



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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HANSARD

Monday, May 2, 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

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Hon. Elaine Taylor	Whitehorse West	Deputy Premier Minister responsible for Tourism and Culture; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, May 2, 2016 — 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 Sexual Assault Prevention Month

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Sexual Assault Prevention Month and the many individuals who work 365 days a year to eradicate sexualized violence in our territory and in our country.

Mr. Speaker, here in Canada, it is estimated that one in three women will experience sexual assault at some point over the course of their lives. Sexual assault is one of the top five most common violent offences committed against women in Canada and remains one of the most under-reported and non-reported forms of violence committed against women. While this systemic violence affects all women, indigenous women and girls suffer at even higher rates.

Mr. Speaker, sexual assault and any other form of violence is not acceptable and it's not to be tolerated. Despite improvements being made, there is still much more work to be done to break the silence on violence in all of our communities. In Yukon we are very fortunate to have many organizations that are working hard to create a cultural shift away from the acceptance and normalization of sexualized violence. This month, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre is hosting a variety of events with other community partners, including BYTE, Les EssentiElles, Gwaandak Theatre and others to further the conversation about consent and sexualized violence. With summer approaching, the consent crew will also be out once again at Yukon festivals and events sharing the message that sexual assault is never acceptable and to ensure that people know the difference between consensual sex and sexual assault.

This initiative is operated as a joint project between the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, Les EssentiElles and the Yukon Women's Transition Home Society. The Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre also continues to run A Safe Place, which provides evening support and programming for women with housing and food insecurity as well as mental health challenges. Ensuring women have a safe place to go is an important part of preventing violence and we are very pleased to support this important initiative again with continued funding. For more information regarding these and other initiatives offered by Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, I urge all members and Yukoners to check out the new and improved website for Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre or to

find them on Facebook to learn about these and other events going on.

A new initiative that I would like to highlight is the youth for safety and justice initiative in Watson Lake supported by the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society.

Youth for safety is a youth empowerment project designed to foster community safety and justice for young women and girls. This project creates a space for active youth participation in addressing issues of violence against young women and girls and is designed to provide youth with the knowledge and skills needed to assume a leadership role in promoting safety and justice for young women and girls.

As a government, we are also working to improve our response, including preserving the dignity of victims and holding offenders accountable, both being central in enhancing reporting and providing supports to those who need it most. With a number of key departments we are focused on a comprehensive and integrated approach to violence prevention by sharing and leveraging resources, capacity, expertise and current services.

As the largest employer in the territory, we are developing a number of initiatives including a web-based training module for front-line staff, a domestic violence in the workplace toolkit, and revisions to our own communications style guide.

Together with First Nation and municipal governments, organizations and agencies, we're also continuing to work together to address violence against indigenous women and girls with the recent hosting of a family gathering and a Yukon Regional Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in December and February respectively.

In order to move forward on the issue of sexualized violence, we need to have a clear understanding of what is working and where there are gaps that still exist left to address. One way we are supporting this knowledge within government and throughout the Yukon is with the launch of a new website, *Shifting Territory — Indicators of Yukon Gender Equality*. This website is also an important tool in implementing gender-inclusive analysis, which the Women's Directorate currently provides to help ensure gender-equitable outcomes throughout government.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I wish to thank all of the many individuals throughout the territory who work in all of these and other efforts. I encourage everyone to participate in these events and to join the voices of men and women who already speak out against sexualized violence in our community. Thank you.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to acknowledge that during the month of May, we undertake national and local campaigns to prevent sexual assault. This campaign aims to raise public awareness about the prevalence of sexualized assault in Canada.

One in four Canadian women will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime. In the Yukon in 2014, the rate of sexual assault was 3.8 times higher than the national average. Fifty-seven

percent of aboriginal women report having been sexually abused, and aboriginal women are three times more likely to be violently assaulted.

The calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada specifically call upon governments to investigate and find remedies for the disproportionate victimization of aboriginal women and girls in Canada.

Sexualized violence refers not only to rape, but includes stalking, harassment, assault and sexist attitudes. These occurrences each contribute to a culture that condones and supports sexualized violence.

Sexual assault is a gendered crime and one that is rarely reported. Statistics Canada reports that over 80 percent of sexual assault victims in Canada are female. Of these victims, 66 percent are under age 24, 60 percent are under age 17, and 11 percent are under age 11. Those are numbers that should cause all of us to be outraged and motivated to end sexualized violence and all forms of violence against women and girls. Eighty percent of sexual assaults occur in the home; half of all sexual offenders are married or in long-term relationships.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said in this House before, the fundamental cause of violence against women is inequality. It is violence that keeps women “in their place”. The Canadian Women’s Foundation states: “In our society, gender inequality is visible in politics, religion, media, cultural norms, and the workplace. Both men and women receive many messages — blatant and covert — that men are more important than women. This fundamental inequality creates a rationale for humiliation, intimidation, control, abuse, and even murder.

“In this context, it becomes easier for a man to believe that he has the right to be in charge and to control a woman, even if it requires violence. This is not only wrong, it’s against the law.

“Violence against women is rooted in the belief that women deserve less social power and it is therefore acceptable — maybe even necessary — to exert power over them. This mindset also drives many other forms of violence, such as racism, homophobia, classism, ageism, and religious persecution.

“There is no evidence that alcohol or mental illness causes men to be violent against women. Men who assault their partners rarely assault their friends, neighbours, bosses, or strangers. In fact, when it comes to alcohol, there is a double standard: while alcohol consumption by an offender is often used to excuse their behaviour, victims who have been drinking are often blamed for their own victimization.”

Mr. Speaker, one of the most public trials in recent memory has shone a spotlight on the realities of sexualized violence and sparked a national outrage about how survivors are treated in the legal system. In the lead-up to the recent high-profile trial and acquittal of Jian Ghomeshi, we saw hashtags like #BeenRapedNeverReported and #IBelieveSurvivors dominate the public discussion. Following Ghomeshi’s acquittal, there has been much public discussion and legal comment about what is needed to improve the criminal justice system response to women reporting sexualized violence. There hasn’t been a systematic review of

criminal law since the law reform of the early 1980s when evidence, law and procedure were amended to abolish such rules as the doctrine of recent complaint, which provided that a woman who had not raised a hue and cry immediately after her assault must be discredited, and a requirement for a witness to corroborate such a complaint.

We must maintain the right of an accused person to a fair trial, while at the same time ensuring that trials are not discriminatory and that Charter rights to equal protection and benefit of the law are also respected.

One commentator asserted that fear of the unknown is preventing people from reporting. I believe that in fact many women who choose not to report sexual assault do understand the system and make a fully informed decision based on knowing what to expect in a courtroom, and that decision is that they do not report.

I recall a conversation I had many years ago with a senior RCMP official who said that he would advise his daughter not to report if she was raped. Because the system often re-victimizes, estimates in Canada are that only six out of every 100 sexual assaults are reported to the police. Since the summer of 2014, Yukon residents have the option of third-party reporting. This means that anyone 19 and over who has been sexually assaulted can make a confidential report to Kaushee’s Place about the crime. The assault is then reported to the police, but the victim’s information is kept confidential unless the victim later gives consent to disclose it to the police.

In 2012, Holly Johnson prepared an attrition pyramid published in *Sexual Assault in Canada: Law, Legal Practice and Women’s Activism*. The actual number of sexual assaults is unknown, but rates have been calculated from general social survey data. Many reports are filtered out as unfounded by the police, which means that charges are not laid. Many cases are dropped when a prosecutor determines that there is not enough evidence to proceed to trial, and conviction rates are low. Professor Johnson’s study finds that 0.3 percent of perpetrators of sexual assault were held accountable, and 99.7 percent were not. So what are we doing in Yukon to address a societal crisis of sexualized violence? Tomorrow night, Gwaandak Theatre is presenting a reading of Melaina Sheldon’s play *Chance*, followed by discussions.

On May 10 in Whitehorse, Victoria Faulkner Women’s Centre is presenting a panel of young speakers to share their reflections on the Ghomeshi trial, the media and how to prevent sexualized assault from happening by teaching and learning about enthusiastic consent. Their announcement reads: “Everyone is welcome to share your frustration, build your solidarity, and create dreams of a better response system to sexualized violence.”

In Watson Lake, a group called Youth for Safety has launched a petition about changing language in the criminal law to more accurately describe criminal acts of violence against children. This work with the Liard Aboriginal Women’s Society and Youth for Safety demonstrates youth leadership for justice.

Sexual assault prevention must become a focus of our attention 12 months of the year. We should encourage consistent dialogue and education for women and men on sexual assault and the root causes that lie in the sexism of our society. We need to recognize that in our territory this is an issue of increased concern. The rates of sexual assault in Yukon are alarming and are cause for immediate concern and action. No individual should ever experience sexual assault, but a quarter of all women in Canada will in their lifetime. What does this tell us? That we are not doing enough. High heels don't cause rape. Short skirts don't cause rape. Women's bodies don't cause rape. Rapists cause rape.

During Sexual Assault Prevention Month, I urge everyone present and all members of our community to meet the challenge of ending sexualized assault each and every day of the year.

In recognition of National Hospice Palliative Care Week

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I rise today in honour of National Hospice Palliative Care Week which runs from May 1 to May 7. Over the past few years hospice palliative care has become a topic of national conversation as the baby-boomers age.

We all want the same thing as we grow older or as we deal with a life-limiting condition: to live as well and fully as possible until we die.

Our Yukon population is aging too and more Yukon seniors are retiring here than in the past. Good planning and excellent end-of-life services are more important now than ever. As part of this planning, a hospice palliative care unit is being incorporated into the new Whistle Bend continuing care facility.

The Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association is a national voice for quality end-of-life hospice palliative care in Canada. Its principle aim is to relieve suffering and improve the quality of life and living and dying. In Yukon, we're lucky to have a number of volunteers and professionals providing support for those at end of life and their family and friends who care about them.

Health and Social Services' hospice palliative care team has been very busy. Some of the highlights of the team's past year include: the release of the Yukon palliative care framework; ongoing education to the public, health care providers and Yukon's First Nations to increase our capacity to help Yukoners living with palliative conditions to remain at home; collaboration with community-based service providers — for instance, Hospice Yukon to support the important work they do; collaboration with Yukon First Nation care providers to support them in providing care to elders in their communities; and the completion of a care at home resource binder to support those living with life-limiting conditions and their home care and palliative care team.

The palliative care team, working with the home care team, provided support to close to 100 Yukoners living with life-limiting illnesses. They also supported many people who were in a facility such as the Whitehorse General Hospital or in an extended care facility. Because their work is so

important, the hospice palliative care team received permanent funding during the last fiscal year to allow them to continue their important work.

In closing, it's important to thank all the volunteers, nurses, friends, doctors, Hospice Yukon workers, home care and hospice palliative care team members, whose caring and generosity of spirit have eased the way for so many Yukoners and their families.

Discussing end-of-life care is never easy, let alone when we are face to face with it either for ourselves or for our loved one. This week is an excellent time to open this discussion with our loved ones and our health care providers. I encourage everyone in this House to talk to their families and fill out an advanced care directive. Let your loved ones know what you want ahead of time.

Ms. Stick: I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Third Party to pay tribute to National Hospice Palliative Care Week.

Hospice and palliative care refers to end-of-life care in Canada. It includes educating ourselves and the public on advanced care planning, hospice care and palliative care. Too often these are topics we do not want to talk about, whether for ourselves or for family members or for friends. It's uncomfortable for most of us and, when it comes to an ill or dying family member or friend, it can feel as though we are giving up hope — but hospice and palliative care services are much more.

We have many professional health care providers and well-trained volunteers in Yukon. I know these individuals do exemplary work, from stories I have heard and from those living it. Those staff and volunteers from Hospice Yukon offer support to dying and bereaved clients at the Whitehorse hospital, in care facilities and in private homes, and they offer support in workplaces and in their downtown office space. They are there for all who are involved in the death and dying of an individual. This includes family, friends and coworkers. We also have health care professionals — physicians, nurses, LPNs and home care workers to name a few — who provide the care and support needed in our health facilities and in people's homes in Whitehorse and, when possible, in communities.

Imagine a time, Mr. Speaker, when hospice palliative care is available to all Canadians when and where they need it — where living well until death is the goal of care. Unfortunately that is not the case across Canada, where different jurisdictions offer different and varying degrees of palliative and hospice care. That, Mr. Speaker, is why a national strategy or framework guaranteeing that levels of care to all Canadians is something we encourage all levels of government to work towards.

As recently as March 2015, a report was released that is called *The Way Forward National Framework: A Roadmap for an Integrated Palliative Approach to Care*. This report was released by the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association.

If I can quote from this document, I think it sums up what a framework would accomplish: “An integrated palliative approach to care focuses on meeting a person’s and family’s full range of needs — physical, psychosocial and spiritual — at all stages of frailty or chronic illness, not just at the end of life. It reinforces the person’s autonomy and the right to be actively involved in his or her own care — and strives to give individuals and families a greater sense of control. It sees hospice palliative care as less of a discrete service offered to dying persons when treatment is no longer effective and more of a simultaneous or integrated approach to care that can enhance their quality of life throughout the course of their illness or the process of aging.”

I think this sums up what is needed and, fortunately, this report does go on to lay out how each jurisdiction in working collaboratively with each other can achieve this.

I want to thank those professionals and those trained volunteers who continue to provide this support to our friends, our neighbours and family members.

In recognition of Teacher Appreciation Week

Hon. Mr. Graham: I rise in the House today on behalf of all members to pay tribute to teachers in the Yukon and indeed throughout Canada.

Teacher Appreciation Week marks a time to honour the contributions of teachers — not only teachers, but administrators and paraprofessionals — to the lives of our students, not only here in our territory but throughout Canada and the world. The Silicon Valley venture capitalist Guy Kawasaki appropriately described the importance of teachers when he said that if we put someone on pedestals, put teachers; they are our society’s heroes.

