



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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HANSARD

Thursday, April 7, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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

DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Party

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

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

New Democratic Party

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

Liberal Party

Sandy Silver	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Rudy Couture
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Doris McLean
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, April 7, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

INTRODUCTION OF PAGES

Speaker: It gives me great pleasure to start this first day of our Spring Sitting and also to start with announcing that the following students will be serving the House as legislative pages for the 2016 Spring Sitting. I apologize in advance if I mispronounce their names.

They are: Sophie Janke, Cole Sinclair and Sana Javed from F.H. Collins Secondary School; Nila Stinson, Makala Ryles and Anthony Lundgaard from Porter Creek Secondary School; Andrew Smyth from Vanier Catholic Secondary School; and Vincent Aubert Ménard from École Émilie Tremblay. Today we have with us Anthony and Sophie. I would ask all members to welcome them to the House at this time.

Applause

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes that have been made to the Order Paper. The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as they are outdated: Motions No. 155 and 903, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition; Motions No. 312, 364, 548, 603, 800, 833, 1008, 1051, 1069 and 1102, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party; Motions No. 316 and 845, standing in the name of the Member for Mayo-Tatchun; Motions No. 652, 719 and 747, standing in the name of the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes; Motions No. 675 and 887, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South; Motion No. 877, standing in the name of the Minister of Health and Social Services; Motions No. 894 and 964, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin; Motions No. 952, 961 and 962, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake; and Motion No. 1073, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as the action requested in the motion has been fulfilled in whole or in part: Motions No. 20, 687, 1004, 1021 and 1022, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party; Motions No. 28 and 842, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South; Motions No. 123 and 246, standing in the name of the Member for Mayo-Tatchun; Motions No. 134, 682, 921 and 1056, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake; Motions No. 210 and 1032, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King; Motion No. 968, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition; and Motions No. 1060, 1063, 1070,

1083 and 1092, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Martin Kienzler, Outstanding Partner award

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise today on behalf of all of my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly to pay tribute to Dawson City resident and Yukon government employee, Martin Kienzler. Aside from his many contributions to the community, he was recently awarded the Outstanding Partner award by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

His efforts and institutional knowledge, for that matter — in partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Service — has contributed greatly to the management of the international Porcupine caribou herd. As the first hire for the regional wildlife technician for the northern Yukon region, Martin's efforts, both in the field and in the office over the last 18 years, have undoubtedly contributed to the Porcupine caribou herd's substantial population growth of almost 200 percent. His technical expertise and community engagement have fostered strong relationships and partnerships in both Canada and in the United States, in turn developing a strong and healthy Porcupine caribou herd, vital to the north.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent Martin and the many other community members who work hard to make the north prosperous and sustainable.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to rise to acknowledge a few people who we have in the gallery today. I would like to start by acknowledging that His Worship Mayor Dan Curtis is with us. Samson Hartland probably is in perhaps a dual role — I can't tell what your jacket says — as member of the Whitehorse council and also as executive director for the Yukon Chamber of Mines. We also have Peter Turner with the Yukon Chamber of Commerce here, and Mr. Jonas Smith, who is very familiar to this side of the House and I'm sure to the other side as well. Connor Whitehouse is here as well, and Conrad Tiedeman and Jonathan Preston. It's nice to see Jonathan Preston as well. I invite all members here today to welcome them to the House.

Applause

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge a number of people in the gallery today. With us today are: John Streicker, Liberal candidate for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes; Jeane Lassen, who has recently become the Liberal candidate for Takhini-Kopper King; and Don Hutton — I

don't know if Don made it today — no, Don did not make it. We also have Karlo Krauzig, who is a local businessman who is seeking the nomination for Porter Creek Centre. We have Laura Cabott, as well, who is here. She is the chair of the territorial campaign committee and also Devin Bailey, the president of the Yukon Liberal Association. I see Rose Sellars, as well, is here. She is representing the region of Copperbelt South and also Russ Hobbis, who is seeking the nomination as well for the region of Porter Creek South.

Also in the gallery is Brittanee Laverdure — I hope I pronounced that correctly — close anyway — who is no stranger to the Yukon. She is a national wrestling team silver medalist at the Commonwealth Games. I think she needs congratulations as well because she will be called to the Bar tomorrow as well. We also have Moira Lassen, as well, who is a volunteer at Sport Yukon. She is a member of the International Weightlifting executive and Mr. Speaker, the first woman elected to the executive.

So I would like to wish a hello to all and, to all the friends in the gallery, could everybody please say hello.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity to welcome people to the gallery as well — Marguerite Roberts and Rob and Mary Anne Lewis, who collectively have probably spent about 300 hours in this Legislative Assembly so far, watching Question Period, so thank you for that.

Gill Cracknell and Bonnie Dalziel — it's a pleasure to see you as well. Thank you for coming.

Applause

Mr. Barr: I would like to welcome to the House my friend, storyteller, MC extraordinaire and long-time comedian, Ms. Sharon Shorty — a good friend of mine — to the House. Welcome.

Applause

Speaker: Before moving on, I would like to acknowledge that, in the Speaker's gallery, I have some guests. They are: Yukon Ombudsman and Information and Privacy Commissioner and Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner, Diane McLeod-McKay with us, and also joining her is David Jones, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. Sitting in the front row is my dear friend and fellow Speaker, Sharon Shorty, a member of the Teslin Tlingit First Nation, but also the Speaker for the General Council of the Teslin Tlingit Council. Günilschish.

Applause

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: The Chair has for tabling the 2015 annual report of the Ombudsman, which is tabled pursuant to section 31 of the *Ombudsman Act*.

The Chair also has for tabling the 2015 annual report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, which is tabled

pursuant to section 47 of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

The Chair also has for tabling the 2015 annual report of the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner, which is tabled pursuant to section 43 of the *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act*. Members will note that this is the first annual report issued by the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner.

Finally, the Chair has for tabling the *Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from Sittings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees*, dated April 7, 2016.

Are there any further reports or documents for tabling?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have for tabling the project charter for the assessment of the proposed Casino mine project.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 23: *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 23 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?

Bill No. 22: *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 22, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 22, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 22 agreed to

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to withdraw its support for the four controversial amendments to

the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*, and that the Government of Yukon commit to working with the Government of Canada and Yukon First Nation governments to expedite the amendments to YESAA necessary to restore the spirit and intent of YESAA as negotiated by the parties to Yukon First Nation final agreements.

