming traffic. I am wondering, though, why the centreline rumble strip is only being proposed through the curve north of the bridge — and would it not look at doing that on the approach to the bridge from both directions?

Hon. Mr. Kent: With respect to the Atlin Road, I think I mentioned in my opening remarks that the work that's anticipated for the bridges at Tarfu and Snafu — the decks will be replaced with concrete to maintain their structural integrity. Earth work at the crossing approaches and bridge replacements at these crossings are planned for this year, 2015-16.

Funds allocated for this work total \$4 million. The recoverable piece is \$3 million under the Building Canada fund program. That's the information that I have as far as recoveries go for the work on the Atlin Road for this summer.

When it comes to the Takhini River bridge, I know we talked about it and, as mentioned, this has been something I've been working with the MLA for Lake Laberge on, respecting his constituents and the concerns they brought up since that unfortunate accident that occurred earlier this year. As I mentioned, RCMP confirmed that speed was the contributing factor to the crash that occurred on the bridge. There has been no RCMP report obtained from the department. Prior to the February 20, 2015 collision, there were three accidents reported in the collision database since 1996. The details of those accidents are outlined as follows, and I'll read them into the record now, as we don't have time to do this often during Question Period.

On October 23, 1999, there was an accident. The major contributing factor was human condition, human action and weather conditions. There was one vehicle involved, and it was snowing at that time. October 21, 2001, weather conditions were the major contributing factor. Again, one vehicle was involved in that, in snowy conditions, with one injury. December 13, 2012, the contributing factor was a failure to yield, following too closely and weather conditions. Two vehicles were involved in that accident that again occurred in snowy conditions, and there were no injuries.

As far as the measures outlined to improve what is taking place at that bridge — install a curve sign and advisory 80-kilometre per hour speed tab. It was posted at 90 kilometres per hour and the new speed tab actually has been installed. Again, travels to Dawson City this past weekend confirmed that. Also, the installation of a mobile temporary radar speed sign for a period of one to two months. These signs collect traffic data that can be used to track vehicle speeds and evaluate the effectiveness of the interactive sign. Studies have shown limited long-term effectiveness of speed radar signs and the use of temporary short-term installations can be more effective. Again, that is something we'll make a determination on, once we get some of the data collected from the sign. We will be installing recessed centreline reflective markers on the bridge itself, which will clearly delineate the curve in poor weather conditions, and install a centreline rumble strip through the curve north of the bridge. I think that obviously doing something south of the bridge is something we can consider as well when we're there and I'll take the member's comments under advisement.

As far as the timing for the additional activities, I did send a formal letter back to the Minister of Justice, the MLA for Lake Laberge, earlier today, and we're having copies of that letter made. I'll be able to table them for all members in the House a little bit later on during debate so you can get a sense of the timing. I don't have it at my fingertips here so I don't want to comment on it at this point, but you'll get a better sense of when the other work is anticipated to be conducted on that particular portion of the North Klondike Highway.

Ms. Moorcroft: I thank the minister for that information and I am pleased that he will provide a copy of the letter to us. I would also like to put on the record that I am

looking for a response to the issue of cyclist and pedestrian use of the Takhini River bridge as well.

Turning to airports, the minister spoke about the improvements that are in the budget for the Whitehorse and Watson Lake airports for the 2015-16 budget year. I would like to ask the minister about the safety management system that is being implemented at airports. Could the minister tell us how many employees have engaged in training under the safety management system, and how frequently, across the entire airports division?

Hon. Mr. Kent: First of all, with respect to cyclists and pedestrians on the Takhini River bridge, I think part of the work that we did on the north Klondike functional plan will help to inform some of the longer term improvements that we can make to the bridge. I will send over a copy of the letter that I sent to the MLA for Lake Laberge this morning. I don't have another copy, so I will give this to the page and it will provide the member opposite with a little bit more information as to timing.

Pardon me, Madam Chair, I do have a copy for the MLA for Copperbelt South as well as the MLA for Klondike. If they require additional copies, I will just let them do that.

Some of the other questions that were asked with respect to the bridge are more in the medium and longer term. I have been engaged in discussions with the MLA for Lake Laberge and have talked to officials about some of the cost estimates for additional infrastructure on those bridges. Of course, those are things that we will have to make a decision on. It's not part of the current budget, but we are always looking to address safety concerns where we can and make sure our transportation network is as safe as possible.

With respect to the safety management system question that the member opposite asked, we have sent a note to other officials who are in the aviation and marine branch. Perhaps before the end of the day, I can have a better answer for her. I am not aware of the numbers that she is speaking of but, hopefully before the end of the day, I will be able to give her a better idea of what those numbers are. If not, we will include that in the package of information that we get back to her with in the very near future.

Ms. Moorcroft: At the departmental briefing, we raised some questions about the Alaska Highway near the airport where the paint is wearing off and the road surface is deteriorating. I expect the minister's office, as well as my own, has received a number of phone calls with complaints about motorists' windshields being cracked. At the departmental briefing, the Highways and Public Works officials said that it was a contract deficiency and so it would be the contractor's duty to repair that and that there wouldn't be a cost.

I would like to ask the minister: What was the total value of that chipseal contract, and when does the department anticipate the repairs will be completed?

Hon. Mr. Kent: The difficulties that were encountered by the contractor in the delivery of the project likely stem, in our understanding, from the weather conditions at the time of the work and some key differences between the design's

recommendations and the actual installation. The department and the contractor have been communicating about this issue and meetings have taken place very recently between officials. The contractor is aware that the department does not consider that this contract is complete. They are expected to complete the contract during the summer — we are anticipating that in what we are hoping are the warmest months of July and August.

The contract value for the chipseal work is \$550,079. The extent of the project was from the intersection with Robert Service Way to the intersection with Two Mile Hill, which was a total of 6.7 kilometres. So far, four kilometres have been completed. Obviously there is some work that needs to be addressed there. We are working with the contractor to ensure that the work gets done and the contract is completed this year.