Yukon educators may indeed be heroes in the lives of all of our Yukon students. Each day, they inspire our youth to not only learn, develop and grow, but also to go beyond their limits and reach their fullest potential. They motivate our students to reach as high as possible and to do things they never thought they were capable of doing. Through their work, they help to develop curious and creative individuals who are ready to take on any challenge. They also plant a seed for the love of learning, which continues to grow as students’ minds are nurtured by many different teachers during their time in school. When students’ minds eventually bloom and they use their education to achieve great heights, we have teachers to thank for the benefits that our society gains from the potential that they helped to grow. From the early years of learning to the point when a student completes high school and goes on to find their way of life, either in a career or through further education, a teacher is the prime factor in what that student eventually becomes.

We can see the effects of the influence of teachers every day in Yukon and across Canada and globally. Our political and business leaders, scientists, doctors and others who are changing lives and the world around them were all at some point influenced by a teacher. As we work toward a new vision in education, teachers will be even more important as we shift from what students learn to how they learn.

Yukon teachers will be empowered to lead the change within our schools and ensure that our current generation of learners and the next generation of leaders are ready to take on the new opportunities that our rapidly changing world presents.

It is this week that we celebrate those who have dedicated their professional lives to shaping young minds. We thank all teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators for their invaluable work and for the daily inspiration they provide our students. We acknowledge and thank them for their commitment to bringing out the best in our students and developing a passion for learning that we hope can last a lifetime.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Mayo-Tatchun and I had the opportunity to travel to Watson Lake to observe first-hand what a difference that dedicated, professional teachers make in the lives of young Yukon students during our visit to the rural experiential model. We were told by students at the interview stage of the week that it didn’t matter what mode they took their education in — whether it was by distance learning or personal — the difference in their learning experience was the teacher. It was very, very telling, I think, to both the member opposite and me to learn that from young students.

While I’m on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity to welcome one of those excellent teachers to the Legislature today. I would like to welcome Kim Hart, who is a teacher at Vanier Catholic Secondary School. She also brought members of her school choir here as part of the music school program and we just had the opportunity to listen to the excellent choir in the lobby. Welcome, Kim, and welcome members of the choir as well.

Applause

In recognition of Music Monday

Ms. McLeod: I rise today to pay tribute to Music Monday. At the behest of my colleagues, I will not break out in song.

This national day to raise awareness of the value of music education was established in 2005 by the Coalition for Music Education. Organizers say it’s the world’s largest single event dedicated to this purpose. Following so soon after the Rotary Music Festival, its timing is indeed fortunately timed in Yukon. Several schools take advantage of the work their students do every year to prepare for the festival by offering them another opportunity to showcase their talents in school-based activities and events to mark Music Monday.

Just to mention a few such events in Yukon schools today, Mr. Speaker: Christ the King Elementary School held its annual Rotary review today with instrumental performances on piano and violin and a song or two by the school choir. Members of the Filipino cultural club also performed a traditional dance. A class at Takhini Elementary School sang a fun song and learned about Music Monday celebrations elsewhere in Canada. Hidden Valley students participated in campfire singing during their music class today.

As members know, and as the minister has already shared with us, we were treated to a wonderful choir bomb performance by a very talented group of choristers from the Vanier Catholic Secondary School.

I would also like to remind members that tonight is the annual All-City Band spring concert at the Yukon Arts Centre, featuring music students from Porter Creek and F.H. Collins secondary schools.

Music Monday reminds us of the great value of music education, not only in and of itself, but in terms of many spinoff benefits. It's well-established that music education facilitates children's intellectual and social development. It provides an avenue for self-expression and fosters creativity. It increases attention span. It teaches a sense of empathy.

In closing, I would like to salute all the music teachers in Yukon schools by sharing with you a short poem by that famous and often-quoted writer, "anonymous":

This is why I teach music:
 not because I expect you to major in music,
 not because I expect you to play or sing all your life,
 not so you can relax,
 not so you can have fun,
 but so that you will be human,
 so that you will recognize beauty,
 so you will be closer to an infinite beyond this world,
 so you will have something to cling to,
 so you will have more love, more compassion,
 more gentleness, more good,
 in short, more life.

Mr. Barr: I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Third Party to celebrate Music Monday, which is organized by the Coalition for Music Education in Canada. This is a celebration of music in schools across Canada from coast to coast to coast.

Music is not a frill, but an important part of our children's brain growth. Playing music improves the development of both sides of our brain. We think that when children are introduced to playing musical instruments at an early age, they will almost always perform better than their peers in core subjects like math, science and reading. These same children often go on to be some of the most successful members of our society, including doctors, engineers, inventors, businessmen and businesswomen and, yes, Mr. Speaker, even politicians.

In Yukon, we are fortunate to have amazing music teachers in our public schools, but we also have the wonderful advantage of having Yukon and visiting musicians spend time with our children in school, sharing their music passions, exposing students to a variety of music styles, songwriting and music appreciation. I was just made aware that Mr. Steve Slade and Mr. Mike Stevens have been around the Yukon this last week. Mike Stevens is an internationally known fellow who has played the Grand Ole Opry and has gone to communities throughout the north, especially First Nation communities, sharing his skills and time and being with folks in schools. I also would like to mention at this time Mr. Peter Menzies, who, along with Steve, started music in the schools

several years ago. It has led to the volunteering of people either giving money or donating instruments to schools throughout the Yukon — a shout-out to them.

I have also had the privilege of playing not only in schools, but for an even younger crowd in daycares. It is quite the thing to get to be able to do.

Music entertains us, inspires us and is also a critical component of ongoing therapy for many who are suffering from a variety of illnesses and injuries, including dementia, Alzheimer's, strokes and depression. We know many local musicians who share their gift of music in continuing care facilities, and we thank them for that.

If I could, Mr. Speaker, I would share a song in here — like the Member for Watson Lake — but instead would encourage everyone to take a few moments to listen to their favourite music, sing along with the radio, and sing along with your children, as I had fortunate times with our family growing up on road trips to visit our grandparents.

I would also like to thank the Vanier Catholic Secondary School for the exceptional concert in the YG foyer celebrating music day here in the Yukon.

Applause

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.
 Are there any returns or documents for tabling?
 Are there any reports of committees?
 Are there any petitions to be presented?
 Are there any bills to be introduced?
 Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to use the 2016-17 budget to contribute \$686,000 to support the operation of the Yukon Wildlife Preserve as part of a five-year contribution agreement with the Yukon Wildlife Preserve.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to use the 2016-17 budget to invest \$350,000 in campground and facility improvements, including the development of accessible campsites, infrastructure replacement and staffing.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to follow through with its commitment to Yukoners' health and safety by implementing the final phase of the certificate of recognition program which requires employers to complete an occupational health and safety certification for Yukon government construction contracts below \$110,000 in value.

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

QUESTION PERIOD**Question re: Internet service reliability**

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, this past Friday, few Yukoners were surprised to learn that the Yukon has the worst Internet speed in Canada, that the Canadian Internet Registration Authority's test confirmed what Yukon citizens and businesses already know: our Internet speed is terrible — 6.7 megabites per second. In the Northwest Territories, the speed is over twice that at 15.4 megabites per second. This test measured dozens of different indicators of Internet performance, including upload and download speeds. Time and again, this government tells the Yukon how committed it is to diversifying the economy and that it supports the IT sector; yet when it comes to our information technology infrastructure, this government has let the Yukon slide to the back of the pack.

When will the government demonstrate that it understands the needs of Yukon businesses and citizens who require reliable and quality Internet service?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, we've heard many times on the floor here in the Legislature that fast, affordable and reliable — that is what this government is looking for and that is what we are committed to providing.

Yes, we have seen this latest result saying that we are below average and that is the reason that the government presented at the CRTC hearings at the end of April and are recommending that we see an increase in the speed of our Internet here in the Yukon.

Ms. Hanson: The question is: How? When speaking of the long-promised fibre redundancy project on April 25, the government indicated — and I quote: "... discussions are ongoing with Canada with regard to funding that project."

So Mr. Speaker, we've had years of studies, spent over a million dollars and we're still awaiting a solution. To date there is no secured source of funding for the Dempster option — the preferred option of this government. To use a phrase that has become all too familiar with this government: There is no money in the bank for this project.

Can this government assure Yukoners that it has a plan B for the promised secondary fibre optic link if the federal funding is delayed or falls through?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Of course, as I said just moments ago, we understand the importance of fast, affordable and reliable Internet service in the Yukon. We do understand the importance of the IT sector in the Yukon. We are working with the federal government on the northern Dempster fibre link. We are trying to firm up that money through the federal government. We're working with Northwestel. We will continue to work diligently and make this project move forward in the most fiscally responsible way we can.

Ms. Hanson: Clearly Yukoners need to have the government move from talk to action. The minister indicates the preference for the Dempster route. The Dempster route has discontinuous permafrost along with other O&M concerns that present unique engineering challenges. Melting permafrost already creates serious issues on our highway

system and a fibre optic link is a sensitive piece of infrastructure.

The September 2015 Stantec report on the Dempster route advised that there are reliability concerns with the large distance associated with this proposed link to the outside world. It states — and I quote: that shorter routes will "... always provide a higher level of network reliability."

This government is committing to spend \$60 million of public funds to build this vital piece of Yukon infrastructure. If providing a fast, reliable and affordable link is the objective, does the government guarantee to Yukoners that the Dempster route is the best option?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Of course, as the member opposite has pointed out, we have done numerous studies. We're doing the due diligence to ensure that this project moves forward in the most responsible fashion possible. It's important that we do that engineering; it's important that we do the studies and just figure out what is the best way to move forward. We're not just going to go off half-cocked and put something in the ground that isn't going to work. It is important to do that planning, to do that engineering and make sure that this project is done properly.

Question re: In-house apprenticeship program

Ms. White: An apprenticeship is one of the most important things for budding tradespeople's careers and skilled trades are found on many of Yukon's jobsites — the construction workers on our highways, the heavy equipment operators and mechanics in our shops, mines and placer mines and the multitude of tradespeople who build our infrastructure. Post-secondary programs are an essential foundation to working in the skilled trades, but there is no substitute for the real-life skills developed by an apprenticeship that lets veteran workers mentor new ones to learn the skills they will use over the course of their careers.

I would like to start by asking about the government's role in apprenticeship creation. How many apprentices are currently employed by the Yukon government departments?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I'm not certain what the actual number is. I'm quite certain that, at the last report I received from my apprenticeship branch, we had approximately 483 apprentices in various trades throughout the territory. However, we don't track apprentices by place of employment; therefore, I'm unable to provide that information at the present time. I will undertake to try to get the information from the department. If it's available, we will bring it back and publish it here in the Legislature.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that response, but I'm curious — out of the 483 registered apprentices, how many of those work in government? As a journeyman myself, I know the importance of the role that government can play in supporting the private sector in creating opportunities for apprentices to move into Yukon's workforce. Those opportunities come through having enough placements so that new apprentices who are qualified to safely access workplaces can get their hands dirty and work toward their journeyman certification.

How can the Yukon government expect the private sector to take on apprentices when the government isn't doing their own part in the share of the work because they can't even tell us how many apprentices work within the Yukon government?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Maybe the member opposite didn't hear what I had to say. I said that we don't have the numbers here immediately available but that I would undertake to get back to her.

What we also have done on this side of the House, as part of the government, is create a new trades facility at Yukon College. We have our mobile trades trailer travelling around the territory. It was recently in Ross River. During the visit to Watson Lake, the member opposite and I had the chance to talk to the instructor who is teaching a dual credit course of high school students and adults in Watson Lake. We also have a number of other programs that are going ahead — the northern institute on mining facility will soon be ready at the college.

So we're doing a lot to increase the number of people in the trades program here in the territory. As I said, once we get the statistics available — if they are available — for Yukon government, we'll be only too happy to bring that information back.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that sentiment, but without knowing how many apprentices work within the Yukon government, we can't possibly say that Yukon government is doing enough to support the skilled trades. When will the government recognize its very own important role in supporting Yukon's new skilled tradespeople and create more apprentice opportunities within government workplaces?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I guess it's kind of difficult for me to stand up here and say the same thing over and over. We don't have that information. We'll get that information.

We're just rebuilding the tech wing at F.H. Collins to be available not only to F.H. Collins, but to the new francophone school as well. We support the trades in a number of different areas. I know at the present time we have a program operating in Old Crow, so we not only do it here in Whitehorse at the college, but we — in cooperation with the college — offer a number of programs throughout the territory.

To say that the government is not shouldering its own weight in the area of hiring apprentices is simply not accurate. We as a government are fully in favour of hiring people in trades — apprentices — and we will continue to do that into the future.

Question re: Economic outlook

Mr. Silver: An article appeared in *Up Here* magazine over the winter. It was called "Fortune Tellers — Yukon..." The Premier was featured in a section called, "Let's pay our way". In it, it said — and I quote: If the Premier's "dream comes true, by 2026 the Yukon would be sending millions — maybe even tens or hundreds of millions — of dollars to Ottawa in the form of transfer payments. Yes, he wants the Yukon to be so prosperous and self-sufficient in 10 years that

they become a 'have' territory — or in his words, a 'net contributor to Canada.' But, as it stands today, that's an ambitious goal."

Mr. Speaker, no kidding — under the economic leadership of this government, the Yukon's economy has stalled. It has shrunk three years in a row, in fact. The budget tabled this year shows Yukon generating only 12 percent of our total revenue. The rest comes from Ottawa and other sources.

Will the Premier confirm that Yukon generates only one-tenth of its own budget revenue?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Yes, it is a long-term goal of this government, and I'm happy to say that. I'm very proud of the fact that the Premier has said that.

In order to do that, we need to continue to do the hard work that we're doing. We need to continue to diversify the Yukon. We need to continue to do the hard work, the training, and do all of the things that this government is currently doing so that when the economics of the world turn around, the Yukon will be in a better place than it was when we went into this downturn.

Mr. Silver: In the five years that Yukon Party 2.0 has been in office, the needle hasn't moved in terms of generating more local income. It's not continuing — they need to start to do this. In fact, over the last 14 years of the Yukon Party being in office, the amount of local revenue as a percentage of our budget has actually dropped from 13.7 percent to 12.1 percent.

Corporate income tax generated locally over the last year has dropped by almost half. It was down from \$26 million to just \$14 million. We also know that the federal payments from Ottawa have increased steadily in the last five years and are at record levels. So while the Premier likes to paint a picture of the Yukon standing on its own two feet financially, the reality is quite different.