Mr. Barr: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to carry out their commitment to make Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday in Yukon, release a timeline for public consultation, and provide this House with an update on what work has been completed to date.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to commit to develop and invest in a national suicide prevention plan.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to reaffirm its commitment to pay equity under the *Human Rights Act* section 15(1) in recognition that female full-time Government of Yukon employees have not yet achieved wage parity with their male counterparts.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to conduct a socio-economic analysis of the potential job creation and economic benefits of developing a green renewable energy industry in the Yukon.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to uphold its election commitments to roll back Canada's ineffective and harmful mandatory minimum sentencing practices.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure healthy environments and resources for its citizens to encourage activity, good nutrition, and community wellness.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to inform Yukoners of:

- (1) how many of the last at least 10 deputies who have left the Government of Yukon in the last two years have received a severance package; and
- (2) the total amount of these severance packages.

Lastly, I give notice of the following motion for the production of papers:

THAT the House do order the return of all current applications for infrastructure funding that the Government of Yukon has submitted to the Government of Canada.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Economic growth

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, you know, just as April brings spring snowfalls, another year of Yukon Party governance has brought economic hardship for ordinary Yukoners. The Conference Board of Canada's statistics have again confirmed that Yukon's gross domestic product has declined for a third straight year.

Despite this, this government has said in this House that they have done all they wanted to do within their mandate. How many Yukoners recall seeing three years of economic decline in the Yukon Party's platform?

Yesterday, the Premier was asked to explain the assumptions he relied upon to project economic growth in Yukon for the next three years. That is a legitimate question, not just for the business community, but for all Yukon citizens. Unfortunately, the Premier was unable to answer the question yesterday. Now that he has had some time to think it over, how does the Premier respond today?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: It is unfortunate that the Leader of the New Democratic Party wouldn't understand the fact that, although we would like to control all of the factors that influence an economy, unfortunately we do not. One of the biggest factors influencing an economy is commodity prices. That has been the major challenge that this jurisdiction — and not only this jurisdiction, but many other jurisdictions that are resource-based — has struggled with in the past few years.

In spite of that, we have not sat still waiting for commodity prices to go forward. We continue to make record investments in infrastructure. We focus on the creation of the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining to train Yukoners for the next wave of Yukon mining. We focus on ensuring that we are going to improve our mine licensing and permitting, our regulatory processes, and create a mineral development strategy — all of that, of course, in conjunction with working with Yukon First Nations and with the mining industry.

Ms. Hanson: The Yukon Party has been in power for almost 14 years, yet they have still not grasped the basics of building a robust, durable, local economy. After more than four years of prodding and our positive suggestions for action to recognize and encourage the growth of Yukon-based businesses, the government has decided, mere months before an election, that it suddenly cares about supporting local Yukon businesses. Where was this thinking when earlier this year the Yukon government awarded the Faro mine remediation contract to a California-based multinational?

There is a clear disconnect between what the Premier says and what he actually does. Why has the government waited until an election year to make supporting Yukon businesses a priority?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: In fact, yesterday I was proud of an e-mail that was sent to every Yukon government employee in this territory that simply stated how important it is for our government to buy local when we can see products here that are competitive — to buy local because, not only do local companies employ local people, they also are very important parts of our society and of our community. These are the same companies that are ensuring that the kids who want to play hockey have a sponsorship — or soccer — or invest in things like the Rotary Music Festival. There is tremendous support in this community by the local businesses and it is in fact very important that this government recognizes that and ensures that, whenever possible, we support those local businesses.

Ms. Hanson: It is kind of ironic; those on this side aren't the ones who hold their biggest fundraisers of the year on a yacht in Vancouver harbour with Outside companies — so much for supporting local businesses.

We know that Yukon is facing hard times, but we also know that there are ways we can show leadership and rebuild our economy. Yukon is ready to rise to that challenge. Yukoners want to diversify our economy, build green infrastructure and join the rest of the world by looking at ways to harness the vast renewable resources in our territory.

Will the Premier listen to Yukoners and work with them to build a green economy, or is he content to wait for another round of the boom-and-bust cycle to repeat itself?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, it is quite simple. This is a government that is looking for sensible solutions to real problems. We are focused on real issues and not on ideology. I am very proud to be tabling a budget this afternoon that will have some very simple and focused areas that we will be investing in. We are going to continue to work at strengthening our economy and renewing our mining industry. We are going to focus on better education and creating more opportunities for our students. We are going to ensure that our families have the best health care possible. We are going to continue to invest in infrastructure that will create jobs today and ensure that we have valuable infrastructure that we will use for many years to come.

Question re: Procurement policy

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, since this government has been elected, we have been getting more and more calls from Yukoners who are concerned about procurement practices that fail to ensure that government purchases benefit Yukon businesses. The government has heard these calls too, and after pressure from Yukon businesses and the Yukon NDP they established the Procurement Advisory Panel. Yesterday, at the Chamber of Commerce luncheon, the Premier unveiled his solution for Yukon's procurement woes: a few tweaks to the procurement system and an e-mail that he sent to all Yukon government employees asking them to buy local.

Mr. Speaker, why does the Premier think that an e-mail to Yukon public servants is an appropriate solution to the serious problems facing Yukon procurement?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, our government has supported and will continue to support the principle of open competition and encourage responsible contracting practices that are fair and open to Yukoners and Yukon businesses. The member opposite raised the Procurement Advisory Panel that I as minister, with the support of my colleagues, established in November of last year. We would expect a report to come from that advisory panel in the coming months that I will table in the Legislative Assembly during this Sitting. Since that time, we have had a procurement forum hosted here in Whitehorse that was very well-attended. I believe that over 200 registered delegates attended that forum — an opportunity for a reverse trade show there as well.

I think it is important to note that of the \$294 million spent on services and construction contracts in the 2014-15 fiscal year, 74 percent of those contracts went to local companies. In that same year, 82 percent of the service and construction contracts — 3,600 of 4,400 — went to local companies as well, and 19 of the 20 largest contracts awarded in 2014-15 went to local contractors. We are doing a good job. Yukon contractors are doing a great job of competing when it comes to bidding on contracts. We will continue to work to advance the procurement process so that it does offer opportunities for local companies.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, I would say it is clear that this government realized that it hasn't done enough when it comes to supporting local businesses and contractors through local procurement. Just before their term is up, they are searching for a last-minute solution. Lucky for them, the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce has launched a great buy-local campaign that the government decided to piggyback on. To be clear, the Premier requested that Yukon government employees buy local if possible. There was no mention that he would be making changes to the procurement directive or supports for management to make good on this buy-local campaign. As far as pre-election stunts go, this takes the cake.