The department spends an average \$225,000 once every three years to do asphalt patching — spray patching — and crack sealing along that stretch of road, and the chipseal is intended to reduce the frequency of those repairs. Tying back to the Whitehorse corridor plan of the Alaska Highway, looking at eventual improvements there, this is what was determined to be the most cost-effective way to perform those repairs until we get a better sense of what the plan is for the Whitehorse corridor of the Alaska Highway.

Ms. Moorcroft: I would like to ask the minister as well about the new lease lots at the airport. I think that, during his opening remarks, he indicated that there would be 20. I would like the minister to indicate whether all of those lease lots will be for airport-related businesses.

I would also like to put a couple of department-wide questions on the record for the minister to respond to. What is the total value of the collective agreement and management increases? When we had the departmental briefing and we went through each branch, there was a sum indicated for the collective agreement increases and the management increases. I would like the minister to provide the total value of those increases for collective agreement and management pay. I would also like to know the total number of employees — full-time equivalencies — working for the department and include the number of auxiliary employees. Finally, what is the total number of employees working in communications across the department?

Hon. Mr. Kent: When it comes to the lot development at the airport, off of apron 2 — which I think is the location of it — there are a number of commercial and recreational aviation companies that have approached not only me, but officials, with interest in that lot. The Whitehorse airport is a significant economic driver for the territory. On the airport property, we have a number of other companies that are involved in the aviation industry or in that type of activity, such as expediting companies, aircraft maintenance companies and other businesses that are aviation-related.

We haven't had the discussion on limiting these lots to strictly commercial or recreational-use aviation companies because the demand could be further than that for companies that use the airport and the important economics of it.

On the department-wide questions that the member opposite asked, we're just reaching out to department officials to see if we can pull those numbers together. Hopefully I have them before the end of debate today. I can share them at that time. I thank her for asking those specific questions.

I'm just going to recap, just to make sure that I have correct what the member is looking for — it's the total value of the collective bargaining agreement as well as management increases, the total FTEs in the department, including auxiliary employees, and the total FTEs that we have in communications.

While I don't have that information here, I'll try to get it before the end of the day today. If not, I'll get it to the member opposite as soon as possible.

Ms. Moorcroft: I have some questions relating to property management. The main administration building has been under renovation for some time, and that work is continuing in the budget year we're debating now. The old Whitehorse Public Library is space that is centrally located. It's downtown and it's accessible. It was formerly the library and would be an ideal location for a public service, whether it was a Yukon government public service or whether it was leased out.

Can the minister tell us whether a decision has been made as to what offices will be going into that space? It has been empty for a number of years now.

Hon. Mr. Kent: With respect to the main administration building, obviously it's currently undergoing upgrades to the exterior and the interior to reduce the operating expenses and allow more efficient use of space in the building. Work completed to date includes a new generator and electrical distribution upgrade, which will allow building systems to continue to operate in the event of a power outage. As well, the front ramp surface has been repaired and upgraded to improve accessibility.

The department estimates that the exterior work will occur this current fiscal year; again, this is pending implementation approval by Management Board. Exterior work involves re-skinning, which means removing the aluminium siding, installing new windows, doors, insulation and vapor barrier, and then re-siding the facility.

The interior upgrades will occur during the 2016-17 fiscal year and will include upgrades to the fire suppression and alarm systems, building control systems, electrical systems, heating, ventilation and cooling systems and washroom improvements. There will be a new space reconfiguration that will improve the working layout and space use of all three levels. Planning and consultation with affected departments is underway.

Property Management is currently reviewing plans to upgrade the library for use. I know the original intent for that was to — as we move through the main administration building, for the people who work in this building, as their area is renovated, we would move them into the old Whitehorse library space for a temporary time and then conduct the renovations and move them back.

There are some structural issues with the Whitehorse library as far as additional office space goes. Of course that will have to be taken into account, as well as the potential for public parking when we're taking into account what the longer term use of that facility would be, but again those are options that the department is looking at beyond the shorter term of relocating existing employees who work in the main administration building into that space while renovations in their particular area are underway.

Ms. Moorcroft: Moving on to fuel oil tanks and code requirements, out of 90 fuel oil tanks, 22 did not have a working tank whistle and 29 did not have fill pipe protection and 14 did not have overfill protection. There were some incidents with some tanks being overfilled and spilling.

The building maintenance projects for 2015-16 show that 20 oil fuel tanks will be replaced in five departments in the current budget year. My question for the minister is: How many fuel oil tanks will fail to meet code once that replacement has been done? How many oil tanks will there be left to replace before they will all meet code?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Yukon government works very hard to make sure that our buildings are clean, safe and comfortable for Yukoners and Yukon students. We know how important it is for Yukoners and Yukon students to be comfortable and secure when they're earning a living or while they're learning and pursuing their goals. There are budgetary implications. We have to work within a finite budget to administer across a variety of competing interests, but HPW is prioritizing and making the best decisions possible in the interest of and to the benefit of all Yukoners.

HPW has identified 21 underground tanks as a priority to be replaced by 2015-16 with above-ground tanks that will be easier and less costly to monitor and repair, which in turn will enhance the safety of Yukoners and the government. Staff at HPW are working hard so Yukoners can be assured that oil tanks and equipment at all YG facilities are being effectively managed and are in good working order and meet the appropriate building codes.

We are responsible for servicing approximately 440 oil tanks at Yukon government facilities. Yukon government ensures that oil tanks meet the code of the day, meaning they meet the code in place at the time of installation and are approved until such time as they are altered. Remediation measures developed by HPW to address oil tank leaks continue to be resoundingly successful in ensuring the safety of the public and the environment.

What the government is doing over the next two years is either removing or upgrading oil tanks that do not meet the present-day 2014 codes. Fuel tanks previously installed that met the code requirements of the day are not obligated to upgrade when new codes are adopted. However, HPW and contract employees are visiting each facility to ensure that tank location and size information is correct and to get a complete listing of any tank equipment problems that could affect fuel delivery.

Certified oil burner mechanics and building maintenance personnel are responsible for the inspection of YG above-

ground fuel tanks. Any deficiencies noted during these inspections are typically repaired by the oil burner mechanics. Inspections are visual and are targeted at the overall condition of the tank, which includes corrosion, physical damage and leaks. Visual inspections occur at least on a monthly basis and, in some cases, more often during daily facility visits. A number of malfunctioning tank whistles have been identified for replacement. The whistles indicate when it is time to shut off the flow of fuel to the tank. The consequences of a bad whistle include overfilling a tank, which can often result in a fuel spill, or underfilling a tank to prevent a spill, resulting in unexpected outages.