Is the Premier prepared to admit that, or is it just too inconvenient of a truth for an election year?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: It is no secret that world markets are down, as I've said before. It's not just the Yukon, Mr. Speaker, that is in this situation. We see it all across this country and all across the world. That's why I said we continue to do the good work that we do. We continue to invest in infrastructure; we continue to invest in education.

When the economy does turn around in the world — and it will, Mr. Speaker — I'm very confident that the Yukon will be situated in a great place.

Mr. Silver: We are the only jurisdiction in Canada with three years of economic decline. After 14 years of the Yukon Party being in power, we're actually further away from that goal of paying our way forward.

The Premier and the Minister of Economic Development won't admit it because it contradicts their message that the Yukon is a good fiscal manager of our government. That's an inconvenient truth in an election year, and the Premier simply doesn't want to talk about it.

The article in *Up Here* magazine should probably have been entitled "Fantasy Island" as opposed to "Fortune Teller".

Despite years of talk and years of promises, we are as dependent on Ottawa to keep our lights on as ever. Why should anyone believe the Premier's promises of paying our own way? After 14 years of Yukon Party government, the needle hasn't even moved.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: This party has and will continue to stand up for Yukoners, Mr. Speaker. I take note and Yukoners take note that the first question in this session that the Liberal leader put forward wasn't a question, but it was in fact to stand up to defend the cuts in the anticipated transfers from the federal Liberal government.

Mr. Speaker, this party is committed to, more than ever, standing up for our resource industry because we know that, for every mining job that there is in this territory, we see five or six other jobs created in this territory. That's why we will continue to focus on it and we'll stand very proudly for the record that we have had since coming into power.

As I have stated, since 2000, we have seen 6,000 people move into this territory. We've seen unemployment rates drop from being double-digit to being among the lowest in the country. We've seen average weekly earnings continue to rise — in fact, 39 percent between 2000 and 2014. This party, the Yukon Party, will continue to stand up and have a vision for the future to see that we pay our own way and we will do what is right for Yukoners.

Question re: First Nations/government relations

Ms. Hanson: You know, there is one issue in which the Premier is clear. He says he will not be providing financial resources to help implement recommendations contained in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report; however, this year's budget has over \$2 million allocated for what the budget calls "reconciliation" with First Nation governments with a further \$2 million for implementing the Kaska framework agreement — which are apparently linked to these reconciliation discussions. It would seem that the Premier is unclear on the concept of reconciliation. We are either spending money on reconciliation or these agreements are not really about reconciliation. When this question was raised in the past, the Premier refused to answer.

Mr. Speaker, what are the end goals of the Kaska framework agreement and the reconciliation agreement discussions with unsigned Yukon First Nations?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: This government is proud to have signed a framework agreement on reconciliation with the Kaska — something that the NDP failed to do and something that the Liberals failed to do. People for 30 years have tried to reach a reconciliation agreement with the Kaska and we're very proud that it's another example of how this government continues to focus, to work with First Nations and to partner with First Nations.

We will work with First Nations when it comes to the implementation of the calls to action as described through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We're very proud of the work that we have done already. We're proud to see that First Nations will lead us through a proposal that has been jointly tabled to the federal government. This has been a

priority for this government and it will continue to be a priority for this government.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was clear that reconciliation needs to be built on trust. There are no shortcuts to reconciliation. Call to action 47 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission called on federal, provincial and territorial governments to change the way that they interact with First Nation governments, by changing the laws, policies and litigation strategies that reinforce a colonial legacy.

The Premier has said that he accepts the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, yet behind-closed-door negotiations without community involvement continue to occur under the Premier's direction.

Can the Premier explain how the reconciliation agreements currently being negotiated with Yukon and BC First Nation governments advance the principles set out in the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission came out last June with their calls to action, I immediately asked all the departments to come forward, to examine the calls to action and to describe what we have already accomplished to that extent. I have shared that report with Yukon First Nations. We have worked with them. We have asked them to lead as we move forward with articulating a plan to engage this territory on a path to reconciliation.

As we know, reconciliation means many, many things. We all feel that it is the responsibility, not only of the public government and the First Nation governments, but indeed of all Yukon citizens, organizations and service clubs. That is the path that we are on. We are proud to submit a proposal to the Government of Canada along with Yukon First Nations, and we will be very proud to continue to move forward with First Nations on this very important issue.

Ms. Hanson: A key principle of reconciliation is that it cannot occur without a shift in thinking and a change in the way in which government — this government — goes about its business. These agreements that the government says are intended to reduce the social, economic and resource gap between Yukon First Nations and the rest of Yukon are supposedly being done to further reconciliation, yet they are being negotiated in Vancouver boardrooms, disconnected from the communities in which reconciliation is supposed to be taking place.

The notion that reconciliation can take place without the engagement of community members is inconsistent with the principles of reconciliation set out by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Does the Premier really believe that reconciliation can be achieved through negotiations in a distant boardroom rather than in working with all segments of Yukon's communities?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: When it comes to the Kaska — which the leader is implying — we indeed will meet anywhere that they want to meet to work forward. The Kaska wanted to

meet in their offices in Vancouver, so we were very glad to do that. We do support negotiating with the elected members of the Kaska. That is exactly how we are doing it. We have our negotiators who work with their negotiators. This is how public government recognizes the duly elected governments of First Nations. We will continue to work with them. We continue to work with White River as we move forward with reconciliation with them. Truly in this territory, having 11 final self-government agreements is a large — something that has been described by the TRC as being a very important step forward in Canada for reconciliation — something that this territory, again, leads the country in.

Question re: Speech-language pathology services

Ms. Stick: Speech-language pathology is a field of expertise practised by a clinician known as a speech-language pathologist. Speech-language pathologists specialize in the evaluation and treatment of communication, speech delays and disorders, and swallowing and feeding disorders, to name a few. Currently in Yukon, publicly funded speech-language pathologists work with individuals in continuing care, in education and in in-patient treatment at Whitehorse General Hospital, but sadly there are no publicly funded speech and language services in Yukon for adults who are not in hospital or in continuing care.

This is a serious gap in our health services. What steps has this government taken to address this gap in speech-language pathology services available for adults?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I certainly appreciate the question from the member opposite. It gives me an opportunity to thank the many men and women who work in this field throughout the territory, both in the publicly funded component and the private component. I know that I have utilized these services for my son Jack, who has autism, over the past number of years. I have certainly seen an increase in capacity here in the territory in providing that level of services to those individuals who need it.

I know that the Department of Health and Social Services, over the last number of years, has funded private contractors to work with children and youth in providing this level of service. I certainly commend the department for stepping up to the plate and those individuals who provide that level of service. From a personal perspective, I have seen great strides in my son's ability to communicate and look forward to the continued work of those professionals here in the territory.

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, that does not help individuals not in continuing care or not in hospital who require this service. Speech, language, swallowing and feeding disorders can result from a variety of causes including stroke, brain injury and hearing loss. They can be the consequences of serious degenerative diseases such as Parkinson's or ALS. Speech language pathologists can work with patients to evaluate, diagnose, treat and come up with methods to address this broad range of delays and disorders.

Currently, in Yukon, an in-patient receiving those services has no access to publicly funded follow-up services

when discharged from the Whitehorse General Hospital. These follow-up and ongoing services are critical.

Why has this government neglected to provide publicly funded speech therapy to adults once they —

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

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Again I appreciate the member's question. Certainly, as I indicated in my first response, I acknowledge the work that is done throughout the territory by speech language pathologists. I know there is exceptional work being done at the hospital and at our continuing care facilities, and through the Department of Education and through the Department of Health and Social Services and the respect through Family Services for children with disabilities and for those parents who wish to contract those professionals to work with their children.

As I mentioned in my first response, I have a personal connection with this. I have certainly seen the benefits with my son who was non-verbal and now has the ability to communicate with his family, his friends and his peers through the means of an iPad and with a little bit of spoken language. Again, I thank the member opposite for her question and I do thank the men and women who are providing this level of service throughout the territory to those Yukoners who need it.

Question re: Ross River suspension bridge

Mr. Barr: Mr. Speaker, over two years ago the people of Ross River came together to save the historic Ross River suspension bridge from being torn down. After years of neglect, this Yukon Party government had decided to tear it down rather than invest in repairs; however, Ross River residents opposed this and eventually forced the government to take the necessary steps to save the bridge. Yet the Ross River bridge saga continues to drag on as we enter year 3 of the bridge being shut down. The government has requested \$2.7 million for bridge repairs under the Building Canada fund.

Has funding for phase 2 of the Ross River bridge repairs been approved?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: As we know, over the past number of years we have spent over \$1.5 million to stabilize the existing bridge in Ross River and have plans to continue to do repairs on the bridge including adding stairs, repairing the decking of the bridge and replacing the cabling system. That's an application that we have submitted to the New Building Canada fund to the federal government. I tabled a list of projects earlier this Sitting, which included that list. The simple answer is no, we have not heard back yet from the federal government as to whether or not that has been approved. I hope to hear back from the federal government soon. We have made it very clear to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities and our colleagues in Ottawa that we are eager to see these projects that we have submitted get approved, and we look forward to moving forward on it once we hear.

Mr. Barr: The Ross River bridge is more than just a tourist attraction. The bridge provides much needed access to residents, hunters and prospectors to the far side of the river during spring thaw, winter freeze-up and when the ferry is not running. It also represents a cultural link to the people of Ross River to the old town site of Tu Lidlini. The bridge has been closed for two years. That means two years of reduced access across the river. This wouldn't be acceptable if it happened in Whitehorse so why is it okay in Ross River?

Can this government give the people of Ross River a firm timeline for when the suspension bridge will be reopened?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: No, I can't give a firm timeline because I don't know when the application will be approved by Canada. Once that funding is approved by Canada, we can move forward and hopefully do the work expeditiously. My understanding is that if we do have approval we would be able to complete the work in a building season, but that's assuming we get approval soon enough. It depends when the federal government will approve it.

We've made clear to the federal government that we want to see these projects approved expeditiously. We applied a number of weeks and months ago, depending on the project. With this particular one, I'm not sure when the application was submitted, but it was probably in March or February. My understanding is that the application is sound and that the federal government hopefully will approve it very soon.

Once we hear from the federal government on the funding, we will inform the residents of Ross River when the work will begin.

Mr. Barr: It is not lost on the people of Ross River that their bridge has sat closed for two years while the government drags their feet on repairs. Meanwhile they see the government's reaction to deficiencies on the Miles Canyon bridge closed and reopened in less than a year and a request for tender is currently underway for the permanent rehabilitation work. Quick government action on the Miles Canyon bridge is praiseworthy, but the people of Ross River are still wondering when their bridge will be fixed. What it comes down to is priorities and the will to get things done. The government has demonstrated it is capable of getting things done with the Miles Canyon bridge, but the same cannot be said about the Ross River bridge.

Will this government commit to making these repairs with or without the New Building Canada fund?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I don't think it's a fair comparison to use Miles Canyon as an example. That was a significantly less costly fix that was required, but in this particular case we have stepped up to the plate and responded exactly as the community has asked us to. We've stabilized the bridge — spent over \$1.5 million to date stabilizing the existing bridge. We have plans to begin the next phase of that work as soon as we get our funding application approved by the Government of Canada.

We don't know when that will be; obviously we hope it's soon. Once we get the money flowing from Ottawa, we'll be able to conduct the repairs to the bridge and open it again to the residents of that community.

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. 99: *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 99, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Pasloski.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I move that Bill No. 99, entitled *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It is moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 99, entitled *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: It is indeed my pleasure to introduce Bill No. 99, the second act to amend the *Income Tax Act* and regulations. This bill is the epitome of why, this year in particular, waiting for the federal budget before tabling our budget was the prudent and fiscally responsible decision. In Canada, every province and territory relies on the federal *Income Tax Act* to varying degrees for the administration of their respective income tax acts. Taxpayers benefit from a single administration of all income tax acts.

Could you imagine, Mr. Speaker, individuals and businesses having to complete up to 14 income tax returns with different definitions of income from every province and territory as well as the federal government? Yukon is without a doubt the jurisdiction that has harmonized our tax system with the federal government to the greatest degree. We have generally the same brackets and the same credits; we differentiate ourselves on tax rates. This has been the intention, as we believe there is benefit for taxpayers by simplifying the tax system. Simplification is beneficial not only for the purpose of filing tax returns, but for planning to reach financial goals, such as retirement planning.

One attribute that is universally seen as desirable in tax systems is certainty. Tax systems that are radically changing make it difficult for individuals and businesses to have confidence in their plans for the future. The new federal government promised extensive changes in their first budget. It was only prudent to wait to see how disruptive those changes would be for Yukon.

This bill responds to federal plans to phase out and then eliminate the children's fitness tax credit and the children's arts tax credit. However, before I discuss these credits, I want to discuss another tax measure in the federal budget. I would like to discuss the impact of the change to the northern residents deduction and the process, or lack of process, in making that decision.

The federal budget proposes raising the northern residents deduction residency amount by 33 percent, from \$8.25 to \$11 a day. We are in full support of this change, as it recognizes the unique challenges of living in the north. We estimate this

measure will put an additional \$6.3 million in Yukoners' pockets. However, the unique aspect of the change to the northern residents deduction is that it represents a change to what is referred to as the common tax base in Canada.

The common tax base, to grossly simplify, is the determination of taxable income that all provinces use to apply their incomes taxes against. It is basically total income less deductions before credits. Changes to the common tax base should be a matter of federal, provincial and territorial cooperation. Of the \$6.3 million saved by Yukon taxpayers, \$2 million is coming from the Yukon treasury without any consultation and transitional assistance when the federal government unilaterally changed the tax base. This is impacting every province and territory except for PEI, but obviously impacting the three territories the most proportionately. An unplanned imposed \$2-million cut to our treasury on the heels of the cuts to the territorial formula financing grant are not examples of sunny ways, Mr. Speaker. Fortunately, our prudence and strong fiscal management has enabled us to quickly respond to these challenges as demonstrated by our budget presented to this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to return to the specifics of this bill. Our government has been quite clear in our support of these two tax credits. Our government introduced the children's fitness tax credit in December of 2007, enabling families to claim a credit related to children's physical activities up to \$500 per year. In October 2012, we introduced a similar credit for children enrolled in music, arts and tutoring activities. In October 2014, the maximum amount per child that could be claimed for the fitness credit was doubled to \$1,000 per year. In March of 2015, the fitness credit was changed from being a non-refundable tax credit to a refundable credit, enabling families with incomes too low to incur taxes to benefit from this credit. Parents with children with disabilities are entitled to additional amounts when claiming either credit. The two credits' eligibility criteria and the amounts are determined by way of reference to the federal *Income Tax Act*. The federal budget released on March 22, 2016 proposes to reduce both credits by 50 percent in 2016 and eliminate the credits entirely in 2017. Without amendments to the Yukon *Income Tax Act*, Yukon equivalent credits will be phased out in a similar manner.