Mr. Speaker, what specific changes to Yukon's procurement directives has this government made to ensure that the "buy-local" the Premier talks about in his e-mail actually happens?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, of course the government recognizes that local businesses — small businesses — contribute immensely to our Yukon economy. I mentioned stats in my previous answer — 74 percent of the \$294 million spent on service and construction contracts in the 2014-15 fiscal year went to local companies; 19 of the 20 largest contracts awarded in 2014-15 went to local contractors. Mr. Speaker, that is 95 percent of the contracts awarded in that year.

There has been a lot that we've undertaken on procurement. I certainly recognize that, as minister, as a focus and something that we need to move on. The previous Minister of Highways and Public Works made the good decision and a popular decision to establish the Procurement

Support Centre. That was done under this government in order to assist Yukon government and our contracting community with identifying challenges on the procurement side of things.

We have done an awful lot when it comes to procurement, but we recognize that there is more work that can be done. Over the past week, the Premier, the Minister of Economic Development and I hosted community conversations with two groups of local contractors so that we could hear directly from them on what their concerns are. Again, when the Procurement Advisory Panel report is ready later on —

Speaker: Order, please. Final supplementary.

Ms. Moorcroft: To be clear, an e-mail to Yukon government employees asking them to buy local if they can is an embarrassing response to Yukon's procurement woes. This government is scrambling to fix problems that they themselves created. It is this government that removed local hire provisions from the procurement directive. It is this government that is enforcing the parts of the *Agreement on Internal Trade* that prevents them from giving preference to Yukon businesses. An e-mail isn't going to reverse those losses, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday the Premier said that his party relentlessly stands up for Yukoners when it comes to procurement. That simply isn't true. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier acknowledge that Yukon's procurement policy has become less favourable for Yukon businesses under his watch?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I won't repeat the statistics that I provided in earlier responses, but they certainly speak to the competitiveness and the ability of local contractors to compete, not only against each other within the Yukon, but against companies that are from other jurisdictions. Again, when it comes to procurement, we have done an awful lot. I mentioned the establishment of the Procurement Support Centre. We continue to work on issues when it comes to procurement, and some of the themes, of course, that emerged from the Procurement Advisory Panel work and engagement with Yukon businesses are around local purchasing and local contracting.

So again, it's something that we want to make sure we get right. We also want to make sure that we're responsible with taxpayers' dollars. We're a party and a government that stands up for business. We're a pro-business government, but we also want to recognize that those businesses here can and do compete against other businesses and we have a responsibility to spend taxpayers' dollars wisely and we'll continue to do that and continue to find ways where local companies can be successful in bidding on government contracts and where government purchases are involved.

Question re: Territorial formula financing

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, this year the annual transfer payment from the Government of Canada to the Yukon is on the rise again. It's at a record level, in fact. We received \$21 million more than last year and we continue to rely on Ottawa for more than 80 percent of our budget.

Despite years of promises from the Yukon Party, we remain as dependent as ever on Ottawa. The Yukon Party promises to make Yukon a net contributor to Canada and we are failing in that regard. Despite yet another increase, the government is still unhappy and wanted more from Ottawa. The changes should come as no surprise to the Premier because he and a former federal Conservative Finance minister signed the agreement that we have in place now. Changes that were implemented last fall are part of that agreement, and the government has known about these changes since 2012, and certainly since 2014.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier confirm for the record that the transfer payment from Ottawa is up some \$21 million over last year?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, I guess I can only describe that as Liberal math. It's quite clear what we have here, and it was very well-articulated to all Yukoners back in December when, in December, we were notified by the federal government that they were going to reduce the territorial formula financing by \$23 million. This is a very articulate, comprehensive formula that clearly states what the amount of the transfer payment should be. Only a Liberal could come, stand up in this House and say that it was an increase. It was an increase, Mr. Speaker, of the total that we received the previous year. It was a cut to what we were supposed to receive, Mr. Speaker. That is the Liberal math.

Mr. Silver: I guess, from that answer, Mr. Speaker, it's up and it's down. We received more money than last year, Mr. Speaker; that is a fact. The current agreement was signed by the Premier and the former Conservative Minister of Finance. I will be tabling a timeline outlining the history of the changes that the Premier now says he knows nothing about. It shows clearly that this government has known about the changes since 2012 and was even provided estimates about the financial impact.

The only thing that changed is the fact that the new government in Ottawa is red instead of blue, and the Premier seems to not like that. Attacking the new Finance minister as disingenuous, as the Premier did, is hardly a way to build a new relationship or get along with another level of government, Mr. Speaker.

Instead of making this political, he should have simply gotten down to work, as many others did. Why did the Premier insist on making a political statement about the future of the federal transfers instead of admitting that he knew about the changes three years ago?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, I will stand up in this House every day and defend Yukoners, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I guess not only was I wrong, but so were the Finance ministers and Premiers of Nunavut and Northwest Territories, who themselves also said that this was a cut from what we were supposed to receive. This is the truth. Math — Liberal math — is always what it is, Mr. Speaker. What the people of Yukon know is that the Yukon Party speaks only for Yukon. We are the only party in this territory that is not encumbered to be the little sister of their federal political party. We will continue to stand up for Yukoners.

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, the changes we are discussing were set in motion by the former Conservative government. They are part of an agreement that the Premier signed. To try to blame the federal Liberals is just politicking as we go forward into a fall election.

Now, attacking the federal Finance minister as disingenuous is just another example of this government's inability to work with anybody else, other than Conservatives. It is also counterproductive, considering the issues that are ahead of us — the work ahead of us with the Government of Canada in areas such as infrastructure spending, Mr. Speaker.

The document that I will table shows that the government has known about this for three years now. Instead of being open and accountable about it, the government tried to pretend that it was a total shock. The drop in corporate income tax and our shrinking economy is a much larger issue, but you don't hear the Premier talking about that. \$14-million less than last year — that's Liberal math.

Why won't the Premier admit that he knew about these changes three years ago?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Liberal Party is absolutely wrong. The changes that occurred were as a result of Statistics Canada making a methodological change to how they looked at the data. That became obvious in December. As a result of that, the federal government notified us that we would be receiving \$23 million less than what was agreed to. We were just finishing the second year of a five-year agreement. My conversation with the federal minister was that the end of that agreement would be the right time to have a discussion about making such changes.

I will acknowledge the work that was done by the federal Finance minister to see that we got \$16.5 million of the \$23 million eventually. However, that still left us \$6.5 million short of what was articulated and laid out in the territorial formula financing agreement.