Members will remember the oil spill on December 12, 2014 that occurred at Selkirk school in Riverdale. Two to three gallons of oil spilled at that time. The underground tank was being replaced with an above-ground tank by a contractor. Students were sent home for the day to ensure the safety of our students as well as staff working in the facility. The facility was opened the following Monday. Environment Yukon was notified of the spill and cleanup is taking place under their direction.

Macaulay Lodge had an oil tank incident, which was a result of human error and a malfunctioning overflow protection device. Remediation is underway in accordance with an environmental protection order and Property Management Division is replacing the tank.

A Faro airport incident in November 2013 involved a Transportation Maintenance branch equipment operator accidentally striking the airport generator shed with a snowplow, damaging one of the fuel lines. Affected soil was remediated a few months later — February 2014.

There were incidents at the Carcross school where an oil supply company overfilled the brand new unit by 750 litres of oil, which spilled into the boiler room floor and was captured in the holding tank. All hazardous waste was successfully removed. The Vanier Catholic School oil spill was a result of vandalism that took place in May 2011 and remediation was successfully completed there.

I am going to highlight the fuel tank replacement schedule. I won't get into too much detail, other than to give members and Yukoners who are interested an idea of which ones are in the queue to be replaced. We have the T.C. Richards building here in Whitehorse, Teslin School, Vanier school, Grey Mountain Primary School, Porter Creek Secondary School, St. Elias school, the Haines Junction administration building, the maintenance shop — I am assuming that is the one located in Whitehorse — the Whitehorse Transportation Maintenance shop, the group home on Lowe Street, Mountainridge Residence — which is located on Hoge Street here in Whitehorse — the Watson Lake grader station, the Taylor building, the Property Management Agency office in Ross River, the Dawson air terminal building, the OTAB in Dawson City, the VRC in Dawson, the Stewart living complex — of course we are replacing that complex, so we will also undertake to replace the fuel tank — and the air terminal building in Mayo.

There are a few notes — and I could get into detail of the years these were installed, but this is the priority list for government fuel tank replacement. I would like to thank and congratulate officials in HPW who have put this priority list together and work hard to ensure that the buildings we maintain and operate are as safe as they can be.

Ms. Moorcroft: Another one of the building maintenance projects that I have a question about is the BSCS cooling upgrade at Whitehorse Correctional Centre, which is an upgrade for \$120,000. I am wondering if this is related to some of the problems that were encountered in heating this facility from the start and if there is any warranty component to that. Why does this relatively new building need an upgrade and what is being done?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I'll just go quickly back and thank departmental officials who provided this information and aren't attending the House today.

The increases from the collective agreement, including manager increases — I don't have the separate numbers, but could potentially undertake to get those — are \$1,107,000. Policy and Communications has a total of nine FTEs, four of which are for communications. The total number of auxiliary-on-call staff is 80.9 and the total number of FTEs in HPW is 770.74. If you include the agencies, that number arises to 782.94.

Hopefully that provides the information, and I do thank the officials who are back in the department for sending that over. This particular project that the member opposite is referencing — I don't have any information currently with me on it. Again, I think I have mentioned on occasion that we do manage quite a number of contracts but, that said, I will seek some advice from the department and get details with respect to this BSCS cooling upgrade that was referenced by the member opposite.

Ms. Moorcroft: The department has provided information about having completed building condition assessments for all 330 buildings that are larger than 100 square metres in size and have mechanical and electrical building systems. When Property Management Division completed that building condition assessment, did they also look at accessibility? Can the minister provide information on the number of government buildings that are not fully accessible and the number of government-leased buildings that are not fully accessible?

Hon. Mr. Kent: The Yukon government knows that our buildings and sites need to be accessible to our employees, clients and visitors. We want everyone to be able to safely enter, exit and function comfortably at our facilities. Just by way of reference, Highways and Public Works manages approximately 575 owned buildings, including storage facilities, as well as 95 leased buildings.

YG owns just over 300 buildings scheduled for condition reports, which include accessibility evaluations. These are buildings that are more than storage sheds, obviously. They have mechanical or electrical systems and are over 100 square metres in size. Most of our owned buildings were built prior to 2005, when accessible design became part of the National

Building Code of Canada requirement. We are working toward upgrading our sites to meet current standards for accessibility. All additions and new construction of YG facilities and all new leased space meet current standards for accessibility.

The 2008 master service plan YG space planning guide confirms that government facilities must be accessible to persons with disabilities. Over the past five years, HPW and the Yukon Council on DisABILITY have worked together to identify accessibility issues at Yukon government buildings and leased spaces. We are working to improve accessibility throughout all of our spaces so that everyone can access and enjoy our services and events. When we do capital upgrades on Yukon government buildings, we address accessibility issues at the same time. As mentioned, the ramp at the front of the main administration building recently saw improvements for accessibility issues completed there.

New construction and new leased spaces are designed to be accessible from day one, and we relocate services from inaccessible to accessible spaces whenever possible. HPW makes it a priority to sand and shovel snow and ice from building entrances and keep them free of debris throughout the year so that everyone can access our buildings safely.

I hope this provides an overview of what we're trying to do and what we currently do with respect to accessibility of government buildings and the sheer number of buildings that we manage.

I should also mention that the Yukon Housing Corporation has enlisted a committee that works with them on the design of their facilities. As a former minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation in the early years of the mandate, in my time as minister I certainly saw an awful lot of washrooms and bathtub facilities in many of the newly constructed seniors facilities, so I would like to congratulate the individuals at the Yukon Housing Corporation and the individuals who participate on that Accessibility Advisory Committee for Yukon Housing Corporation — and HPW works with the Yukon Council on DisABILITY to address those types of accessibility concerns as well. It is something that we take very seriously, whether it's living quarters that are being built for seniors or others who may have accessibility issues or the office spaces that we either own or lease for YG services.