Mr. Speaker, we believe these important activities should be supported through the tax system; therefore, we are ensuring the continuation of the Yukon credits with this legislation. There are approximately 1,700 families claiming the fitness credit and 650 claiming the arts credit. These credits save taxpayers approximately \$96,000 and \$25,000 annually.

Before I close, Mr. Speaker, I want to just acknowledge the fine work of our Finance department that they do each and every day and for the due diligence that they did putting this together in cooperation with our legislative writers in the Department of Justice.

Ms. Hanson: I'll just speak briefly to this. I think that the Minister of Finance has outlined his interpretation of the

provisions that the federal government has implemented through their federal budget. We had spoken at length over the last while — last year in particular — when we spoke about the nature and the importance of taking a progressive approach to taxation and ensuring that more, rather than fewer, are able to benefit from the instruments that government has available to assist people — and it is clear by the numbers that the Premier tabled that basically those who have, get, and those who do not, do not. If you have the money to be able to fork out for expenditures for either arts or sports, that's great — they'll get a credit on top of everything else.

The reality is — and I think that what we have expressed previously in this Spring Sitting — that the proposed revamped approach from the federal government with respect to ensuring that a larger segment of the Canadian population with children will be able to benefit with a net increase to their income — non-taxable, Mr. Speaker. We are not going to challenge the Finance minister on this, but the fact of the matter is that the notion that we keep taking a little bit here and a little bit there from the territorial treasury — this is a choice that is made, as opposed to doing it in a more progressive manner that would actually, as the federal child benefit does, provide that cash in hand. It really begs the question — as these little boutique cuts have been made over the last 15 years — whether or not that is in fact what is driving the Minister of Finance to do his what he calls “innovative budgeting” to try to find the \$2 million that may make him come close to having a balanced budget at the end of this fiscal year.

Mr. Silver: I will be very brief in second reading of the *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016*. This tax credit is beneficial to many households with children in the Yukon, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately it does not benefit all parents, especially those in a lower-income bracket. The deduction is basically negligible for houses with low-income tax brackets. They are usually the ones needing most of the support.

Art and fitness programs have been proven to help with a child's psyche and promote creativity, interaction with peers, integrity, and overall confidence and self-worth. We need to support families with children to give them all equal opportunities.

It will create a well-rounded and inviting community for our children and I do understand the benefit of these taxes. Because it is a step in the right direction — supporting many parents with children — I will be supporting this bill that will continue the children's art and fitness tax credits. I'm looking forward to the debate in Committee of the Whole.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the indulgence of my colleagues to speak at second reading.

I just wanted to speak briefly in favour of this bill. It is one that we have discussed a little bit during this session. We debated a motion a few weeks ago put forward by my colleague — the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin — about the role of these credits at the federal level and encouraged the

federal government to continue with those federal credits under the children's fitness and art tax credit program.

That motion did pass. Of course the NDP didn't support that motion. The Liberals — it seemed — reluctantly did. This is the Yukon government's response to those federal changes. The tax credit has been reduced and ultimately will be eliminated by the current federal government, and we are trying to do our part to ensure that this does continue in some measure.

This is not the first time we have changed the *Income Tax Act* over the last few years. As the members will recall, we have consistently changed the *Income Tax Act* to reduce the tax burden on Yukoners by providing sweeping tax cuts for all Yukoners in the past years. We have also changed a number of tax measures to reduce the tax burden for Yukon businesses as well as many others. This is just another step forward for us in our overarching plan for the tax system in Yukon to ensure that Yukoners have low taxes and competitive tax regimes and that Yukoners can benefit from healthy choices like having kids in arts and recreation programs.

As the minister responsible for sport and recreation, I obviously support this bill. I know I have heard tremendous feedback from groups like Sport Yukon and others working in the sport field that want to see these tax credits continue. I know that I have spoken to parents who have accessed these credits at the federal level and they very much appreciate them. They certainly help with encouraging their kids to participate in those sorts of programs.

Also, as an MLA, I certainly support this bill as well. I know a number of my constituents have accessed these tax credits and have expressed to me that they would like to see them continue. Both as minister and as an MLA, I am very much supportive of this bill and look forward to seeing it passed so that my constituents and all Yukoners can benefit from this excellent tax credit program.

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

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. Stick: Agree.

Ms. Moorcroft: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Barr: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for second reading of Bill No. 99 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 99, entitled *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016*.

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. 99: *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 99, entitled *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016*.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: It is my pleasure to speak to Bill No. 99, an act to amend the *Income Tax Act*. This bill before the House is a short and simple piece of tax legislation designed to ensure the Yukon children's fitness tax credit and the Yukon children's arts tax credit are maintained at current levels while the federal government reduces their credits by 50 percent this year and eliminates them entirely next year.

Section 2 of Bill No. 99 deals with the Yukon children's arts tax credit. The credit is enabled by the Yukon *Income Tax Act* subparagraph 6(29)(c)(ii), which references, another other items, the federal equivalent credit found in section 118.031 of the federal *Income Tax Act*.

Since the federal credit isn't being eliminated entirely for a year, the most eloquent drafting solution involves removing the reference to the federal credit in subsection 6(29). This

section enables other Yukon tax credits and will remain otherwise unchanged. A new subsection 6(30) is added, which essentially states that the Yukon child arts credit will contain the characteristics such as eligibility criteria and the amounts as found in the federal act and associated regulations in 2015.

Section 3 of Bill No. 99 deals with the Yukon children's fitness tax credit. The credit is enabled by the Yukon *Income Tax Act* paragraph 9.01(1)(c), which references the federally equivalent credit found in section 122.8 of the federal *Income Tax Act*.

The solution for preserving the fitness credit is the same as the arts credit with the sole difference that the new paragraph is not required since paragraph 9.01(1)(c) does not reference other existing credits.

Bill No. 99 includes a few minor consequential amendments designed to preserve the federal Minister of National Revenue's obligations to assess returns containing the refundable children's fitness tax credit. We believe these important activities should be supported through the tax system; therefore, we are ensuring the continuation of the Yukon credits with this legislation. There are approximately 1,700 families claiming the fitness credit and 650 claiming the arts credit. These credits save Yukon taxpayers approximately \$96,000 and \$25,000 annually.

Of course, maintaining the arts and fitness credits is in addition to the support provided through the Yukon child benefit program. Enhanced in 2015, the program provides lower-income households with \$820 per child, up from \$690 before the enhancements took effect on July 1, 2015.

I also — just for comment — find it interesting and I look forward to voting on third reading on this bill. As we know, on April 13, our Member for Vuntut Gwitchin tabled a motion that stated: "THAT this House urges the Parliament of Canada to recognize the importance of encouraging families to adopt healthy lifestyles by fully reinstating the children's fitness tax credit and the children's art tax credit." The record shows that all members of the New Democratic Party voted against that motion. They did support this legislation at second reading. We look forward to seeing whether the Official Opposition continues to support this legislation at third reading.

I also, for the record, want to take a moment to talk about the tax changes that have occurred under the Yukon Party government. This will be the 15th amendment that we have made to the Yukon *Income Tax Act*. As we have stated in the past, each time it is to reduce the tax burden either for Yukon taxpayers or for Yukon small businesses.

To briefly summarize: on May 1, 2003, the Yukon government extended the temporary Yukon mineral exploration tax credit until April 1, 2004. On May 18, 2004, we further extended the temporary Yukon mineral exploration tax credit until April 1, 2007. On December 14, 2004, the Yukon government lowered the small business tax rate from six percent to four percent effective January 1, 2005 and raised the small business tax deduction limit to \$400,000 from \$300,000 effective January 1, 2007. On December 6, 2005, we provided a one-time energy rebate of \$150 effective January 1, 2006 to low-income Yukon families who were entitled to

receive the quarterly GST rebate. On December 19, 2005, Yukon government harmonized Yukon tax brackets with the federal brackets, representing an annual savings to taxpayers of approximately \$473,000 per year. That speaks to the efficiencies of harmonization.

On May 24, 2006, a minor amendment to the Yukon mineral exploration tax credit set a cap on the maximum entitlement to \$300,000 for the last year of the program. On December 13, 2006, we doubled the pension income credit, increased the personal exemption credit and the eligible dependent credit, and introduced credits for adoption expenses, public transit passes and employment income. On December 13, 2007, the Yukon government introduced the Yukon child fitness tax credit and the Yukon child tax credit. On December 31, 2007, we increased the Yukon child benefit from a maximum of \$37.50 per child per month to \$57.50 per child. On November 9, 2010, we modernized the dividend tax credit provisions in the *Income Tax Act* and increased the small business tax deduction limit to \$500,000 from \$400,000 effective January 1, 2010. On December 6, 2012, we established the children's arts tax credit. On May 8, 2014, the Yukon government lowered the small business tax rate by 25 percent — from four percent to three percent — effective July 1, 2014. On April 30, 2014, Yukon government lowered all existing tax brackets, eliminated the surtax, increased the Yukon child benefit and changed the children's fitness tax credit to a refundable credit.

Those were 14 examples. This one that we have now tabled would be 15.

Ms. Hanson: I rise to speak on Bill No. 99, entitled *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016*. I just wanted to reflect on a couple of the comments that were made by the Minister of Finance.

I have a couple of questions, but I just wanted to reflect on this notion that he has — that is sort of a contradictory message that he delivers on a regular basis, which we've become quite inured to. The fact of the matter is that what we've heard over and over again is that this is a Minister of Finance who talks about being a net contributor to Canada and yet has, by his actions and his failures to create an environment conducive to business investment — and I heard this again this morning at a meeting where any resource sector, for example — but that's not the only kind of business investment that we need in this territory — considering or had in the past considering investing here is taking a very jaundiced view of it because of the tendency of this government to create an environment where it's one of uncertainty with respect to whether or not you can make a go of it because of the divisive nature that the government has created or their unwillingness to fulfill their obligations under the land claims agreements et cetera.

The decisions run contrary to what we know and would expect of a government that's trying to create those local businesses that in fact can bolster the economy through the creation of jobs where people actually pay personal income tax to support the public services that we all come to need and to enjoy in this territory and that cause this territory to be the

kind of community that people want to live in. The decisions by this government to award contracts to Outside multinational corporations, thereby minimizing or eliminating the number of locally sourced employees; income tax paid territorially; people making purchases; local multiplier effect — all drastically reduced in terms of the economic implications for dollars that this government has.

What we're seeing increasingly is that this government has lost sight of the fact that for 13 years they have had the opportunity to act like a province and yet they continue to act like an administrator of federal programs, making these decisions so that instead of looking at how they could maximize those federal transfers, they minimize them. When the minister opposite talks about his notion of — and it's really based on the ideology that all tax is bad and so he touts tax after tax that he has cut — I have to ask him: At what point does he think that he is ever going to translate some fiscal capacity to be able to become this net contributor to Canada?

I have some specific questions for the minister with respect to this particular bill. I would like to ask him in terms of the economic modelling that was done — he has referenced the number of families and certainly that information was provided in previous briefings. What I would ask the minister to do is to confirm the number of children — first of all, confirm the age range for eligibility for this credit; second, the total number of children in that age range in the Yukon who will benefit from this credit; and third, the percentage of children and families represented by the total number of tax filers in the Yukon.

If we're looking at the number of children in the Yukon, how many children have been benefitting or what percentage do they represent in terms of the Yukon total population of children whose families are eligible for this tax credit? If the minister is true to his word, it's really about whether or not children are actually accessing these benefits. I would imagine that the minister would have made an informed decision when he determined that this was a course of action that he wanted to take and he would know the number of children who would actually benefit from this and what percentage they form of the total youth population. I'm sure he would look at — or has that modelling been done based on the Yukon Bureau of Statistics? Even if he only has it as of September 2015, I would be quite happy with that number as opposed to the end of the calendar year or the end of the fiscal year. Whichever year he can provide, that full-year data would be helpful — and what the forecast is beyond 2017 in terms of, again, looking at the Bureau of Statistics population forecast for the eligible age range for this tax credit benefit.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I think part of what we heard from the Leader of the NDP really speaks to the significant ideological differences that exist between the NDP and the Yukon Party. The Yukon Party believes that now more than ever, we need to stand up for the resource industry and we are proud, Madam Chair, that there is one party in this territory that actually aspires to a longer term vision, a path to prosperity and a goal of being able to pay our own way, which

is something that we very much believe in and will work every day toward reaching that goal. Of course, that goal is not in the near term, but unless we actually put that out in front every day, it's difficult to — Madam Chair, you put it out in front of you every day and it helps you determine the decisions that you make. It's very important.

I think really one of the things that we do see and hear is that, not only the NDP's but also the Liberals' view of diversification is quite simple. Their view of diversification is to replace resource jobs. That's how they would diversify, whereas the Yukon Party wants to add jobs over and above the resource sector. I think that is a significant difference between the Yukon Party, the territorial NDP and the territorial Liberal parties.

Having said that, we continue to make significant investments across the board — I just think of the IT sector, the knowledge economy, where we're increasing our envelopes from \$6.5 million to \$9.5 million this year. I'm looking at the work that's going on as we move forward from Yukon College to creating a Yukon university and the tremendous work that exists through the Yukon Research Centre. We continue to look for opportunities to find areas within the economy that will allow us to continue to grow regardless of what happens in a cyclical mining industry.

Again, for all the 6,000 people who live here now who were not here when the Yukon Party took over in late 2002 — just a reminder of what we saw after a successive NDP and Liberal government and some of the significant policies — like a protected areas strategy, to name one off the top of my head — we saw a mass exodus of population, mostly people in their prime working years of 25 to 45 years of age, who left this territory. We saw massive unemployment — double-digit unemployment — at a point where, sadly, this territory was borrowing money just to pay wages.