Question re: Mental health services

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, when the federal mental health strategy for Canada was launched in Whitehorse in 2012, this government promised a territorial mental health strategy. Yukoners have been promised one every year, and Yukoners have been waiting many years. In its 2014-15 annual report, the Yukon Hospital Corporation's chief of medical staff identified psychiatry and the care of the mentally ill patient as the largest gap in services in the Yukon. The most recent Yukon Health and Social Services Council annual report repeated the same thing.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government finally act and adopt a mental health strategy with clear goals, timelines and measurable outcomes?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for this question, particularly as it gives me an opportunity to highlight the good work done by not only government, but non-profits around the territory, including Many Rivers and other organizations. It gives me an opportunity to highlight the work done by many communities and First Nation partners as well as business like Northwestel

and Bell through their Bell Let's Talk program. The member opposite is well aware that we announced a \$1-million increase in services and supports for mental health over this next year. We just announced that this morning and are looking forward at some great work throughout the territory in that regard.

We know that mental health issues are important. They are very important to this government, but mental health services aren't just a responsibility of government. They are a responsibility of communities, First Nations, businesses and local non-profit organizations. We do look forward to the collaboration with those organizations and the Yukon Medical Association, as well as the Yukon Hospital Corporation on a move-forward basis.

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, a million dollars is not a mental health strategy, and it is not very much money. Communities and organizations are frustrated by the lack of a strategy that supports them to do the good work that they try to do. Meanwhile, Yukoners, including children, youth, adults and seniors, are falling through substantial gaps in service. Yukoners experiencing a mental health crisis are sometimes admitted to the secure medical unit at Whitehorse General Hospital — an inadequate facility for those with a mental health crisis. Others end up at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

Mr. Speaker, can this government confirm that they will come out with a strategy with goals, timelines and measurable outcomes for all Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, again, I thank the member opposite for this question. It is a true honour and a privilege to stand on the floor of this Legislature and talk about the collaborative efforts that are taking place within our territory. I mentioned earlier the relationship that we have with Bell and Northwestel through Bell's Let's Talk program, through organizations like Many Rivers, Teegatha'Oh Zheh and Challenge — and the list truly does go on.

I just announced this morning \$1 million, which is a significant investment in mental health — over this next year throughout our territory and we do look forward to those initiatives being rolled out. I can tell members of this Legislature that there are a number of programs and services offered by non-profits and by government, such as: FRIENDS, which is through Bell funding; mental health first aid; Living Life to the Full through the Mental Health Association — a very important partner — and we look forward to working collaboratively with that organization as we move forward and prepare to roll out the mental wellness strategy.

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, I think I heard a mental wellness strategy in that answer. I hope it's true. Hopefully this plan will fill in some of the substantial gaps in service. But as far as demonstrating true concern for mental health by this government, it's simply too late. People are frustrated by the lack of service. I talk to individuals who have long wait-times or who are not able to receive the services they require in Whitehorse and in the communities.

Yukoners continue to be sent Outside to facilities to address their immediate or long-term needs. These people are separated from family and from their communities and often when they return, it's to the same situation. Millions — many millions of dollars — are spent on these individuals.

Mr. Speaker, why has this government continually neglected to put resources where they have long been needed to fix these gaps?

Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her question. There is some important work that is taking place in the territory. This work has been taking place for the last number of years. The mental wellness strategy isn't a starting point; it's a continuation.

As minister, I am very grateful for the supports and the feedback that we have received from the NGO community, from the business community, and from organizations like the Hospital Corporation and the Mental Health Association of Yukon on the particulars around the mental health strategy and a number of other reports that have been conducted over the last number of years.

I for one look forward to the completion of the Sarah Steele alcohol and drug services building with the expanded youth programming that we just announced earlier this week. The member opposite indicated that there are youth being transferred Outside for services and she is correct in that manner. What we want to do is bring those youth home and keep Yukon youth in the territory through this expanded service at Sarah Steele.

Again, I look forward to working with all of our stakeholders as we move forward in services for mental health and the release of the mental wellness strategy.

Question re: Hotels, long-stay

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, a tenant is a tenant is a tenant. Whether they rent an apartment or a house, or stay in a hotel room over the winter, they are supposed to have rights.

Mr. Speaker, the long-awaited *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* and regulations came into effect on January 1 of this year. Yukon government continues to use hotel rooms as a stop-gap measure due to a lack of affordable housing.

This government has spent tens of thousands of dollars every year to have Yukon citizens live in hotel rooms over the winter. These same Yukoners are also asked to leave each and every spring to make room for the territory's visiting tourists. Last fall, the government was unsure about where long-stay hotel tenants should go if they had problems with their unit or their landlord. So could the minister now tell long-stay hotel tenants who they should turn to in the first six months of their tenancies to have their rights upheld?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: This is an issue that is very familiar to those of us in the Legislature. We debated it thoroughly during the passage of the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* in 2012, and we had subsequent debates on this very topic numerous times.

What the fundamental policy question is at hand is: At what point does a person go from being a long-term-stay

client of a hotel to a tenant under the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*? As I have explained previously, under the act and regulations that we've put forward, we've set that threshold at six months. That is the point upon which an individual goes from being a long-stay guest at a hotel to a tenant under the act.

Now, I believe the member is asking about those first six months. So when a person is a guest at a hotel and they're finding their accommodations unacceptable, obviously they can go to the hotel. In the case of a client of Health and Social Services who is having their room paid for by the department, they can go to the department and talk to them about it. But if it's a more general residential tenancy question, they can come to the Residential Tenancies Office, which was established under the act in 2012 and is now open for business and taking inquiries from the public — from landlords and tenants alike — throughout the Yukon.

Ms. White: Yukoners living in hotels deserve the same housing rights as anyone else, but the government's new regulations only kick in once someone has lived in a hotel for six continuous months. This means that there is a class of Yukon tenants who can't count on a secure place to live year-round and who are left in a unique situation where they can't access the same resources as other tenants, and in many cases, these people need the help the most.

It would be great if the Premier or any other minister stood up for Yukoners living in hotels, like he says they do for every other citizen of the Yukon. Where are people who live in hotels during the winter months supposed to go when they are asked to leave their place of residence every spring?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Again, as I explained, I appreciate that the NDP and Yukon Party have different positions on this particular issue and that the members opposite disagree with our policy decision around the six-month threshold. For individuals who are without adequate accommodations, there is a range of housing options. This government has made considerable investments in housing throughout the territory over the last number of years. Those options are numerous, and I'm proud of the investment that the Yukon government has made in housing options for those in need of that kind of housing.

But again, to circle back to the criticism about the act and the regulations, this is simply a disagreement between our parties about what the appropriate threshold is. We have made a decision that it's six months. The NDP have criticized us for that, but haven't offered an alternative. If they do have an alternative to the six months, I would be interested to hear it. They haven't expressed that previously.

So again, we are proud of the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* that we brought forward. We're proud of the regulations and the Residential Tenancies Office that has been established now, which is functioning and available to landlords, tenants and others who have interests and inquiries about the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* and those laws that apply to tenancies in the territory.