Ms. Moorcroft: I would like to move on with a question about the government's changes to the administration of insurance. The government now has a blended model of commercial and self-insurance so that losses up to \$2 million will continue to be financed through the risk management revolving fund. The General Administration Manual was amended, and there is a new enterprise risk management policy and a contract was let for insurance services.

Part of this new model calls for the development of a structured, systemic loss prevention program, and the introduction indicates that the goal is to reduce the number of claims on insurance policies. I would like to ask the minister how Highways and Public Works plans to work with other departments to reduce the number of claims, and what the

nature of a loss prevention program would be. What would it look like?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I respectfully apologize to the member opposite, but I don't appear to have any information with respect to this particular issue. I will endeavour to get some and either report back to her before end of day to day or at my earliest convenience. I certainly want to ensure that members opposite have all the information that they ask for and will do so.

Again, apologies and hopefully we can move on to another item.

Ms. Moorcroft: Thanks to the minister for that commitment.

I'm going to move on to contracting. One of the largest projects proposed is for the new continuing care facility. It was put in the budget as a 300-bed continuing care facility and has since been revised to reflect that the project will house 150 beds at the present time and full services for being able to add another 150 beds in the future. I would like to ask the minister why Partnerships BC was hired to be involved in this project. What is the department's role going to be in managing the project?

Hon. Mr. Kent: With respect to the continuing care project just by way of background, on March 10, phase 1 of the Whistle Bend continuing care project took an important step forward with the release of a request for qualifications, or an RFQ, to design and build the new 150-bed facility. The RFQ is the first step in the competitive selection process to select a qualified team to design and build the new facility.

The Yukon government will conduct a rigorous evaluation of the RFQ responses it receives and expects to announce a short list of three teams later on this year. Phase 1 of the Whistle Bend continuing care project will be delivered using a design/build approach to leverage private sector competition, innovation and expertise while ensuring cost and schedule certainty for Yukon taxpayers.

Partnerships BC is supporting Yukon government's delivery of this project through the sharing of their advice and their expertise, procurement and project management best practices. They obviously have some experience and expertise when it comes to this type of delivery model, so that's why we've engaged them to assist us in ensuring that this project moves ahead as smoothly as possible.

Ms. Moorcroft: Another project that I had some questions about was the tendering in relation to the Sarah Steele Building. It's not indicated that it will be a treatment centre per se. Why are there eight addenda to the original tender? Was the tender period extended in order to allow contractors some time to deal with the addenda to the contracts?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Replacement of the Sarah Steele Building is obviously an important part of maintaining Yukon's alcohol and drug services and programs. This project went out to tender with a closing date that was extended, as the member opposite mentioned, to April 16, 2015. The bids came in within budget and the contract is awarded to the lowest bidder, which is a Whitehorse firm.

I know that people are eager to see construction start on this project and we remain committed to ensuring that we put in place a building that will serve Yukoners for years to come. The new, larger facility will be a great opportunity for the minister, the staff and others in Health and Social Services to offer improved addictions and mental health treatment. The full project completion date is anticipated in 2016. When it comes to the addendums, there are actually 10 addendums associated with this project. Five were considered housekeeping items — rescheduling site visit, extending the closing date and revised tender forms. There were two addendums associated with each — the rescheduling of the site visit and closing-date extension. Five were technical in nature, and examples of that are drawing and/or specification clarifications or revisions, the geotechnical report — which was omitted from the tender by mistake — and some response to bidders' questions.

The number of addenda varies from project to project. There is no norm or best case for no addendums. Some of the examples that I have on other projects are the Beaver Creek fire hall replacement. There were six addendums on a relatively small \$3-million project in total.

With the original design for F.H. Collins; there were 12 addendums. The second design and the one that is being constructed now on that site — there were four addendums associated with that project. McDonald Lodge replacement — eight addendums for a \$10-million project and the Law Centre chiller replacement had five addendums for an \$800,000 project. There are no hard and fast rules. What we are trying to ensure is that the contracting community understands what the project is that they are bidding on as best they can. Often there are some, as I mentioned, requests that the bidders have for additional information or things like in the case of a geotechnical report begin omitted from the tender by mistake that need to be addressed.

Hopefully that provides responses to the members opposite. We work hard to ensure that the contracts and construction projects that we deliver are done in a fair and transparent process to the best of our ability. That of course includes some of the addendums that are there for various projects.

Ms. Moorcroft: A large amount of the budget is spent on contracting. The Yukon procurement and contracting directive came down from Management Board in February 2013, and is authored by the contracting regulation. At that time, local hire provisions were dropped. This was a tool for government to award contracts based on the number of Yukon workers that were to be hired. The directive and the regulations also changed what it means to be a Yukon business, which is now defined as a “business that meets some or all of the following criteria: the business employs Yukon resident(s); the business owns, for purposes directly related to the operation of the business, real property in the Yukon; the business operates a year-round, locally staffed office in the Yukon; and the business is owned, or is a corporation that is owned, 50 percent or more by Yukon residents.”

The Procurement and Contracting Directive says in 53(3): “Where ranking criteria are used, they may include the methods to be used by the proponent to maximize the full value of local community and Yukon content in carrying out the work, which may include local experience, knowledge, and culture.” Departments seem to take a different approach to section 53(3) of the contracting directive. In Energy, Mines and Resources — I am looking at their tender for project management services for Yukon mine site operations and mine remediation projects — they indicated that an emphasis on mine site operations and/or mine remediation in a northern environment would make up part of 30 points out of 70 for technical evaluation. There was nothing to favour a Yukon business, although it referred to a northern environment.

In Highways and Public Works, a tender for traffic safety engineering services, 2015/17, indicated that all proponents are expected to bring to the project a thorough knowledge to those aspects of the work for which they are responsible and should be familiar with local conditions. There was nothing explicitly stated to favour a Yukon business.

Department of Environment tender 2015/16, a standing offer agreement for technical review services, had nothing to favour a Yukon business or nothing related to preference for local experience.