We will continue to keep our focus on the resource sector. We know that, for every job that's created within the mining industry, it will produce anywhere from five to eight jobs in the rest of the economy. That is a large part of how we will get to our goal of becoming a net financial contributor, of paying our own way. It is through a strong, vibrant, growing, responsible resource sector — that's how we will get there. Again, I will say that this party will continue to stand up even more so for that industry at a time when it definitely needs that support.

To answer the member opposite's questions, 16 years of age is the age for eligibility — that's my understanding — for the tax credits. Of course, we know that children don't file taxes, so for the information she is requesting I will ask the deputy minister, who I rudely did not introduce when we started. I would like to recognize that Kate White is here and, again, I thank you for your support and the great work of your department.

We'll endeavour to provide that information, extrapolated as best as it can be from the tax information that we collect. As we continue to focus on creating opportunities to grow our economy, that will also mean, as we've seen in the past decade, a growth in population and therefore, I would suggest,

a greater utilization of these two credits, as I could echo the remarks of the Minister of Community Services that we have heard from many people who are supportive of these tax credits for fitness, as well as arts, tutoring and music. The numbers show 1,700 families claiming the fitness credit and 650 claiming the arts credit and, between them, they save taxpayers \$96,000 and \$25,000 respectively every year.

Ms. Hanson: The difference — as we've said repeatedly on this side of the House — is that we believe in evidence-based decision-making. So when I asked the Premier — I asked the Finance minister — I was clear that I was not talking about children filing income tax — really.

I was asking him about the children who are affected by this tax credit so I would have expected him to have that evidence. He has every bit of data at his behest.

In fact, when he quotes that the population is soaring in this territory, he may want to look at his own data. The Yukon Bureau of Statistics has shown in fact that the population has declined since 2014, through various numbers. I am sure that he can — those decreases do in fact have a material impact on the territory over time.

Madam Chair, I am not going to belabour this because I think that what we hear from the Premier is that, rather than him wanting to address the particulars just of this tax measure — is to trot out the same old shibboleths of party mantra. I would point out yet again that Standard & Poor's has made it clear in their reports that the actions of this Yukon Party government have narrowed the fiscal flexibility of this government increasingly over the last 13 years to the point that, if and when the government actually wanted to act like a government and make independent decisions based on the priorities of Yukon citizens, our fiscal flexibility is about 15 to 16 percent of our overall total budget or revenues. The revenues that we have in this territory become more and more inflexible in terms of predetermined requirements — non-discretionary, in other terms.

Madam Chair, I think we will just leave it at that because I really do not want to hear any more of the same Yukon Party — if he will not give me the information — if he cannot tell me the total number of children in the age range of the 16-and-under that he mentioned who will benefit from this and what percentage of the total number of children in that age range of under-16 who are represented in terms of Yukon children — I mean, it's just useful information to determine the comparative value of this kind of measure being written into law, as opposed to any other means.

Thanks, Madam Chair — and we will be happy to move on.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: By way of technology, I have part of that answer for the member opposite already.

For the 2014 tax year, there were 2,839 children who benefited from the fitness tax credit. Madam Chair, that is approximately 46 percent — almost half of the children — in the eligible age group who were actually able to subscribe to the fitness tax credit. I would say to the member opposite that it is a significant number of children and families who were able to use this tax credit — a refundable tax credit, I might

add. It will benefit those people whose incomes are low and those who don't pay taxes will also see a return as a result of this being a refundable tax credit. I think it truly does speak to how important Yukoners and Yukon families feel about this tax credit.

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

We are going to move on to clause-by-clause debate.

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Clause 3

Ms. Hanson: In clause 3(2), the expression “federal child fitness credit” is replaced with the expression “notional federal credit”. What is the implication of that?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: The federal child fitness credit ceases to exist at the implementation of the federal budget 2016 amendment. This provides for the continuation of the Yukon child fitness tax credit after the federal credit ceases.

Ms. Hanson: I am curious as to the language “notional federal credit”. If one is ceasing, why do we have language that says “notional federal credit”?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: It is because it occurs in the past.

Ms. Hanson: It occurs in the past tense or it has occurred in the past?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I believe I did mention this in my Committee opening statement — “in the past” in that it refers to 2015. That's correct because they are changing it for the 2016 tax year. It is “in the past” in that it will refer to as it was described in 2015 prior to them making amendments to the federal legislation.

Ms. Hanson: That clarifies that. How does that jive with section 3(3): “This section applies to the 2016 and subsequent taxation years.” If it is the past years, is it the future years too?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: This ensures that the Yukon child fitness tax credit continues on at the maximum of \$1,000 per child.

Ms. Hanson: So 3(2) says that it refers to the past, 3(3) makes this year and subsequent years, and the question still stands with respect to the language “notional federal credit”.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Maybe I will just try to go back to the notes that I said at the beginning of committee. Since the federal credit isn't being eliminated entirely for a year, the most eloquent drafting solution involves removing the references.

What we're doing is, as the federal government phases out 50 percent in 2016 to zero in the calendar year of 2017, we're ensuring that the Yukon portion of this credit remains as it was in 2015, in relation to the federal tax — that it remains at \$1,000 and remains as a refundable tax credit. We want no change to the Yukon portion of what had existed prior to the federal government making amendments through its budget 2016.

Ms. Hanson: I'm just unclear on the language used. We're talking about a Yukon tax credit, but we're talking

about it being a notional federal credit. I'm just looking for clarity as to the language of "notional federal credit". As I understood it, this is an amendment to the Yukon tax legislation.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: What we're talking about is that, by the time we get to 2017, there will be no record of this in the federal tax legislation. That's why it's described as it is. That was the necessity for us to make these amendments, to ensure that the Yukon portion of these tax credits will remain as they were in 2015.

Clause 3 agreed to

On Clause 4

Clause 4 agreed to

On Clause 5

Clause 5 agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Madam Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 99, entitled *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Pasloski that the Chair report Bill No. 99, entitled *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 99, entitled *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

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.

Bill No. 21: *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 21, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Pasloski.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I move that Bill No. 21, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 21, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I am pleased to introduce Bill No. 21, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, along with a companion budget document, the 2015-16 *Supplementary Estimates No. 2*.

Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature will have noted that a special warrant was issued February 5 in the amount of \$15,640,000. There may be critics who suggest that a warrant was not necessary — that a warrant does not represent open and accountable government. As I have stated in previous comments before the Legislature, my colleagues and I take very seriously and respect the importance of effective processes and procedures in support of our decision-making responsibilities. We prepare and table budgets based on the best and most current information at that time — notwithstanding, the best-laid plans are subject to change, Mr. Speaker, and we know that they always do. Changes to the budget plan through the supplementary estimates allow us to be responsive to emerging pressures and priorities of importance to Yukoners. Changes to the budget plan through the supplementary estimates maintain accountability to the Legislative Assembly and to all Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, as identified in the *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, the 2015-16 *Supplementary Estimates No. 2* provides for sums required of \$15,640,000. The sums required are offset by sums not required of \$34,448,000. In accordance with the *Financial Administration Act*, the amounts authorized by the special warrant are identified in the *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16* and summarized in schedule C.

Mr. Speaker, while the Legislature conducts its business, the amount authorized by special warrant ensures that government officials had the requisite legal authority to make expenditures delegated and entrusted to them to provide for uninterrupted government operations while Bill No. 21 is debated in the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, the second supplementary estimates detail the proposed expenditure changes that require legislative appropriation authority in addition to the spending authorities previously granted by the Legislature. Although I defer to the individual ministers on the details, I will take a moment to comment on our summary financials reported here today.

Mr. Speaker, *Supplementary Estimates No. 2* presented a forecast annual surplus of \$1.235 million, resulting in an estimated accumulated surplus for March 31, 2016 of just under \$1.354 billion; and continuing to avoid net debt, our year-end net financial asset position is projected at \$131.728 million.

I wish to emphasize for all members the significance of having net financial assets as opposed to net debt. This is a very significant indicator of our financial health and it means that the government is not relying on future revenues to provide current services. This is an enviable position as we continue to provide financially sustainable programs, services and infrastructure on behalf of Yukoners.

While most provincial and territorial governments have net debt, meaning they owe more than they are currently capable of paying, that is not the case in Yukon. We have the

cash and other financial assets to pay off all of our obligations. This is significant, as it allows our government to be flexible in timing our investment decisions. Our very healthy net financial resource position has provided and will continue to provide our government the opportunity to make significant capital and program investments to the benefit of all Yukoners.

As I have noted, ministers who are requesting supplementary budget approval will be pleased to provide members of the Legislature with the complete details of their expenditure requirements in a department-by-department, line-by-line review in general debate, if requested.

I would also like to take an opportunity again to recognize and to thank our Department of Finance for the great job that they have done and acknowledge the work of the finance people in all the departments who were required — even for the supplementary estimates — to put it together. Again, it's acknowledging the work of those great people who work for us every day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Finance minister, I commend the supplementary estimates for consideration by the Legislative Assembly.

Ms. Hanson: I believe that the Minister of Finance has demonstrated yet again, for the fifth straight time in a row, the problem that he has with managing — both in his ability to forecast additional expenditures as well as an inability to manage planned expenditures — those that had been approved by this majority government in the last fiscal year. I don't intend to comment at great length. The fact of the matter is that this government has demonstrated by this bill their inability to set clear objectives and/or program goals and/or implement those that it does establish or put in place.

The difficulty is that it's rather rich to talk about not relying on future revenues to provide current services when we see a government that doesn't base its decisions on evidence, but has shown by its repeated need to come back to get after-the-fact authority for the expenditure of dollars after the money has been spent — after they put their majority rubber stamp on expenditures already made. We know that the truth will only become known or confirmed after the fact when the Public Accounts are tabled or published later this fall.

The fact of the matter is that when the Minister of Finance says that we're not relying on future revenues to provide current services, the picture painted by this government in fact contradicts that when we look at the forecasts for this year, as an example, where we have an as yet unknown massive increase in O&M funding for an as yet not completely costed major capital expenditure — the facility at Whistle Bend.

So for the minister to suggest that the surplus that he has worn down from over \$80 million to \$1.235 million — I love the precision and will love to see how that looks in the fall — notwithstanding that he has left off that \$187.5 million in debt from our Crown corporations that the actions of this

government have saddled Yukoners with to be paying in the future.

What we have seen is a demonstration of an inability to develop a plan, much less stick with it. One of the things that we go back to talking about — as he said, the best-laid plans change and we know they always do. Unfortunately, Yukoners do know all too well that with the Yukon Party, the priorities and the plans — best-laid or not — do change; they always do.

I can imagine — when I look at the bill that's before us and I see areas where there is lapsed funding, that if we had a government that actually looked at priorities from the community-based approach, I can imagine citizens in Ross River would have appreciated recognition of the enduring challenges they face, driving the road between Ross River and Faro and the precarious nature of that road with respect to medevacs or even just as a road safety issue, as well as the implications it has for dissuading tourism from that region of the country — or those same citizens, if they thought that it would have been nice, with these lapsed funds on certain areas — the state of the airfield at Ross River or Pelly Crossing — they would wonder why no action was taken in moving "Mount Paz". Or they would wonder, with this almost a million in unspent capital for Yukon Housing Corporation, why there's such a delay in getting repairs done to the capital infrastructure — the housing stock of the Yukon Housing Corporation — with the million and a half in Community Services and the decision made not to respond to the repeated need in the Carmacks community for a viable community centre for their kids to be able to play hockey. We just spent a lot of time talking about the niceties of tax credits for kids for sports and fitness, but if you don't have a hockey rink, it isn't going to be very useful to have that fitness credit. No confirmation, as we heard yet again this afternoon for the community of Ross River, despite the fact that on tourism brochures going back many years and currently, the Ross River bridge is touted as a tourism icon — but we don't think it's a priority to put money into that.

The question that citizens could legitimately ask is: Will this government use its much-vaunted surpluses — wherever they're hiding them — to fund these critical community infrastructure projects?

Again, it's sad to see that the dependency on Canada doesn't decrease, but it is sadder yet to see the dependency on Canada in terms of decision-making — 13 years after devolution of provincial-like responsibilities to the Yukon government. When will the Yukon government act like a province to work with the communities to set priorities and to work with achieving them as opposed to simply waiting for Ottawa to tell them what is available to spend? As I said earlier, Standard & Poor's has just demonstrated and confirmed again that this government has restricted its flexibility by the decisions it has taken. We now have less fiscal flexibility than we have ever had. One would think that they would want to use that to the maximum to try to build an economy that actually has some of our own-source revenues.

There is nothing to commend this. It is the same old, same old, and we will just observe as the government goes on about it.

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

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I am proud to rise to end second reading debate on Bill No. 21. I just have a few comments to make.

To reiterate, as I have said, today — was echoed by the Leader of the NDP. I have, in fact, said it many times: changes can happen and almost always do, because you do your budgeting and planning based on the best information that you have at the time. Inevitably, there are things that can occur. Many times it is beyond the control of the government as well.

The good news — and what Yukoners are thankful for and comforted by — is that there is a Yukon Party in power that has been responsible with the money. We are not asking future generations to pay for programs or services that we are providing today. We are not in that position and, in fact, we are now the only jurisdiction not in that position — not in the position where we are borrowing money to provide services and asking our kids or grandkids — or, in the case of some provinces, it might be six or seven generations to be able to get out of their fiscal imbalance. I will point out for the record, as well, that, because of assertions made by the NDP leader, the Auditor General of Canada every year does fully and completely audit our consolidated accounts and has, each and every year, provided an unqualified position and stated clearly that we are in a net financial position, that our assets exceed our liabilities, and that we have money in the bank. That allows us the flexibility to be able to react as things change and to be able to provide those services without having to mortgage the future. I know that Yukoners are listening and Yukoners across this territory are very grateful.

As I have said in this House many times, families and small businesses have to live within their means and their government should have to do the very same thing. Again, the Leader of the NDP wants to quote Standard & Poor's and talks about reducing flexibility, which is really code for "raising taxes". That is exactly what the NDP are talking about — raising taxes. To describe it in the manner in which the Leader of the NDP has said on the record, we should not really call them "taxes"; we should just be calling them "fees".