Ms. White: I was hoping that the minister would have some suggestions of where long-stay hotel clients could look for housing.

I would like to state for the record that Yukoners shouldn't be sent to hotels for long-term stays in any circumstance by the Yukon government. They deserve appropriate housing like everyone else. They pay a security deposit, monthly rent and play by the rules, but they are denied the same rights as other tenants. That people are forced to live in hotels as their home is disgraceful. It's even worse that these people are being denied basic tenant rights.

There's a financial case to be made for fixing this problem. If this government had used the money it spent on long-stay hotel rooms since the Yukon Party took power in 2002 to actually invest in appropriate housing for these clients, there's no doubt that their situation would be better today. So, Mr. Speaker, my question is this: Is it fair that the government has been dragging its heels for 14 long years while people who live in hotels over the winter months are asked to leave their hotel rooms each and every spring?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, certainly the member opposite and this government are well aware that addressing homelessness is a challenge for Yukon. It is a challenge for every jurisdiction across Canada. Yukon is not alone in this endeavour. Aside from the fact that the member opposite hasn't understood the investments that we have made — there have been significant investments that this government has made through the Yukon Housing Corporation. Specifically through Health and Social Services, we have invested in a 14-unit complex for individuals with FAS. We have invested in a 22-unit facility for transitional housing that will be operated by the Salvation Army. Mr. Speaker, in the coming weeks, we'll be opening the St. Elias group home that provides support and services for those with a wide range of cognitive disabilities.

The member opposite, in her assertions that this government has not made those investments in homelessness, is simply incorrect. We will continue to invest in Yukoners and I am very proud of our record, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 23: *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 23, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Pasloski.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to present the 2016-17 budget for the fifth time as the Minister of Finance. While the budget is tabled by the Finance minister, I want to acknowledge the tremendous work and effort of every Yukon Party MLA. I am truly honoured to lead an incredible team and I'm very proud of everyone's efforts. This is our budget.

Mr. Speaker, this is a plan that will give Yukoners confidence that our government's focused and principled approach to fiscal management is working. I hope it is also a plan that will make them proud — proud to live in a place where we look out for each other and we take care of our most vulnerable. I'm proud to see continued investments in areas that matter most to families in job creation, health care and education.

Mr. Speaker, I am tremendously optimistic about the future of this territory. Yukoners have big ideas; they have ambition and they have their eyes on the future. They want to build something great and, like our government, they want to position the next generation to build something even greater.

I hope all Yukoners see themselves, their families and their hopes in this budget. After all, they are the people who made it possible. They are taxpayers, caregivers and volunteers in this territory. They are the people who get up every morning, pull on their work boots and head into our mines, put on their scrubs and take care of our patients in our hospitals, or put on their aprons and serve food in our restaurants. Whether you are working in private industry or in the public service, I want to say thank you. Our success is possible because of your hard work; because you give back to your communities by paying taxes, employing other Yukoners and providing an essential service.

Our business owners are no different. They are the people who took the risk to start something here; who looked at Yukon and saw opportunity, got a business number, hired employees and went to work. Like your employees, you give back to your territory in so many ways and you pay taxes too, and those taxes help to make public services possible. So I want to thank you all for your contribution, your sacrifices for the greater good of everyone who lives here and for placing your trust in our government to make sure your contribution goes toward the people and the projects that need it most.

Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to table the 2016-17 Yukon budget in the Legislature today. Today I'm proud to stand here and tell all Yukoners how we are investing their money and how those investments will help make Yukon an even better place to live, work, play and raise a family. The choices we are making are informed by what we heard from Yukoners in our pre-budget consultations. We travelled to every corner of this territory. We did 60 consultations and we spoke to hundreds of people. We wanted to know what was important to them and what was keeping them up at night — the aspirations they had for their children and their grandchildren and for their mothers and their grandmothers. This budget would not be possible without their input, so from the bottom

of my heart and on behalf of all of my colleagues, I thank them for taking their time to contribute.

I remember a few of them exceptionally well. Betty Skoke Burns is a teacher who also runs a toy boutique and retail shop. Her children grew up here. She cares about this community and at our community conversations this past fall, Betty spoke with pride about her staff and all that they do to make Yukoners feel valued and well-served.

I remember Chris Lane, the owner of Make IT Solutions, who spoke passionately about growing his company so that he could employ local people and show the world that Yukoners can be at the forefront of software development. I remember Hillary Aitken from the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre talking about the transformative impact their work, in partnership with other NGOs and like-minded organizations, has made in the lives of local women and how government investments have helped in that effort.

When I think about our job as government, I think about conversations with people like Betty, Chris and Hillary. All of them expect us to manage responsibly, to plan for the future and to maximize every single dollar so that we can invest government funds in a way that benefits all Yukoners. That is the principle that forms the backbone of our focused economic plan — make every dollar count.

I am proud to tell you that, for the fifth year in a row, we are doing just that. I am pleased to tell the Legislature that we are tabling a surplus of \$9.483 million. This is as governments across the country are tabling budgets in the red. In fact, not only are we introducing a budget with a surplus, we are also increasing spending to ensure that we can deliver our most important services to people who need them the most. This year, the increase to our operation and maintenance budget is \$30.7 million, bringing it to a total of \$1.085 billion, an increase of approximately three percent. Within that increase is a major boost to health care funding. I am looking forward to highlighting how we are better supporting Yukon seniors and patients later in the speech.

While achieving our surplus required some very tough decisions, they were the right decisions. There is an old saying that you hear around the government every so often: "If you have 50 priorities, you have no priorities." You hear it because it is true. We have prioritized new spending to areas where it is needed the most. It is focused and targeted. It makes every dollar count. Today, you are going to hear about: our focused and principled approach to fiscal management and how it is working for Yukoners; how we are investing in our economy because it is fundamental to the future of our territory; how we are investing in education because we want our young people to succeed; how we are increasing spending in health care so our families get the right supports; and how we are spending on infrastructure that will strengthen our communities. A strong economy allows us to have the best public services.

Since being sworn in as Premier and Finance minister, our team has never run a deficit and we have never raised taxes. In fact, the average family of four is paying up to \$777 less per year in taxes than in 2011.

I want to put our achievement in context. In this year's budget, we are increasing spending to sectors that need it the most. We are maintaining the incredible quality of life that Yukoners enjoy. We are doing more to support our businesses, and we are tabling a surplus because we believe that is what the people of Yukon deserve and expect. We are doing all of this with absolutely no debt. I will repeat that. The Yukon government continues to have no net debt. This is at a time when the Canadian Federation of Independent Business estimates that, as a whole, all of Canada's provinces and territories are carrying almost \$600 billion in net debt. That is billion with a "B". To put that into context, it is enough to fund Yukon's total budget for more than 400 years. Not only that, but other provinces and territories pay interest on that debt. There is a line in their budgets that is devoted to paying the long-term interest costs, and every dollar they are using to pay off that debt and pay interest on that debt is a dollar they aren't putting toward programs and services.