I would like to ask the minister why there is nothing in the contracting directive about increasing local benefits? Other jurisdictions have done so, and it seems to be something that we should consider supporting in Yukon contracting.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I know I have mentioned this before, but it is certainly worth repeating. There is approximately 40 percent of the government's annual expenditure made through contracts with private businesses. We issue over 6,500 contracts annually, including more than 3,500 contracts to Yukon businesses. This is money that goes directly into the local economy and ultimately into the pockets of Yukoners.

The way in which we procure items can be just as important as what we procure. A key underlying principle of our procurement is open competition, and we are working to support that principle and encourage competitive bids for goods and services wherever possible, which makes Yukon tax dollars go further and do more. By using responsible contracting practices, we have created a system that is fair and open to Yukoners and Yukon businesses and that achieves best value for taxpayers' money.

We have worked closely with the Yukon Contractors Association to make our procurement practices easier for businesses to manage. We are helping to equip local businesses with the skills needed to get government work within the Yukon as well as across Canada. Our procurement practices recognize the importance of employee safety and active supporters of the COR program, and we require that certification on all construction contracts over \$100,000. The money we save through responsible procurement is available for other projects. It might be used to pay for hospital or school supplies, for road safety campaigns or a number of other projects.

On February 17 and 18 this year, we held our first annual industry conference where we were able to talk with industry and have a number of government officials present about the procurement process. There were 125 people registered, of whom 72 were Yukon contractors and utility staff. An additional 53 were Yukon government staff. The conference was, by all accounts, a great success and we continue to work with Yukon businesses to improve how we procure goods and services. We're proud of the work we do to manage procurement and the way that it benefits all Yukoners.

When it comes to the government, approximately 1,800 of our staff have procurement signing authority. Procurement training has resulted so far in over 1,940 certificates being awarded to YG employees over the past two years. Procurement Support Centre staff are leading an interdepartmental working group on a collaborative project to standardize construction procurement documents. As I mentioned, the first annual industry conference was held and was a very big success.

Our commitment is to promote government contract regulations, policies and procedures that are fair and consistent for the local business community. Revisions to the directive that removed preferences for Yukon businesses were made to ensure the Yukon policies align with the spirit and intent of the *Agreement on Internal Trade*, or the AIT. Yukon is part of the global economy and must play by the same rules as everyone else.

Preference for Yukon businesses is the same thing as discrimination against other businesses. Our borders need to be permeable, and not solid, if we expect to continue selling and buying from outside of our borders.

The government did maintain the provision in the directive that requires deputy ministers to approve direct-award contracts over \$1,000 to businesses located outside Yukon. This will ensure that purchases from non-Yukon suppliers will continue to have senior management oversight. YG is committed to implementing the recommendations of the 2008 audit of contracts and the follow-up report to the audit that was issued in March 2012. Most of the recommendations have been met, with four still in the implementation process.

The procurement framework project, which has been underway since the audit, focuses on improving rules and processes for current and potential suppliers of goods and services to government, including electronic access to tender documents, or electronic tendering. As part of this project, a joint YG public review panel recommended improvements to government's contracting policies and procedures.

Management Board and Cabinet approved changes to the contracting and procurement regulation and contracting and procurement directive in January and February 2013. All departments have access to the Procurement Support Centre and have been positive in their desire to follow procurement rules and regulations. Currently the responsibility for training and following procurement rules rests with each department's deputy minister. The consistent aspects — I know the member opposite referenced some consistency concerns across departments, and I think that's one of the features of the

Procurement Support Centre that will hopefully pay dividends going forward so that, regardless of which department you're operating in, you're able to operate under the same rules and use the same procedures for procurement.

As I mentioned, there are approximately 1,800 staff who have procurement signing authority, and this is a value of approximately \$400 million per year that is spent annually on procurement. It's a figure that has more than doubled in the past 10 years. That training and the support that we provide to our staff on procurement is very important and we take it very seriously and are very proud of the work done by the Procurement Support Centre staff. We should thank and congratulate them for a very successful industry conference that was held in February of this current year.

Ms. Moorcroft: Can the minister tell the House what percentage of contracts are direct awards? These are also referred to as sole-source contracts. Is that information available?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I don't have that information with me, but I will see if we can get that from departmental staff.

Ms. Moorcroft: Related to information technology and also to ATIPP, could the minister indicate what role Highways and Public Works has in the fibre optic link and whether the routing would be through Skagway or through Northwest Territories? Are there any security or privacy concerns with going through the United States?

I also wanted to put a question on the record related to the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy office, which is budgeted in the Highways and Public Works department. Has the amount of training for ATIPP coordinators across departments increased in the last year, and is it expected to increase over the next budget year?

Hon. Mr. Kent: With respect to the fibre optic connections, the lead department on that is the Department of Economic Development. Of course we would provide any support that they would be looking for, but it wouldn't be with respect to the routing choices or other aspects. If they do want some support from us we're happy to provide that, but again, it is probably best to direct that question to the Minister of Economic Development.

When it comes to ATIPP, the Yukon government is committed to protecting Yukoners' personal information and guaranteeing their right to access government information with only a few limited restrictions. In 2014, the Government of Yukon, pardon me, responded to 493 access to information requests of which 52 percent were requests for personal information and 48 percent were for program information. There was a limited review that took place of the act in 2009 leading to several amendments correcting errors in law and improving administration aspects. Again, we've had subsequent amendments to the ATIPP act.

I will have to get back to her with the specific numbers that the member opposite is looking for. I don't have those at my fingertips, but we'll review the Blues and include it in the package of responses to the member.

Ms. Moorcroft: At the departmental briefing, we had questions related to the updated estimate on F.H. Collins,

which was reported at \$43 million and included demolition, but did not include the tech wing upgrades, furniture and equipment.

The final question I have for the minister is: What is the total updated cost on F.H. Collins, including the tech wing upgrades, furniture and equipment?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I can provide a little bit of information on the F.H. Collins project to the member opposite. We have, for design costs to completion, \$4.755 million; side upgrading, phases 1 and 2, \$2.02 million; phase 3 site upgrades, \$1.5 million — so construction is approximately \$31.139 million. There have been some approved change orders since construction started of \$209,058, which is relatively small for a project of that size. The new track and field needed to be included at \$750,000. There was demolition at \$2.5 million. The tech wing — we're anticipating that the cost estimates for it will be, I believe, just over \$3 million, but that project has not been awarded to a successful contractor yet, so we're not sure what the costs will be. Those are the budget estimates, but we won't know the budget until that closes. So the total is \$46,230,947, or a price per square metre of \$5,742. That is the information that I have. This information was as of April 21 of this year, so if we have more up-to-date information, I will be able to provide that to the member opposite, but those are the numbers that I have in front of me.