Mr. Speaker, when we are talking about financial management — I'm looking at and I have quoted in this House a few times some examples of some of the recent provincial budgets that are going on. We see right now in Alberta with the NDP government — I understand that their revenues are down; our revenues are down as well. What is happening in Alberta is that as revenues have gone down significantly, they have continued to increase their spending. In fact, within two weeks of tabling their budget, their credit rating was downgraded not once, but twice in less than two

weeks. They are now saying that they are going to have created, I believe, just under \$60 billion of debt by 2019. In fact, they had legislation that limited the amount of debt to GDP which they are now going to amend, so that they can in fact exceed the legislative limit that was put in place. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, they are now borrowing money to pay wages today and then asking future generations to pay that money back. We know that would be the path of the NDP and we know that would be the path of the Liberals — that is not the path for the Yukon Party.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 21 agreed to

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 21: *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 21, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Madam Chair, I am not going to forget as I start this time — I would like to acknowledge my Deputy Minister of Finance, Kate White, and thank her again and to thank her department for the incredible work they do every day.

As identified in the *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16, Supplementary Estimates No. 2* provides for sums required of \$15,640,000. These sums required are offset by sums not required of \$34,448,000.

The *Supplementary Estimates No. 2* presents a forecast annual surplus of \$1.235 million, resulting in an estimated accumulated surplus for March 31, 2016 of just under \$1.354 billion and, continuing to avoid net debt, our year-end net financial asset position is projected at \$131.728 million.

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

We're going to proceed now to clause-by-clause review.

Ms. Stick: Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses, schedules and the title of Bill No. 21, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses, schedules and the title of Bill No. 21 read and agreed to

Chair: Ms. Stick has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses, schedules and the title of Bill No. 21, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, read and agreed to. Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 1 and 2 and Schedules A, B and C, deemed read and agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Madam Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 21, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Pasloski that the Chair report Bill No. 21, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Chair: We are going to proceed to general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*. 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. 23: First Appropriation Act, 2016-17 — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Department of Economic Development — continued

Hon. Mr. Hassard: I would just like to thank a couple of people for being here to help me out today: deputy minister Justin Ferbey — and today we have joining us Andy Gaul, who is our acting ADM.

Madam Chair, when I left off last, I was in the process of talking about Yukon's economy, so with your indulgence, I'll just continue from there.

Yukon's economy depends not only on what happens within our territory's borders but also beyond them. The department represents Yukon's interest in national and international trade negotiations.

Yukon works with other Canadian governments to reduce unnecessary barriers to trade because the free flow of people,

goods, services and investments across Canada supports stronger economies. As a sparsely populated jurisdiction with a number of developing economic sectors, an important objective in negotiations is ensuring that Yukon continues to have the tools necessary to achieve economic strength and diversification.

In 2016-17, we will continue to support business development with transfer payment budgets of \$532,000. The department provides support and stimulates the development and growth of Yukon's small- and medium-sized enterprises to further maximize benefits from large resource development projects and other economic activities.

Last spring, our new enterprise development services unit was put in place to better serve the needs of small- and medium-sized enterprise community. Small- and medium-sized enterprises have access to business development to support, and advisory services through the branch's partnerships with non-governmental organizations and industry associations as well as through direct financial assistance. Clients have been able to benefit from staff expertise and also learn more about potential funding sources.

We've also started administering the Canada-Yukon Business Service Centre in collaboration with the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency to advise and direct clients to business services offered by the Government of Canada. The government's business incentive program was also recently incorporated into this one-stop shop in order to serve Yukoners better.

We're committed to growing the private sector economy. We're acting on that commitment by helping more businesses get the financing that they need to expand. This past year, we recognized that the Yukon venture loan guarantee program could be used by more businesses if it was updated to reflect current interest rates and would help more businesses obtain commercial loans. By extending the Yukon venture loan guarantee program to loans at lower interest rates, more companies can now secure financing to upgrade facilities, increase operations or develop new projects and, of course, hire Yukoners.

The department works to increase the benefits that Yukoners, businesses, First Nations and communities receive from economic projects and activities that take place. Government-to-government meetings are especially important as the federal government considers further infrastructure investments.

Over the past year, the department has supported a number of tourism and business missions. Recently, we accompanied local businesses to Ottawa for Yukon Days. This was a coordinated effort to promote Yukon in Ottawa through Yukon tourism promotion, business events and government-to-government meetings. Yukon First Nation chiefs and local businesses like Air North, Yukon's airline joined the delegation to strengthen relationships between government, businesses and tourism operators as well as to promote Yukon's industry to important partners.

The Yukon government has been pleased to partner with the City of Whitehorse, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce,

Air North, and many Yukon tourism and business operators to generate partnership opportunities.

Seeing that I am about out of time, I will take this opportunity to sit down and let the member opposite speak.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for his introductory comments. I hope that we can move through this budget area by focusing on some of the particular areas and some of the particular questions that arise in the Department of Economic Development. The minister just spoke to a certain degree about the support that is provided to local businesses with respect to a number of events. We have seen travel increase from a number of departments and, notably — and I will link this back to what I have read in the departmental strategic plan.

I have a question: Could the minister outline what travel from Economic Development is projected for this fiscal year? I am presuming this is based on the plan that he has in place as the minister responsible for Economic Development — this is travel related to China, for PDAC, Roundup. For what other key events does the Department of Economic Development provide staff travel? What is the purpose of the travel? What goals are established for that travel? How does the department, the minister, determine the success of that? What retrospective look is taken to determine, basically, the return on the investment for that travel?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: If I could just take a few minutes to finish my opening remarks before I get back to the member opposite regarding the travel, I will.

As I was saying, the enterprise trade fund was developed to stimulate and support the growth of Yukon business activity by focusing on the development or expansion of export markets, attracting investment capital for businesses, and supporting business planning, marketing and business skills and training. The fund has been accessed by businesses from a wide variety of sectors, including the manufacturing, service, cultural, mining, and film and sound sectors. In addition to being available to all Yukon businesses, the enterprise trade fund also accepts applications from for-profit and not-for-profit business-related organizations and industry associations.

From April 1, 2015 to January 28, 2016, we funded 133 projects from Yukon businesses to assist them to expand their export-related operations. In this budget, we are allocating \$360,000 for this important fund. We are also budgeting \$73,000 to continue the microloan program administered by Dāna Nāye Ventures. This program provides loans for the creation of small- and home-based businesses and targets a segment of the market that has not been adequately served by banks because of high transaction costs. From March 2000 to December 31, 2015, 152 loans with a total value of over \$467,000 were disbursed. There are currently 15 active clients.

Other 2016-17 budget item highlights include: Yukon Federation of Labour for \$36,000; Yukon Chamber of Commerce for \$35,000; Yukon Building and Construction Trades Council for \$15,000; the Alaska trade show for \$8,000; and the Business Development Bank for \$5,000.

Madam Chair, in terms of connectivity, a current multi-jurisdictional concern is the state of broadband connectivity here in the north. Of course telecommunications is an important enabling factor in the economy and the Technology and Telecommunications Development Directorate's — or T2D2 — work includes exploring options for improvement. Information and communication technology services are essential for Yukon residents and businesses alike. This sector has an incredible potential as a contributor to a diversified Yukon economy. Further, we believe that the information and communication technology sector and telecommunications infrastructure in the north should be comparable with other areas of Canada in terms of access, service, quality and price. Of course connectivity means modern, affordable and reliable infrastructure, Madam Chair.

Our Department of Economic Development's Technology and Telecommunications Development Directorate has been working hard over the past couple of years to ensure Yukoners get fast, affordable and reliable telecommunication infrastructure and services. For the past two years, this government has conducted extensive research into alternate fibre route options with particular focus of course on the Juneau and Dempster Highway fibre link possibilities. Of course, we have decided that the Dempster Highway fibre link is the route to go in partnership with Northwestel. Of course, we have in the budget this year \$500,000 for next steps in this project. This link will provide the best long-term diversity for Yukon as well as enable diversity of voice and mobility services. This route is the only route that ensures redundancy to most Yukon communities.

As part of this announcement, Northwestel has committed to contributing its own capital to strengthening fibre in the territory, including extending the existing fibre line from Stewart Crossing to Dawson City. This means that, in addition to redundancy, there will be an increase in the number of communities with reliable fibre service. The Dempster Highway fibre link project will build more than 750 kilometres of fibre along the Dempster Highway and connect the Yukon's fibre network with that of the Northwest Territories, providing fibre diversity to both Yukon and the northwestern part of the Northwest Territories. This means that should there be a backhoe cut or fire damage, for example, it will not be as noticeable to residents and businesses along the loop.

Cloud data services, ATMs and credit card machines will remain in operation while the primary line is fixed. Internet access will continue with broadband speeds. This enhanced reliability should provide the confidence for network-dependent businesses to invest and expand here in Yukon.

The Dempster Highway project is a two-year build, with completion anticipated in 2017. Northwestel started the first leg of this project by issuing a tender back in March for the Stewart-to-Dawson link. Both Canada and the Northwest Territories are supportive of northern redundancy, and we continue to work with those governments to explore partnerships. By creating a fully redundant fibre loop, we are ensuring every Yukoner and every Yukon business has access

to reliable Internet service, as well as mobile services, which are increasingly important to Canadians both economically and socially.

As well as Internet connectivity, the Government of Yukon wants to ensure that Yukoners in all communities have access to those same economic and social benefits. The Government of Yukon is providing \$760,000 in funding to Bell Mobility between 2014 and 2018 to assist with the expansion of 4G services in Yukon communities to ensure Yukoners have mobile access that is comparable to the rest of Canada: over \$68,000 in 2014-15, \$438,000 in 2015-16, \$46,000 in 2016-17 and over \$207,000 in 2017-18. As a result of this initiative, 4G mobile service is now currently available in 17 Yukon communities, and 4G service is scheduled to be available in Beaver Creek this year, with service to Destruction Bay and Stewart Crossing scheduled for completion in 2017. 4G service, which allows people to use smart phones, is economically and socially important to Yukoners. By 2017, Yukoners in every community will have access to 4G cellular service.

It is also through T2D2 that the department supports Yukon's research, innovation and commercialization sector as an area of prime strategic importance to our economy. Development of the research, innovation and commercialization sector has a strategic long-term benefit for Yukon, including enabling growth of the private sector, supporting the development of wealth-generating industries and secondary industries, as well as supporting the development of a knowledge-based economy here in the Yukon.

The Department of Economic Development is investing over \$1.1 million in research-, innovation- and commercialization-related projects in 2016-17. \$820,000 of that is budgeted for Yukon College toward support for Cold Climate Innovation and technology innovation at the Yukon Research Centre. The Cold Climate Innovation centre's vision is to become an internationally recognized hub for cold climate technologies and related solutions for the subarctic regions around the world. In turn, this will support the development, enhancement and success of Yukon's technology industries.

As well, Madam Chair, \$302,000 is budgeted toward the technology and telecommunications sector. This includes \$150,000 for the Yukon Information Technology and Industry Society for operational funding and other projects intended to provide a focal point for the industry and to enable the society to act as an advocate for the industry, to provide a forum for industry members, and to promote the industry outside of the Yukon.

As well, Madam Chair, \$75,000 will be provided in continued support to YuKonstruct for their operations, which began last year and will continue in 2016-17. YuKonstruct will also receive funding to complete a strategic planning project, as well as funding for (co)space, which is the first of its kind here in the north.

The Government of Yukon is also participating in the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications

Commission's hearing on basic service offerings, which may fundamentally change the landscape of services.

The Government of Yukon is also investing resources to support the development and diversification of the Yukon information technology sector in funding specific projects that will support the development, growth and diversification of the information and communications technology sector.

Now a little bit more about economic diversity — for example, just as we reach out to mineral industry investors, we also reach out to the film and sound industries to create opportunities for Yukoners and to maximize the economic impact of media production in the Yukon. Our film and sound industry is vibrant and growing. The Yukon Film and Sound Commission will build on its recent activities and successes providing Yukoners with employment and training opportunities and encouraging investment from Outside interests.

A portion of the 2015-16 funding was designated to the film location incentive program, with several productions currently being shot here in the Yukon. Our investment attraction efforts in this sector have increased attention from Outside interests to the Yukon as a film location, with spinoffs to the tourism, hospitality and retail sectors.

Madam Chair, because of this, visitation to the Yukon has increased, and the tourism and hospitality industries are benefiting economically from the spending generated by tourists and film productions. From April 1, 2015 to January 28, 2016, the Yukon film location incentive program provided financial benefits to two projects for over \$673,000 and has an anticipated direct spend to Yukon businesses and crews of over \$2.6 million, Madam Chair. As of January 28 this year, over \$8.3 million has been awarded to 428 film- and sound-related projects and initiatives since 2003. This investment has resulted in direct spending being injected into the Yukon, contributing significantly to the growth of our economy, and we, of course, want to continue the momentum of that growth.

In 2016-17, the Government of Yukon is budgeting \$815,000 toward Yukon Film and Sound Commission transfer payments. Some highlights of this funding include: \$380,000 toward the film production fund; \$140,000 for the film location fund; \$50,000 toward the film training incentive fund; \$50,000 for the film development fund; \$50,000 has been budgeted toward the sound recording fund; and \$40,000 will be available from the filmmakers fund.

These programs provide funding to Yukon producers for projects that have demonstrated commercial potential. The programs also provide financial benefits to production companies from outside Yukon to film in Yukon and hire Yukoners. From April 1 of last year to January 28 of this year, the Yukon Film and Sound Commission approved 36 projects totalling over \$1 million in funding under the film and sound incentive program. Additionally, during this same period, seven film projects were approved for over \$25,000 under the enterprise trade fund program to support Yukoners in seeking additional investment in their projects from outside of the territory.

We are taking on new and innovative initiatives as the environment changes and presents new opportunities for enhancement. As part of our commitment to encourage industry development, film and sound initiative programs are currently being reviewed. Recently, the Yukon Film and Sound Commission launched a pilot producer mentorship program to provide local film producers with knowledge and advice from experts in the field. The program offers up to 15 hours of mentorship that allows writers, directors and producers to access supports as they complete funding applications, develop their business or pitch projects to national and international markets. The Government of Yukon is proud to respond to the needs of our local film industry by offering a mentorship opportunity that will advance Yukon film and media projects.