It's a dollar they cannot invest into families or better health care or supporting businesses or innovation. It's a dollar they aren't using to reduce taxes like we did last year here in Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, all Yukoners should be incredibly proud to know that we have money in the bank. Our investment income exceeds any interest charges we face, meaning that no money is diverted from serving Yukoners to servicing debt. Because we have a focused, principled long-term fiscal plan, we are extremely well-positioned for the years to come. We are a small economy and vulnerable to external forces. We need to be resilient, and ensuring that we are debt-free provides us with more choices and more independence. It means we have to reduce waste any chance we have. We know we can avoid debt because our government has always done that. It's a choice; it's a principle. It's something my colleagues and I stand strongly behind. Debt is easy and it's insidious in a small economy like ours. If you don't stand up for a debt-free Yukon, you don't stand up for Yukoners. I believe that we should never put our economic future at risk or that we should have any right to ask our children or our children's children to pay for the cost of our emergency room visits or the social services we all use today. Instead, we should do everything we can to grow the economy and create good, high-paying jobs so that our kids inherit a territory full of opportunity.

Maintaining our principled and focused approach to fiscal management is crucial. That's why this year we'll be launching an initiative we're calling "innovative budgeting". It's pretty simple, really. Together with our public service, we're going to look closely at our budget and ask ourselves one simple question: Can we get more for our money? Every Yukon family is looking at their bills and trying to figure out how to squeeze a little bit more out of their paycheques. I want Yukoners to know that we are doing the same thing in government. It goes back to the principle of making every dollar count. We need to make sure the rationale for spending isn't — and I quote: "because that's the way we've always done it".

To use an analogy, we shouldn't be investing in a horse and buggy if we can get a hybrid car for the same price. Just like families, we should always be looking for ways to get more for our money. We need to challenge ourselves to do things smarter, and over the next year we will be doing just that.

This year's budget shows \$2 million toward end-year savings under innovative budgeting initiative. This will be accomplished with zero job loss and no reduction in services. We look forward to meeting or exceeding that goal by relying on the government's best resource, the public service itself.

Mr. Speaker, a strong economy allows us to have the best public services. This government firmly believes that when it comes to economy, the government's job is to make it easier for business. Government needs to support the economy, not become the economy.

So, Mr. Speaker, as a government, we are doing everything we can to empower our businesses so that together we can grow the economy. First, we are positioning the mining sector for the inevitable rebound. Now more than ever, we need to support our resource sector. It's an opportunity to make sure that we're training Yukoners so that high-paying mining jobs go to people trained at home. We're asking more companies to work with the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining to make sure we're getting the right training to the right people.

It also presents a chance for us to modernize our mining regulations to create greater certainty, regulatory streamlining and a more integrated approach to permitting, and to continue to engage First Nations around how we can improve mine licensing.

It's an opportunity to work with our mining partners to promote the industry. The Government of Yukon is providing support to the Yukon Mining Alliance for a \$1-million mining attraction initiative to be undertaken over the next three years. Combined with its own contribution, the mining alliance will design, deliver and manage the promotion of our mining sector to key markets in Europe, Asia and North America.

Closer to home, we're investing \$335,000 toward the north Yukon regional economic development initiative, a project aimed at developing an even more vibrant north Yukon economy. This year's commitment is \$150,000 and represents a partnership between our government, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Vuntut Gwitchin First Nations and the City of Dawson.

We're also moving aggressively to support our tourism industry. This government does not see it as an either/or choice when it comes to mining and tourism. We believe we need both these sectors to be vibrant and strong. That's why we want Yukon to be the world's worst-kept secret. Every tourist who enters our borders spends an average of \$82 per day in the summer and \$151 per day in the winter. That's new money that flows directly into our economy, driving job creation and creating a better quality of life for our families.

Tourism has always been a key sector for Yukon, and it continues to be a big part of the economy. That's why we will continue to invest in the sector with this budget. This includes

a \$100,000 increase in annual funding to the First Nation culture and tourism association, up from \$60,000 to \$160,000 annually. That's why this government has repeatedly increased investments in our museums, such as our recent contribution of \$450,000 to the MacBride Museum to help them plan their expansion. In this budget, there is \$1.84 million for museums and First Nation cultural centres. That's greater than a 300-percent increase in funding since 2002. These facilities are a key part of Yukon's tourism infrastructure, and we believe supporting them is an important investment in the tourism industry's present and future.

On a broader scale, in this budget, we are recommitting to funding the incredibly successful Yukon Now campaign. It's the single largest tourism marketing campaign in Yukon history. This campaign is running nationally using home-grown talent, and we know it's having an impact. Since our campaign began, traffic to our tourism websites has increased by 26,216 hits — almost nine percent. Our government has committed to another three years of funding at \$900,000 a year. Hopefully the federal government will match our funding as they did last time, but if they do not meet that need, we will. This initiative is too important to our economic future for us to ignore.

Mr. Speaker, standing up for our economy means taking a clear stand on carbon tax. Our government has stood firmly against any sort of new carbon tax. Put simply, up here a carbon tax is a consumption tax. It has different implications for us Yukoners than it does for the people who live in downtown Toronto. We don't think a one-size-fits-all solution is the answer. A carbon tax would force our families and our businesses to pay more, and it would put our economy at a disadvantage. We know climate change is real and we are doing our part to address it. The Yukon and the north are harder hit by climate change than anywhere else in Canada, but it should be noted that the Yukon has reduced emissions since 1990 while much of the rest of Canada has increased.

We have a climate plan that is working. By focusing on efficient energy systems, reducing emissions in government and providing incentives to individuals, we are protecting the environment while supporting the economy. While some provinces derive most of their energy from fossil fuels, we are 95-percent hydroelectric. That is why this budget includes another \$2 million for continued investment in the development of next generation hydro. If we can find a way to create more hydro power, we can get the territory off home heating fuel and onto clean electrical heat. What doesn't work for the Yukon is a carbon tax. It doesn't work for the northern way of life. We will not raise the barriers for northerners getting to and around the Yukon. We will not make the cost of heating homes more expensive. We will not make the cost of food, clothing and practically everything else more expensive. Finally, we are not going to punish our resource industries and place them in an uncompetitive position.