Mr. Silver: Thank you to the members of the department for their time here today. If we're on F.H. Collins, I might as well start with a question on that.

I did write a letter to the minister in March and I don't believe I got an answer. It was about the new francophone school. It's my understanding that the department is working with Barr Ryder in regard to the new francophone school in Riverdale. So I guess the question from the letter here today would be: What process was used to select Barr Ryder for this project? Is it part of that original sole-sourced contract work related to the new F.H. Collins build? If so, what has this additional work cost the government? I'll start there.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I did receive the letter from the member opposite. That is a contract that was entered into by the Department of Education with the consultants, so I don't have information on that. I did redirect the letter to the Minister of Education, so I'll follow up with him as far as a response to the member's question is concerned — or perhaps if we get up in Education debate again prior to the end of the sitting, he can ask the minister directly.

Mr. Silver: I was wondering if the minister can answer the part that has to do with procurement. If this was a contract that went along with that original Barr Ryder contract for the F. H. Collins, there would be a question to his department as far as that additional cost. I guess a corollary to that would be that, if it were a different contract, the question to his department would be: Was it awarded directly without competition?

Also, if the minister responsible for Highways and Public Works can provide a copy of the new contract with Barr

Ryder and a description of the work that they're doing perhaps — I'll leave it there for now.

Hon. Mr. Kent: As I mentioned previously — or maybe I didn't — this was work outside of the original contract so it is in addition to the contract. It was something that Education entered into with the contractor so, as I mentioned, I don't have the details on how that particular contract was procured, but I'll follow up with the Minister of Education and ensure that he received the letter from the Member for Klondike. When he sent it to me, I did forward it on to him, as I mentioned, and I will check the status of a response.

Mr. Silver: Would the minister have a ballpark estimate maybe for the new francophone school? If not, I will ask the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I don't believe that there is a design or that even the student numbers have been determined for the school. I think it's probably best for the Minister of Education to answer that question. I wouldn't have anything in my possession. They would still be doing the programming work at the Department of Education before it gets turned over for any type of contract management by HPW.

Mr. Silver: I'm going to move on to the LNG spill that happened — or I shouldn't say the LNG spill. It's the tanker that tipped in Dawson. There was a scare of a spill basically when the LNG truck rolled outside of my community. Fortunately there was no environmental impact but the road in Dawson was closed for almost a whole day. Is the government prepared to deal with a spill of this type if it does happen outside of municipal boundaries? Can the minister walk us through how that would be handled?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I may stand to be corrected but I think this activity was coordinated by Community Services. At the time, there were HPW staff on-site along with other first responders. My understanding is that it was successfully completed and contained. I may have more information when I have Energy, Mines and Resources material in front of me or potentially YDC or Yukon Energy Corporation officials, or that minister is on his feet.

Again, my understanding from an HPW response is that it was done effectively and was well-managed, and we were able to address any concerns as quickly as possible and as safely as possible.

Mr. Silver: I guess we'll wait to see if EMR gets called again —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Silver: Community Services.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Silver: I'll hopefully get to talk to the Minister of Community Services on that one.

Moving on to new uses for the old McDonald Lodge, the old building is being currently assessed by the department — the minister can correct me if I'm wrong on that — to determine whether or not it's cost-effective to renovate the building or to figure out some kind of future use for it — renovation, future use or be torn down. Can the minister give

us an update on that assessment, or when that assessment would be completed?

Hon. Mr. Kent: It's my understanding that we're still working on the assessment of that building. I'm not sure of the year it was built, but it is my understanding that it has been there for a substantial amount of time. There are a number of code violations that could require some extensive upgrades and repairs. However, that work is still underway so, when it's complete, I'll be able to report back to the member opposite and members of the House.

Mr. Silver: Can the minister give us an estimate as to when this assessment will be completed? We have been kind of at a stalemate here with this building for almost a year now. We asked this question — I believe it was last spring — about the future use of this area or of this building — if the minister can at least give us a ballpark as to when this assessment will be completed.

Hon. Mr. Kent: It's my understanding from officials that the assessment will be completed sometime later on this summer, and we'll be able to take a look at it. Obviously there are still residents in the Alexander McDonald Lodge in Dawson City and they'll be moving into a new facility here, I believe, later on this year. Again, with respect to the assessment completion, we look forward to having that work done later on this summer and reporting back. Once it's complete, I'll send a letter to the Member for Klondike as I know it's something that's important to him and his constituents.

Mr. Silver: Moving on to the continuing care facility in Whistle Bend, when we were in the budget briefing, the officials from the department provided numbers on cost estimates for the new continuing care facility. They referenced both 150 beds and also 300 beds. I was wondering if the minister can put those cost estimates on the record.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I don't have those numbers in my briefing package. As I mentioned to the Member for Copperbelt South, we have proceeded with phase 1 of the continuing care project.

We took that very important step forward in early March of this year with the release of the RFQ to build the new 150-bed facility in Whistle Bend. We will be conducting a rigorous evaluation of the RFQ responses that we receive and expect to announce a shortlist of three teams later on this year. We have engaged Partnerships BC, and they are supporting Yukon government's delivery of the project through sharing of advice, expertise, procurement and project management best practices. The numbers that the member opposite asked for — while I don't have them in my briefing package here today, I will try to get them prior to the House rising in the next half hour and, if not, I will forward them on to him when they are available.

Mr. Silver: Moving on to Grizzly Valley subdivision road — it is my understanding, driving past there quite a bit, that one of the entrances to the subdivision is closed, and it has been closed for quite some time. Driving up that road, there is some degradation of the more northerly entrance to that subdivision. It is basically impassable. Can the minister

explain the situation? Are major repairs required? Are there any cost estimates known for these repairs?