Moving on to Regional Economic Development — this branch supports a broad range of foundational activities for organizations with a mandate in the area of economic development. The Regional Economic Development branch works with First Nations, local governments, communities and community-based organizations to facilitate strong, economically self-reliant regions and communities. The branch supports social and economic development projects and works with clients throughout the process from project articulation to implementation. Over \$3.3 million has been budgeted toward regional economic development transfer payments for this fiscal year. This includes over \$405,000 for First Nations and regional economic development and over \$2.9 million for the community development fund.

As well as providing advisory and coordination services, the branch financially supports worthwhile initiatives through the regional economic development and the community development funds. The regional economic development fund was established in 2004 to support an inclusive and comprehensive approach to developing regional economic interests. From April 1 of last year to January 28 of this year, 38 projects from Yukon communities were approved for the regional economic development fund for a total of just over \$580,000. These approved projects included: implementation of a municipal economic development strategy; due diligence and feasibility studies of potential First Nation business ventures across a number of sectors, including renewable energy, tourism, transportation, environmental remediation and community economic development, as well as attendance for a variety of stakeholders at networking and educational events.

In August 2015, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the Government of Yukon were pleased to announce the finalization of the *Regional Economic Development Plan for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Traditional Territory*. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in traditional territory regional economic development plan was developed with the assistance of an oversight committee consisting of representatives of the final agreement signatories — Government of Canada, Government of Yukon, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the City of Dawson — as part of regional economic development and opportunity planning initiatives.

The plan presents a long-term sustainable community-based approach to economic development that will lead to increased local spending, increased employment opportunities, growth in existing businesses and the emergence of new businesses in key sectors. The dedication of all involved parties has resulted in a plan that will contribute to the enhancement of local and regional business development with benefits for the entire territory.

Madam Chair, a memorandum of understanding between the participants of the North Yukon Regional Economic Action Development Initiative — or READI initiative — was signed in August 2015 and is now underway. The participants in READI are the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Vuntut Gwitchin, First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun, the City of Dawson and the Village of Mayo, along with the Yukon government. The initiative is a pilot project designed to provide a blend of economic development and business advisory services to north Yukon.

The guiding principles of the north Yukon READI will ensure partnerships and shared oversight of the project, shared resources and decision-making, and community-based planning and deliverables. This project will continue through 2016-17.

Madam Chair, I'll just take a moment and stop there for now.

Ms. Hanson: I'm not sure if we're actually going to have any discussion about the budget or if we're just going to have read the minister's prepared statements. I thought the purpose of this was to ask questions about the Department of Economic Development — questions that may or may not have been covered in the briefing. I guess I'll give it another try. I have one question on the record, and I hope that we will come back to that.

I'll just start backward from where the minister was and we'll come back to the other questions that I have, because where he left off was on regional economic development plans pursuant to chapter 22 of the First Nation final agreements. Yes, indeed, I was there when the READI was finally signed off this winter in Dawson. Can the minister tell the House how many regional economic development plans, pursuant to chapter 22, have been finalized? How many have been completed? Could he name them please, for the record?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: I just have a few more minutes left of my opening remarks. I do think they are important and would like to get them on record today. I'm not ignoring the member's questions, but I think it's important for people out there to understand the work that is being done by the department.

Back to Regional Economic Development — the intended outcomes include coordinated regional economic development plans, a positive long-term plan, long-term impacts on employment and wealth creation, diversified local economies and an inclusive workforce.

Assistance under the regional economic development fund is available for activities related to regional economic development including: assistance in developing regional economic development plans; participation in regional

economic development planning processes; opportunity identification; and related research. The fund also supports activities related to capacity development including: needs assessments; training plans; and corporate organizational capacity training for corporate business, enterprises and economic development organizations. Since inception, the fund has invested over \$4 million in 284 projects.

We can just discuss communities and how we work to strengthen them. The community development fund provides support to Yukon communities, industry and professional associations, non-profit and charitable organizations and municipal and First Nation government projects for projects and events that support community well-being, create jobs, generate spending on Yukon goods and services and have measurable social, cultural and economic benefits for Yukon residents and communities.

The primary goal of the community development fund, or CDF, is to support projects and events that provide long-term sustainable economic or social benefits to Yukon communities. From April 1 of last year to March 1 of this year, Government of Yukon approved over \$3.7 million in funding toward 82 projects throughout the territory.

Some examples of the CDF projects include: \$15,000 for the Association of Yukon Fire Chiefs for training and education tools; \$20,000 to the Copper Ridge Neighbourhood Association to build a playground; \$5,884 to the Mount Lorne Community Association for improvements to the sound tech system and media system; \$19,750 to the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre to develop a comprehensive communications plan and website to strategically target key Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre audiences; \$10,865 to the Yukon Church Heritage Society for research, writing, printing and signage to support the development of a multi-media photo and static display; and \$5,796 to the Yukon Council on Aging to modernize the yukon-seniors-and-elders.org web page, allowing accessibility by all electronic communication devices and desktop computers and giving it an updated look and feel, incorporating a more user-friendly design.

Some examples of projects made possible through the community development fund also include — since 2003-04 the department has provided over \$38 million toward 1,190 community-related projects. These projects have enhanced our communities and the Yukoners who live in our communities. This makes our Yukon region even more appealing.

Madam Chair, the Department of Economic Development plays an important role in the well-being of our territory. The operational budget totalling \$16.4 million and the capital budget of \$1.2 million reflects the priorities outlined. This work is even more crucial during difficult economic times and we will continue to work hard to achieve the goals I have outlined today.

I appreciate the member's attention to detail and further appreciate your support for the resources that will enable Economic Development's continued work on behalf of a vibrant and diversified economy and high quality of life for Yukoners.

Back to the questions regarding the travel — we have a couple of different ways of doing it. We have the investment attraction activities, as well as the investment attraction strategy. In the investment attraction activities — to achieve the Government of Yukon's objective of enhancing the development of Yukon's private sector economy, investment attraction activities focus on the territory's investment-ready sectors: natural resources, technology and tourism. The government's focus has been to promote investment to several key markets around the globe. Over the past year, the Premier and a number of Cabinet ministers have showcased Yukon on the global stage by making presentations to investors at PDAC, the Cambridge House, Colorado Precious Metals Summit and the Yukon Mining Alliance investment tour.

These events provide opportunities for Yukon mining companies to introduce their projects to investors and raise the profile of Yukon's mineral potential and mining projects. In the investment attraction strategy, the department's strategy involves a relationship-oriented approach with the goal of building stable networks between First Nations, industry, government and investors.

The department continues to strengthen existing relationships with First Nation development corporations, industry and industry representatives. This includes a coordinated effort to ensure an effective and consistent promotion of Yukon and its resources.

Madam Chair, the government has recently created a new unit, focusing increasing investment in Yukon, which I mentioned earlier — the investor relations unit. The mandate of the unit includes current investment attraction activities, key after-care for investors once they enter the market, and efforts to promote a competitive business environment within the Yukon.

The travel is broken out across a number of sectors, so there isn't actually one number that can cover all the travel, and there are no specific additional dollars allocated for 2016-17 in terms of travel. In terms of China — as part of its ongoing investment attraction initiatives, the Government of Yukon travels to China to participate in a variety of conferences and meetings. Attracting foreign direct investment is critical to the development of Yukon's economy. The Government of Yukon supports continuing relationship-building and investment work, such as travel to China and hosting inbound Asian investors here in Yukon. Some examples of the annual Chinese investment attraction initiatives include the China mining conference and trade show, Investment Canada forums and PDAC as well.

Now, I am just jumping around, but there were quite a few questions asked all at once.

In terms of foreign investment, the Government of Yukon is committed to encouraging private sector growth and attracting foreign direct investment. Relationship-building activities, such as attendance at these forums and trade shows in Asia, Europe and here in North America and hosting inbound investors to Yukon, have led to significant investments by foreign-based companies in Yukon projects. The department has developed a long-term partnership and

collaboration with the Yukon Mining Alliance. This partnership permits the department to strategically plan investment-attraction initiatives in a manner that is industry-led and government-supported. This has allowed the government to support a large number of mining companies and to maximize its efforts and returns.

I know the member opposite had questions in regard to the north Yukon READI. The north Yukon regional economic action development initiative is a pilot project to provide support and advisory services to north Yukon and, as I mentioned, all of the partners in that. The guiding principles of the north Yukon READI will ensure partnership and co-management, shared resources and decision-making, and community-based planning and deliverables. The First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, as well as the City of Dawson and the Village of Mayo, signed this MOU back in August. The initiative is based on combined financial contributions from the Department of Economic Development, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and the City of Dawson. The First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun will be a non-financial participant in 2015-16, but they have indicated that they will contribute financially in 2016-17. The Village of Mayo has indicated that they may consider contributing financially after the first year as well. The process is that the First Nation would initiate the process and, to date, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in is the only one that has finalized the plan.

I have, as minister, taken the following trips outside of the Yukon: port tour in Skagway on June 17; PNWER in Bozeman, Montana, or Big Sky, Montana, August 10 to 14; port tour in Stewart, BC, on September 21; investment in mining meetings in Toronto on September 23 and 24; mining meetings in Vancouver on September 30 and October 1; oil and gas meetings in Calgary on October 7; PNWER in Yellowknife on November 1; mineral Roundup in Vancouver in January of this year; Winterlude Yukon Days and meeting with federal counterparts or federal ministers in Ottawa at the end of January, and then I went to Yellowknife and met with Premier McLeod as well as Minister McLeod regarding the fibre project at the end of February; and PDAC in Toronto the first week of March.

I think that was all of them, but if I missed any the member can get back to me.

Ms. Hanson: I will come back to a few of those questions. I just wanted to commend the Yukon Party government for continuing with the community development fund. It's good to see that they have invested \$38 million of Yukon taxpayers' into a fund which was created by the NDP — this indicates that it was both sound and visionary when it was created by the New Democrats.

I would like to come back to the question with respect to the chapter 22 plans. I have asked the question in previous budget debate of the minister with respect to regional economic development. I have heard many times in the regions and in particular in Dawson — their concerns that were expressed there — about the lack of presence. So we have this entity within Economic Development that talks

about regional economic development and, as we see by finally getting the fact that the First Nations and the municipal government in that region are working together to develop a regional strategy for economic development, I would have thought that it would have been one of the functions of the Regional Economic Development branch within Economic Development to work to stimulate that interest and to have a presence — one of the undertakings that Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in has invested in here is to actually have a human being who has the lead role here. Economic Development has staff people. Now, how many staff people in Regional Economic Development are actually based in a region outside of Whitehorse?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: There are actually zero RED employees in the regions. It's based out of Whitehorse. Staff travels to the communities, but of course the purpose of the north READI program was to provide funding for people in the region to do that work, not for the government to be there continually — the government is there to support, but the purpose is for the region to have a community-led organization, not a government-led organization.

Ms. Hanson: Absolutely, Madam Chair. I do believe that was the intention of the regional economic development plans that are contemplated in chapter 22, which is why I asked the question in terms of what work to liaise and to facilitate, to ensure that in our regions — one of the issues we face is that once you get outside of Whitehorse, quite frankly, you drop off the face of the system here. The minister's own riding encompasses a vast region of the territory — many of the regions of the territory. Even if we took the land use planning regions that were identified in the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, we would have a basis for beginning to look at regional economic development that isn't simply focused on.

When I talk about regional economic development — and the minister outlined a number of really good objectives for that regional economic development plan or process that will unfold over the next number of years within the northwest region of the Yukon — or central and west region — because they're actually present in that region.

Madam Chair, we hear this time and again. It is not just economic development; it is tourism. If you do not know the community, if you do not live in the community, if you do not have a sense of the pulse of what is going on there — who the players are and what the opportunities are — then how do you put together a coherent approach to the economy and the potential opportunities that are there, unless you are doing it as an administrative exercise from Whitehorse?

What plans does the minister have to stimulate interest toward fulfilling the commitments set out in chapter 22 — in terms of liaison with the regions in this territory, with the communities and with First Nation governments — to achieve some marked progress toward work on these regional economic development plans?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: I guess I don't totally agree with the member opposite. I do not think that we fall off the edge of the world when we get out of Whitehorse. I guess I am getting confused and I'm getting mixed communication when

she is speaking — because I agree that it is very important that these be community-based and they be community-driven because you cannot come from somewhere else and tell someone what they need or how it should be done. If it is not community-driven, then quite often it is a waste of time. I guess I do not understand what the member's question is, because the department provides the funding and the department has the resources. When the community or the organization needs those resources, they are only a call away. The department has people who travel to the communities and to these regions to provide whatever the group may need in terms of training or advice. I guess I'm a little bit confused at where the question is going, Madam Chair.

Ms. Hanson: Maybe I could provide a little clarity, then. Perhaps I could ask the minister: Does he, in his letter of expectation or his expectations of his deputy minister, articulate what his expectations are with respect to this area? Has he set any expectations in terms of performance for the deputy with respect to developing at least a terms of reference in terms of regional economic development and, in turn — in terms of the senior management within the economic development branch — are those part of the performance criteria for the senior public servants there — the deputy and the ADMs?

I say this, Madam Chair, because, again, it goes back to what we've said many times in this House. Until and unless you know what the expectations are, it's very difficult to measure, and then it's very difficult to reward. We're talking about performance bonuses for deputies and other senior public servants. Rather than just having it simply on a bell curve, let's link it to performance.

Does the minister set those expectations — that regional economic development is something that he says is a priority and he expects his department to focus on?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: In the letter of expectation, it talks about diversification of the economy. I would think that this is a very strong example of diversifying the economy.

Ms. Hanson: If it was repeated 11 times or 14 times, it might be, Madam Chair, but one is not strong. One is driven by the community, in particular the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. Thank goodness there was at least a response to it, but I'm looking for something that gives some sense that the minister understands that this is a two-way street.

I was encouraged to hear that there was some work being done to develop a municipal economic development strategy. I'm wondering if the minister could elaborate on that and provide a copy of the terms of reference.