We are the only party that has a made-in-Yukon solution that puts the focus on results and not on ideology. The NDP and the Liberals both support a carbon tax. They follow the line of their federal parties. Proposing carbon taxes may make

the Liberals and the NDP feel warm at night. For the rest of us, it is our furnace.

Besides avoiding a carbon tax, we are protecting tax credits that help our Yukon families. The recent federal budget eliminated the children's fitness tax credit and the children's art tax credit. But we know these credits are making an impact here in the Yukon. They meant parents had the supports they needed to enrol their daughter in swimming or their son in piano lessons. We think that inspiring children to stay healthy through sport or to grow their minds through the arts is too important to walk away from. That is why we will be preserving these tax credits in Yukon and continuing to pay parents the territorial portion of that grant. Our children are future Olympians, composers, NHL players and JUNO nominees. We want to make sure that they can continue to strive for those dreams. Our government believes that we need to invest in our children and make sure that they grow into adults who are ready to take on the world, get well-paying jobs and have families of their own. That is why this budget includes a number of new spending initiatives around education. For starters, we are going to take some stress and strain off every parent in the Yukon by making the first day of school a little bit easier.

This budget includes \$520,000 to defray the costs of school supplies for every single child in the Yukon. That means we'll be able to provide \$100 of school supplies for every child in the system this September. That's \$100 per student parents won't have to spend. For those who struggle to afford supplies, it is one small thing they won't have to worry about.

Beyond these kinds of smaller investments, our government is continuing to invest to ensure the long-term educational success of our children. Last year, I stood in this House and I talked about working toward a new made-in-Yukon education system. A year later, we are well on our way to making our new vision for education a reality. By combining work that was already underway with engagement from First Nations and stakeholders, we know we are building a system every Yukoner can take pride in. Last year alone, our government signed accords or MOUs with four First Nations — Kluane, Kwanlin Dün, Carcross/Tagish and Selkirk — that focus either solely on education or include education components. These agreements will help us in partnership with First Nations to address issues as diverse as language proficiency, student attendance and staffing. In the years ahead, we will be including Yukon context and First Nation culture in every grade level from K to 9; as well, specifically develop coursework for grades 10 to 12. We will build a curriculum and an approach to education that allows each community and each First Nation to include locally appropriate content. There's a long way to go but we are well on our way and it is an exciting path that we are charting.

Beyond curriculum, we are investing in education assistants in every Yukon community. Since 2011, we have increased the number of assistants from 159 to 220 and we have increased the funding by just over \$3 million. That means children are benefiting from an additional 59,780 hours

in the classroom. At the same time, we are working to improve our schools through infrastructure investment. We just opened a brand new one in Whitehorse this January. Now the new F.H. Collins has 639 bright minds in its classrooms every day.

When our kids graduate from our public schools, we want to make it easier for them to pursue a post-secondary education and we want them to be able to do it closer to home. We know that if our students study here, we are more likely to have them stay here, raise a family here, start a business here, and give back to the economy. That's one of the reasons we're contributing \$1.5 million over three years to Yukon College to help them develop into a Yukon university. By providing these funds, we're able to help the dedicated college staff move toward a university, while giving them the resources to ensure that vital community programming is preserved. It's also why we're making some significant changes and adding \$376,000 in overall funding to our student financial assistance program. We are removing administrative burdens and reducing disincentives for studying here at home through Yukon College. The minister will share more details once we table the necessary legislative changes, which I look forward to all parties supporting.

This is a major reform to our grant system. I hope it's one that will encourage more students to pursue post-secondary education. As a government, we are committed to giving our young people the tools to succeed in tomorrow's economy, and I think this budget takes some very important steps toward that goal.

We also want to make sure that our young people are inheriting a strong health care system. After all, having a strong health care system is an important part of our economic strategy. It makes businesses more likely to want to invest here. It means families don't have to worry about how to juggle everything and take months off work when grandparents fall in need of round-the-clock care. It allows our youth, who might be struggling with addiction and mental health issues, to get the supports that they need so they can go back to school or get jobs. Investing in health care is the right thing to do and it just makes good economic sense.

Health care is an issue that is at the heart of our government. It's about caring for our society's most vulnerable people. That's why we opened new hospitals in Dawson City and Watson Lake. It's also why we're building the new Sarah Steele facility for alcohol- and drug-addiction programs for adults and now for youth. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to tell you that this year the facility will receive \$2.048 million in operational funding. That means more than 300 additional detox admissions per year and an increase for in-patient capacity from 90 clients a year to more than 250. With 50 beds, we have more than doubled the capacity at Sarah Steele so Yukoners, beginning at age 13, can access services. Our government committed to the Sarah Steele enhancement and we are following through. Families are counting on it.

We're also following through on the rebuild of the St. Elias group home. We're committing to supporting Yukoners

with cognitive disabilities. The home will open its doors soon and, with the \$487,000 operating budget from the Government of Yukon, it will have twice as many beds and service twice as many adults in need.

Mental health is another area where we recognize there is a major need that government can help address. That's why the Minister of Health and Social Services will be tabling a mental wellness strategy later this session. This budget includes \$1 million for implementation of this strategy because, once it has been tabled, we want to move quickly. This new funding is in addition to the millions we already spend every year in this area, but it's an important needed investment and one that families are counting on, just like they are counting on their hospitals and emergency health care. It is why, together with the Yukon Hospital Foundation, we opened Canada's first MRI north of 60. It's also why we are working to improve the emergency room department at the Whitehorse Hospital campus. We hope most Yukoners never have a reason to use this investment but, for those who do need emergency care, we want to make sure that they get it in a modern, state-of-the-art facility. To do this, we have committed almost \$22 million for 2016-17 and another \$18 million for 2017-18 to complete this project.

When it comes to health care, we recruited more doctors, trained more nurses, and this year's budget will increase the number of hours of home care available to Yukoners as well. In fact, our government has funded nearly 22,000 additional hours of home care since 2011. That's nearly 1,000 full days of additional care for our seniors, and when home care is no longer enough for some seniors, we want to make sure that they can continue to get the very best supports.

We are moving ahead with the construction of the Whistle Bend continuing care facility. The 150-bed home will be located right here in Whitehorse, and it will provide support and care around the clock for seniors and others with complex health care needs. Along with the replacement and expansion of the McDonald Lodge in Dawson City, we are going to be far better equipped to care for our seniors. We need to be. It is anticipated that, by 2031, Yukon residents over the age of 65 will make up almost 20 percent of the total Yukon population, doubling the population share of seniors since we began planning this project in 2013.