Hon. Mr. Kent: There are some cracking and erosion issues on that portion of the road. There still is a functioning access into Grizzly Valley. Earlier this year, when I went to Dawson City and further up the Dempster highway as part of my early duties as Minister of Highways and Public Works, I stopped in there with deputies of Energy, Mines and Resources and Highways and Public Works. EMR's lands branch has retained the services of a consultant who is looking at those issues right now. It is my understanding that HPW is providing support services to the lands branch. I know it is the same minister, but I don't have any of my EMR documents with me right now. Perhaps if we get back into EMR this session or later, or once we have a consultant's report on this, we'll be able to report back.

Mr. Silver: I guess the question for Highways and Public Works is on the extent of the major repairs — if the minister can maybe tell us a little bit more about what is actually required in terms of those repairs?

Hon. Mr. Kent: As I mentioned, there is some cracking and erosion that has occurred close to the entrance. The lands branch from Energy, Mines and Resources has retained a consultant to look at that. Once the consultant's work is complete, we will have a better idea of the extent of the repairs. As I mentioned, HPW is assisting when asked and where necessary to help the lands branch and the consultant with what repairs are necessary to that section of the road.

Mr. Silver: I look forward to hearing more on that report when it becomes available.

Moving on to the Nisutlin bridge — last year, after opposition from First Nations, the plan to replace the aging Nisutlin River bridge was scrapped. Work was done to replace the decking at that time. My question would be — and I know that this has been talked about a lot in the Legislative Assembly, and I appreciate the minister's responses on this issue: What is the life expectancy of the bridge now that these repairs have been done to the decking? Also, when will further work be done on this bridge?

Hon. Mr. Kent: The interim repairs that we did to the steel decking on the bridge — it's my understanding from officials in the department that those repairs have extended the life of that decking for five-plus years. The original project was to replace that steel decking on the bridge. It's a \$15-million project that we had identified under Building Canada. A couple of things still need to take place — first and foremost is to engage the community and I, as Minister of HPW, need to travel down to Teslin and meet with community leaders once we have adjourned the House this spring to talk about a number of issues, including the repairs to the Nisutlin bridge.

The other thing that needs to take place is to identify a funding source. As mentioned, this was originally slated to be a Building Canada project. This \$15-million project was cost-shared with Canada under that, with I think a 75-25 split. So we'll be looking to identify funds as well, whether it's under

the new Building Canada program that is coming forward or a different source of funding.

Those are two important things that we need to accomplish in the near term, which will get this project back on track for completion.

Mr. Silver: We'll move on to Corix and the Dawson sewer treatment plant. I think we already know the answers to these questions, but I don't think they have been actually debated or discussed in the Legislative Assembly. So, for the record, can the minister confirm that the Dawson sewage treatment plant has been signed off by the department and Corix is no longer responsible for the facility? Also, has the facility been handed off to the Town of Dawson City? We believe that it hasn't, so I guess maybe a comment or an update as to that file, including things like the training of the city workers and what kind of snags or what kind of timelines we're looking at with handing off this facility to the City of Dawson.

Hon. Mr. Kent: The Department of Community Services is the lead on this project. Obviously Highways and Public Works played a role in assisting CS. It's my understanding in just quick conversations with the Minister of Community Services that these issues were addressed in departmental debate on Community Services.

I would invite the Member for Klondike to check Hansard or perhaps ask the Minister of Community Services for a more detailed response concerning the Dawson City waste-water treatment plant.

Mr. Silver: With these changes in responsibility, I believe that when we were first talking about this issue — when it first came up — we were directly talking with the Minister of Highways and Public Works. I apologize for asking the Highways and Public Works minister a question on this file. I will endeavour to talk with the Minister of Community Services. There are tons of questions here about the actual handoff to the City of Dawson, so I will absolutely endeavour to have that conversation.

I want to move on to bid change challenges. I believe that in 2013-14, there were seven challenges to public tenders issued. I will start with the question: How many bid challenges were made in 2014-15? Also, can the minister please let the House know what tenders were challenged and — of course, by letter would be fine — and maybe even draw down on some of the nature of those challenges?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I will have to commit to get back to the member opposite with that detail. It is something that I don't have here with me today.

Mr. Silver: Ross River School — a lot of questions about the awarding of the contract last week. If you were watching Google on the computer and watching the tenders page, it wasn't necessarily being updated. I guess the question would be: Was the contract for the repairs to the Ross River School awarded last week? Also, is the minister confident that the ground is stable enough to do the repairs and that we won't have to go back to this again in a couple of years, if this is just a band-aid?

Hon. Mr. Kent: With respect to the process, it is a request for proposals process and we are still evaluating the proposals that were received. Nothing has been awarded yet — or perhaps even a request for qualifications — as I spoke to I think last week during Question Period.

When it comes to the Ross River School, it was built using a thermosiphon heat extraction system, which removes heat from the soil beneath the foundation of the building, to avoid thaw of underlying permafrost. HPW has contracted EBA Engineering to review that system data to determine if it is functioning as designed, as it is intended to stabilize the permafrost below the building.

Just by way of a few quick information items with respect to the school: it was built in 2000-01 and has been monitored for movement periodically since then. In 2006, the thermosiphon loops and insulation were added to reduce heat transfer to surrounding soil. More insulation was installed to the crawlspace floor and walls in 2013 to further reduce heat transfer, so there have been a number of activities taking place. This is going to be one of those buildings, just given the nature of the construction and the type of soil that it is built on, that we are going to have to continue to monitor going forward.

Of course we want to ensure that the students and staff at Ross River School, as well as the Yukon College, which uses that same facility, are able to be back in that facility this fall for the start of the new school year. The entire school community should be commended for their efforts and, again, the Minister of Education — I know he has travelled there twice since this incident to meet with members of the school community and talk about this.

Again, while we're hopeful that these changes will result in long-term solutions to the problems with the school's foundation, it is something that's going to require ongoing maintenance going forward, just given the soil conditions, the site selected and the construction of the building. We'll continue to monitor it and make sure that the students and staff of the school and the college are safe when they are able to return to that building.

Mr. Silver: I think what question is begging here is: Has the source of the degradation to the permafrost been identified?

I'm not an engineer but, after talking to quite a few people, including engineers, we're being told — and maybe the minister can correct me if I'm wrong — that these syphons aren't necessarily going to help unless the source of that water flow has been identified. If we're talking about a building that lands on top of permafrost and loses some heat from its structural integrity, sure, then this is going to help by cooling the actual ground, but if we're talking about a situation where we're going to have water flowing because of a natural geography, then it would be argued by a lot of engineers I have talked to that these syphons aren't going to actually help. As the minister has spoken to, it has been several years that they've been in already and we still have a problem.

I guess the question is: Is the permafrost degradation source identified? Is it a naturally occurring source that is

going to continue and, if so, does the minister believe that these syphons would be enough or is there a plan B, if these don't work?

Hon. Mr. Kent: The permafrost in Ross River, it's my understanding — and again, I'm not an engineer or a geologist either — is it's unstable and unpredictable and there have been previous problems with the school's foundation.

When the school was opened in 2000, it was built with a structural foundation system designed to allow for potential movement and adjustment and a thermosyphon system to prevent heat transfer into the permafrost. After occupancy, it was determined that the original thermosyphon and crawlspace insulation design did not account for enough removal of heat being transferred to surrounding soils. There was also indication that surface water — rain or snowmelt, which I'm assuming is what the member opposite is referring to — was filtering down to the underlying permafrost beneath the building. These issues combined to cause some permafrost thaw and subsequent building settlement.

To address this issue, HPW regraded around the building, changed rainwater down spouts, installed additional thermosyphons and upgraded insulation and impermeable waterproof membranes to reduce the thaw effects.

The building was inspected a number of times over the years and found to be structurally sound. It has had structural repairs and floor-level adjustments when required. The most noticeable issues have been architectural in nature, such as drywall cracking and floor-level changes.

The recent sudden movement triggered the need for new inspections and a permafrost conditions assessment. Independent structural and geotechnical engineering firms have been engaged accordingly. The building will likely continue to move and require ongoing monitoring and adjustments to ensure that architectural and structural problems are identified and addressed as they occur.

The school is home to more than 50 students as well as 17 staff members, and the community campus of Yukon College is also located in that school. There's also a community library, which is routinely used for many events. The school itself is used for a number of community events and activities as well.

Again, EBA Engineering was contracted to review the thermosyphon design data to determine if it is functioning as designed. The location of this project and the type of unpredictability and instability of the ground where the school was built, opened in the year 2000, mean that it's going to take an awful lot of ongoing monitoring and we're going to have to ensure that the work that we're doing is suitable for the occupation of the school this fall. This is a tricky issue of a project that was built in a very difficult location.

We'll continue to monitor this school and make sure that it's safe for the occupants going forward.

Mr. Silver: I do appreciate that it is a unique situation. The reason why I keep going back to these syphons — in Dawson, for example, when we were building our recreation centre, one of the local workers who was digging in to do the pre-engineer fill would dig, and every time that he dug into

the side corner where the recreation centre's curling rink is now located, he basically hit an underground source of glaciated water. If we have identified with the engineering reports the source of this permafrost degradation, then I would imagine that the tender to build would have that mitigated in it. We did hear some people saying that there were some engineering reports out there. Were there any engineering reports done in the last little while that would have identified the source in Ross River of this permafrost degradation? If so, is that something that the minister is willing to table?

I know that there is some proprietary information that, of course, we wouldn't ask him to present to the Legislative Assembly. However, if we know that this is a certain type of degradation to that permafrost, then one might argue that this fix might not necessarily be the correct fix.

Hon. Mr. Kent: With respect to any engineering reports, I will look into what is done. Obviously, there were the two that were done earlier this year that led to us moving the students out of the facility.

There have been some subsequent ones done. I mentioned EBA Engineering looking at the thermosyphon system. I will have department officials look through those reports for any proprietary information. After that has been addressed, then I am happy to make those reports, or portions of those reports, as the case may be, public for Yukoners to take a look at.

Mr. Silver: Thank you to the minister and his department's officials for that.

I am going to turn to the widening of the highway corridor. My colleague for Copperbelt South has done a good job so far — almost a forensic job so far — at identifying some issues, especially this afternoon. I do have a couple more questions, and please forgive me if this was already addressed.

The government has announced a major highway project to widen the Alaska Highway through the Whitehorse area. This has been pushed to the forefront in the last couple of months. I guess the questions here would be: What is the amount set aside to negotiate with local businesses to purchase land along the Alaska Highway? Can the minister give us a little bit of information and background on that process? Also, could he let us know where the money is coming from for this project? Is there a combination with the feds? Is this all YTG? Are there any other types of arrangements?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Just for clarification, the stage of the process that we are at right now is consulting on a draft functional plan.

Actually, the public consultations closed last week. I'm still expecting some submissions. I think officials received a submission from the City of Whitehorse last week, on Friday, but there may be additional submissions coming from organizations like the Alaska Highway Corridor Business Association and the Yukon Transportation Association that have not been received as of yet, but will provide important input into what we do.

That's the stage that we're at. There is no project yet. As I mentioned earlier to the Member for Copperbelt South, there

has been no dollar amount identified for the purchasing of lands, because we're not yet at a detail design phase or we don't know whether or not that is something that is going to have to be done.

This is a long-term project to improve the Alaska Highway between essentially the Carcross Cut-off and the Mayo Road turnoff, or the junctions of the south and north Alaska Highway. I think it's important for individuals to recognize that no decisions have been made with respect to this project. Some of the estimates over 35 years are for it to be \$200 million — again, three phases over that year. What we're going to do is evaluate the public input. We'll be producing a what-we-heard document that will be made available later on this summer on the website that was associated with this planning process.

At some point, department officials will have to put together some options to proceed. It is something that I will have to take to my caucus and Cabinet and Management Board colleagues. I think the input that we've received so far with respect to this project has been very valuable in helping to inform our decision-making process.

Madam Chair, I would just like to thank the Member for Copperbelt South and the Member for Klondike for participating in the debate this afternoon and, with that, I move that you report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: 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.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled May 19, 2015:

33-1-165

Standing Committee on Public Accounts First Report — May 2015 (Hanson)