In a time when we are making careful choices about how we spend Yukoners' tax dollars, we are investing more in health care than in any other sector. This year, the total health budget is increasing by over \$11 million, or nearly nine percent. We already spend more per capita than any Canadian province, and we do it because we want to make sure that the people of Yukon get the care they need. Nobody can legitimately claim that this government does not invest extensively in health care for Yukoners, and I would not have it any other way. The health of our children, our mothers and our grandfathers is too important. When faced with a family member in need, who among us would say, "Spend less"? Health spending comes down to more than dollars and cents. It comes down to compassion, to quality of life and, in some cases, to life itself. We are going to continue to invest in

health care by increasing operational spending and capital spending because we know it is important to Yukoners and their families.

As I outlined our commitments in health care and education, I emphasized a number of new infrastructure projects that do, or will, make a tremendous difference in the lives of Yukoners. But our commitment to infrastructure spending goes far beyond those two sectors. As I outlined to the Chamber of Commerce yesterday, this year's budget includes the largest ever single-year investment in information technology. This year, we will inject an additional \$3 million to IT projects. This will bring our total IT investment to \$9.5 million, an unprecedented amount in the Yukon. That doesn't even include all of the hardware and other technology investments that we make. This is on top of our planned investment to ensure the completion of a fully redundant fibre loop and our five-year, \$760,000 investment in bringing 4G to our communities. Already our government has invested to bring 4G service into 17 Yukon communities. We are making these investments because we know that these initiatives matter to our families and to our business, as do our roads and bridges. A well-maintained transportation network is an essential part of a strong economy. Infrastructure is a key driver of local job creation across this territory and prosperity for our homegrown companies. That is why this budget supports related work for highways, roads, bridges and airports totalling almost \$56 million. Significant investments include: \$12 million related to Shakwak; \$11.4 million for Campbell Highway; \$3.2 million for the Dempster highway, and territory-wide works totalling just over \$29.4 million. In fact, in total, the current capital investment targeted for 2016-17 through our budget is over \$300 million.

That \$300 million is spread across the territory with investments being made in all corners — in Beaver Creek, in Carcross, in Dawson City, Faro, Haines Junction, Keno City, Mayo, Old Crow, Pelly Crossing, Stewart Crossing, Swift River, Tagish, Watson Lake and Whitehorse — and the list goes on.

Mr. Speaker, our budget also includes just over \$40 million to jump-start a new Yukon/Canada partnership under the Building Canada infrastructure program. We've had tremendous success with attracting Building Canada dollars to the Yukon. We are looking forward to having further discussions with the federal government to ensure it will continue.

Mr. Speaker, before I close, I want to take a moment to address our relationship with Ottawa. Much has changed since our last budget and since the Building Canada program was first introduced. There is a new government in Ottawa, but while the Prime Minister and I may represent different parties, as Premier it's my job to work together with the federal government when they are putting the Yukon's interests first. It's also my job to stand up and speak up when the Yukon will not benefit. We want this new federal government to know that their partnership matters; that their commitment to helping us build our roads and bridges is something Yukoners expect. We are forging a new relationship. I hope it is a

productive one and a strong one; one that recognizes just how important this territory is to Canada, to its economy, to its sense of identity and to its future.

Mr. Speaker, our voice in Ottawa will be unwavering and resolute. We will be clear about Yukoners' hopes for this territory and we will pursue every opportunity to talk to the federal government about growing the economy so we can create more prosperity and build more infrastructure. While we'll never stop advocating for Yukoners, we won't be shy about sharing our successes either, especially when they are models the rest of this country can look to, learn from, and emulate.

Mr. Speaker, we are already seeing our advocacy paying off. I was encouraged that the Government of Canada listened to our advice and continued the mineral exploration tax credit for another year. It's important to our industry and provides an incentive for junior mining companies to invest in high-value projects like those found throughout Yukon. We will work hard to ensure we have an open and productive dialogue with the new federal government and Prime Minister Trudeau and all provincial and territorial governments across Canada. In fact, I look forward to having all 13 premiers here in July for the Council of the Federation meeting, the first time this event will ever be held north of 60. Yukoners will have a chance to showcase our territory, not only to the provincial and territorial leaders, but also to Canada's national media — through them to Canadians. It's an opportunity to show and tell them about some of the things we are most proud of, like the work we have done to build relationships with First Nations.

Mr. Speaker, every Yukoner is proud of the fact that we are one of Canada's leaders in the negotiation of modern treaties. Eleven of 14 Yukon First Nations have modern treaties and self-government agreements. To put that into perspective, there are only 29 modern treaties and self-government agreements in Canada. The Yukon final and self-government agreements have proved to be one of the most significant and effective means to reconciliation and positive change for all Yukoners. We are working with Yukon First Nations on implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action.

While we still have work to do, we have made some significant strides. As mentioned earlier, we are working together to improve education outcomes. We have collaborated around child welfare and we have taken leadership when it comes to seeking answers around missing and murdered indigenous women. In fact, through the partnership between our government and First Nation leaders, Yukon has become a national model of how to approach this very difficult topic.

I look forward to working with Yukon's First Nation communities to do more to strengthen our relationship and to build a future where all Canadians and Yukoners are treated justly and equitably. There is always more we can do.

Mr. Speaker, I'm tremendously energized and optimistic about the road ahead. The targeted investments we are making today, along with our commitment to principled and focused

fiscal management, is setting Yukon on the course for prosperity. We are forging ahead and taking the right steps for the future of the territory. We are going to maintain our focus on strengthening the economy and renewing our mining sector, giving our students a better education and more opportunity, ensuring our families have access to the best possible health care and investing in infrastructure, and we are going to do it all while ensuring we never spend beyond our means, that we make every dollar count and that we never lose sight of the tremendous possibility that exists in this place we call home.

If you live in the Yukon, you know what that potential is. We are as ambitious as we are resilient and we dream big. I'm beyond proud to live in this great territory and honoured to have the privilege of tabling a budget that reflects our values and helps shape the future. I look forward to hearing the feedback from my colleagues in the Legislature and from all Yukoners. Working together, I know we can turn the 2016-17 budget into a road map for the Yukon's future success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I move that debate be now adjourned.

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

Motion to adjourn debate on second reading of Bill No. 23 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 2:29 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled April 7, 2016:

33-1-194

Yukon Ombudsman — Action changes things — 2015 Annual Report (Speaker Laxton)

33-1-195

Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner — Privacy management coming into focus — 2015 Annual Report (Speaker Laxton)

33-1-196

Yukon Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner — Whistleblow with confidence — 2015 Annual Report (Speaker Laxton)

33-1-197

Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from Sitings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees (April 7, 2016) (Speaker Laxton)

The following document was filed April 7, 2016:

33-1-124

Project Charter for the Assessment of the Proposed Casino Mine Project (January 5, 2016) (Kent)