Hon. Mr. Hassard: In regard to the communities, Regional Economic Development staff — this is for the Beaver Creek area — continue to engage with the White River First Nation and other community stakeholders in relation to economic development planning and opportunity identification initiatives. During the course of the year, the regional economic development fund approved \$17,250 to the White River First Nation for planning related to the creation of a development corporation. This project is expected to be completed by August of this year.

The department also approved \$14,951 from CDF for the functional plan of a potlatch house for the White River First Nation, as well as \$19,600 to help develop a community garden. Burwash Landing and Destruction Bay — the department continues to engage with the Kluane Community Development Corporation.

Work continues to advance the community's wind-diesel project through its business planning stages. Of course, this assistance has included advice on the overall development process, the necessary inclusions in a business plan, selection criteria for qualified consultants, the issuing of an RFP by the Kluane Community Development Corporation, and coordination with the Energy Solutions Centre to provide technical assistance. The department has also approved \$47,767.50 in funding to enable the corporation to complete its business plan so that it can attract the necessary financing. This project is expected to be completed in July of this year.

The department has approved \$50,000 to the Kluane Community Development Corporation for a tourism strategic plan, and the goal of this plan is to develop a comprehensive, complementary approach to developing community resources related to tourism, culture and recreation and respective priorities. The project is expected to be completed in September of this year. As well, the department supported the participation of the Kluane First Nation and the Kluane Dana Shāw Corporation at the 2016 Cambridge House investment conference as well as at the mineral Roundup in Vancouver and the First Nation's participation in Yukon Days in Ottawa.

In May 2015, the community development advisor for Destruction Bay was instrumental in identifying the need for an organizing and community meeting together with the Kluane Lake Athletic Association. This meeting was facilitated by an independent contractor with financial support from the Government of Yukon's Regional Economic Development branch. The objectives of the meeting were to identify community priorities over the next one-to-three years and to build commitment and collaboration moving forward on future priorities. Thirty-four community members attended and six community priorities were identified, including three infrastructure capital project ideas. The department approved \$20,000 from the community development fund to the Kluane First Nation for the purchase and installation of a playground at the Copper Joe subdivision.

Building on previous investments in Carcross, the department has provided \$21,172 in financial assistance to the Carcross/Tagish Development Corporation in the current year for feasibility work related to a potential tourism venture. The department also provided \$960 to support the Carcross/Tagish Development Corporation at the mineral Roundup in Vancouver and the First Nation's participation in Yukon Days in Ottawa. Departmental staff made a presentation to chief and council in October 2015 listening to their perspective on economic development and discussing how departmental programming might be able to help them achieve their goals and objectives. The department continues to engage with the First Nation and its development corporation with a view to opportunity, identification and programming assistance.

In Carmacks, the department continues to work with Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation in relation to a community-readiness initiative. Financial assistance provided in the previous, current and 2016-17 fiscal years by the department has enabled the First Nation to successfully design a resource development planning application that was used to access almost \$92,000 in CanNor funding in 2015-16 and an anticipated further \$130,000 in 2016-17.

This funding will help the First Nation plan for resource development across a number of sectors within its traditional territory. Going forward, the department anticipates involvement in a number of related multi-sector planning activities in collaboration with the First Nation. In addition, the community has access \$124,380 through the CDF for projects related to trail-building and community outdoor spaces and knowledge-keeping.

The department also approved just over \$6,000 to support the Carmacks Development Corporation in attending Roundup in Vancouver and PDAC in Toronto as well.

In Dawson City, the department has been working on a number of initiatives with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in as well as the municipality and NGOs. Of course, I talked about the north Yukon regional economic action development initiative, the UNESCO world heritage site nomination process, as well as the signing by Yukon, Canada and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in of the regional economic development plan that we talked about earlier. A number of projects identified in the plan have been and are being implemented in the community led by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in with funding from the regional economic development fund, the community development fund, strategic industry fund and CanNor. The community of Dawson is also a participant in the READI program, as I mentioned earlier.

In addition to the UNESCO CDF funding, the community has accessed a further \$377,468 through the community development fund for seven projects related to building biking trails on the Dome, restoring St. Paul's Church, building public washrooms on the waterfront and researching the Jewish presence and influence in Dawson during and after the gold rush. The department has also assisted both Chief Isaac Inc. and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in attending Cambridge House, Roundup and Yukon Days in Ottawa with a contribution of \$5,643.

In Faro, the town has commissioned a number of studies over the years related to tourism and now wants to take what is still relevant from those studies, create a current awareness of opportunities and vitalize the economic potential of tourism. The Regional Economic Development branch provided \$30,000 toward the *Great for Faro — Good for Tourism* strategy, which was completed in December of this past year. Departmental staff visited Faro in January and presented the economic development programs at a town council meeting and they continue to provide research, support and advice to the council administration. In addition the community accessed \$54,920 in this current fiscal year through the community development fund to restore the Tintina shooting range. In September 2015, in partnership

with the Economic Developers Association of Canada, departmental staff supported 15 economic development professionals from across Canada to tour the community.

In Haines Junction, departmental staff continue to engage with the municipality, the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, its development corporations, the St. Elias Chamber of Commerce and other community stakeholders on a variety of capacity-building and opportunity-identification initiatives.

In the current fiscal year, the department has provided \$1,303 in funding to the Village of Haines Junction to allow a senior staff person to attend economic development-related workshops at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities conference. The department has provided technical assistance to the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations related to a forestry opportunity and continues to discuss support for other projects with the First Nation.

Funding was also provided to Dakwakada capital investment to attend Cambridge House as well as Roundup in Vancouver. Department staff attended a forum in Haines Junction in November to explain how best it could support the initiatives spearheaded by the reconstituted St. Elias Chamber of Commerce. The Regional Economic Development branch continues to engage with the chamber and is currently providing technical assistance to help develop marketing material for its members.

Mayo — the Na Cho Nyäk Dun and the Village of Mayo are involved in the north Yukon READI project, which we have discussed already. Building upon prior-year investments, the First Nation Development Corporation has been approved for \$50,000 in funding this year by the department to support its business development activities in the region. As well, the development corporation was approved for \$14,718 to help offset the costs related to a five-year review of a First Nation community benefit agreement with Alexco. In addition, the development corporation was approved for \$2,300 to help offset expenses related to attendance at Roundup and Cambridge House.

Regional Economic Development staff are also in discussion with the development corporation about ways in which the department could help the community maximize benefits from the proposed Stewart-to-Keno transmission line upgrades.

Old Crow: the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation is actively involved in the north Yukon READI project as well. The Vuntut Gwitchin have accessed \$65,157 through CDF to research, mark and clear three traditional travel routes to support both potential tourism and traditional lifestyle opportunities through opening new trapping areas and potential tourism routes.

Pelly Crossing: activities this year in Pelly include support of \$2,908 for the Selkirk Development Corporation staff to attend the Roundup in Vancouver in January and the completion of the Minto mine socio-economic household survey, which was conducted by the Selkirk First Nation with financial support from the Department of Economic Development. The department also continued to support capacity development within the First Nation through an

arrangement that allowed a departmental employee to complete a two-year senior management assignment with Selkirk First Nation in November of 2015.

Ross River: the department continues to engage with Ross River and the First Nation and its development corporation in relation to economic development planning opportunities and opportunity identification initiatives. During the course of the year, Regional Economic Development provided \$11,476 in funding to enable a commercial subsidiary of the First Nation to establish a joint venture relationship with a third party. The department also approved \$6,000 for the community development fund for Yukon College and the Dene Cho Kê'endj Ross River Campus to deliver an eight-week housing maintenance program designed to develop the skills necessary to prepare and maintain housing units within the community.

Watson Lake: departmental staff visited Watson Lake in August, as well as again in December of 2015, when they prepared an overview of economic development programs at a town council meeting. The department continues to engage with the Town of Watson Lake, the Liard First Nation and its development corporation, the Watson Lake Chamber of Commerce, as well as other community stakeholders, in relation to economic development planning and opportunity identification initiatives. The department approved \$7,500 in funding for the Liard First Nation Development Corporation to undertake an economic development strategy planning session. In the current fiscal year, the community was approved \$238,032 through CDF to support the Mike Smith hockey camp and to undertake upgrades to the Watson Lake ski hill, to install a toddler play room area at the Watson Lake recreation centre and to build a playground at the Watson Lake Daycare Centre.

Madam Chair, in Teslin, the Teslin Tlingit Council continues to work on its bioenergy and wood project feasibility study, with phase 1 of the project anticipated to be completed during this fiscal year. The department also provided almost \$1,000 toward the First Nation's participation at Yukon Days in Ottawa; the DDC, or Dèslin Development Corporation, has been approved for \$37,500 in the current year to help it maximize the benefits to the community of a number of capital projects occurring within Teslin. This is part of \$150,000 approved over 36 months to help DDC maximize the benefits to the community of a number of capital projects occurring within Teslin. In addition, the Village of Teslin accessed \$117,825 from CDF for three projects, which included building a gazebo in Friendship Park, community beautification projects and upgrades to the arena.

Madam Chair, I think that covers — that is not including Whitehorse, so that definitely shows where we have been working with the communities.

Ms. Hanson: I believe the question I had asked was also with respect to the municipal economic development strategy — what we heard is quite a long list of projects. That's great, but it does not speak to a strategy; it speaks to a list of project submissions. The challenge that you have is that, year over year, when we simply have a series of projects,

there is often a disconnect and an inordinate amount of time and energy put on those people applying for funds, their administrative staff, without a coherent or a cohesive connection between projects. So there are two aspects: one is the overall regional economic development strategy; and secondly, there was a reference made by the minister to a municipal economic development strategy, and I had asked if there was a copy of the terms of reference for that.

I just want to go back to a couple of other areas. I would ask the minister if he could provide an update. Over the last little while, I've heard some talk about the Yukon Film and Sound Commission. I would like the minister to update me. My understanding is the policy review process that was underway for the Yukon Film and Sound Commission has either been suspended or is not happening. I would ask the minister to confirm the status of the Yukon Film and Sound Commission policy review and what aspects of the commission are being reviewed. Is there increased focus on the flexibility of the commission in terms of its competitiveness with other jurisdictions? Does the Yukon Film and Sound Commission currently address — or is it current enough to address issues of digital media? Are dollars provided to digital media?

Given that it seems to be that the approach being taken today is to talk out the 20 minutes, then I will ask a few more questions so he can have something to talk to, as opposed to just going back and forth in budget debate and discussion.

The budget identifies \$717,000, as he mentioned, for a new investor relations unit. He talked about one of the key activities being after-care. I would like the minister to address more specifically the purpose of that unit. How does this unit fit with the strategic plan that was established in 2012 for 2012-17 and the current staffing for the investor relations unit? The department published the Yukon investment attraction strategy in 2014: the *Yukon Investment Attraction Strategy: Yukon Mining Industry*. Is the unit specifically created for this purpose or are there other sectors that the investor relations unit is also focused on and looking at? This might be in line with the Film and Sound Commission question I just asked.

If it's not exclusively focused on the non-renewable resource sector — and I would like to know which elements of the non-renewable resource sector, in addition to mining, would be included — has the department developed any other documents that speak to investment attraction? What consultation with industry and other stakeholders has taken place? Would the minister table those, if they're available?

The minister spoke in his comments about numerous trips and money spent on investment attraction. He spoke about after-care. What has been the result of the initiatives to date — so since 2014, 2015, 2016 — in terms of the return on investments? He mentioned that he actually used the words, at one point, about linking foreign investment. He made the comment that there would have been significant foreign investment. If he could quantify what is significant foreign investment and in what areas? So what are we talking about — he also used the phrase, “as a large number of mining

companies to maximize opportunities". Could he expand on that? Because surely when we're spending territorial resources, we would like to know what our ROI is on that.

What are we getting back? What benefits have flowed directly to the Yukon? How is investment attraction measured? Are there clear measurements with respect to new Yukon businesses, the expansion of existing businesses and Yukon jobs in terms of what money is flowing directly into Yukon's economy? Has the minister directed that his department — I know this is not being done on local jobs. We have asked this numerous times when we talk about local procurement in terms of the local procurement multiplier effect, but hopefully at some point we will begin to get that kind of economic analysis occurring. I would ask the minister if that is part of what he directed, as it would appear from the strategic plan that this should be coming up for review. In anticipation of that, what is the minister looking for from his department in terms of ensuring that there is actually a return on the investment for this area?

There is a whole range of issues to be raised, for sure, with respect to fibre optic and Internet because clearly we have a lot of talk about it, but actually no action. We are most fascinated to hear the minister's plans about how he actually anticipates that the fibre optic link will be up and running by 2017, which I would remind him is next year — actually, it is less than a year away. I am looking forward to hearing when he anticipates actually having something to announce about how and how much that will be.

He mentioned the CRTC hearings on basic services and the implications that may have for the north and for Yukon in particular. I would ask the minister to elaborate on what position the Yukon government is taking in those hearings, what points of view and what is the basis for those points of view. Who have they consulted? I would ask the minister also to update the House with respect to — again going back to local procurement. It's an initiative the Premier has certainly made clear that he expects people to use their credit cards to do local procurement but, as we know, the issue is much broader than that.

The minister, in the past — and certainly the Premier — has not been forthcoming with respect to the current status of discussions around the *Agreement on Internal Trade* and what is the current status of those discussions? Who from the Department of Economic Development — which sector — is involved, or is it simply ECO? Does Economic Development have a view or a role in influencing the Yukon's position on AIT? As they've done that, what consideration have they been giving to the local businesses that have identified a number of specific issues around how the business incentive programs for Yukon businesses could be better defined and provide greater opportunities to level the playing field, in terms of local businesses and the spinoffs — again, the multiplier effect of local businesses hiring local people, paying local income taxes, buying local houses and supporting local businesses? In turn, it's that whole cycle.

I think I've laid out about five or six key areas that I look to the minister to identify in terms of what focus and what

direction he's giving as a department, and how the department will be assessing progress on these fronts.

I just wanted to ask him one last question before I sit down, because it would be my last question, probably, because I imagine he will use the balance of the day to respond. Can the minister provide us a confirmation on whether or not there has been an update to the enterprise trade fund that was last updated in 2007, which, according to their documents, we pick up when we go to a public event? It says the enterprise trade fund was updated in 2007, and I'm just curious as to that — also the other public document that talks about the small business investment tax credit. He knows I've asked him previously about — him and his predecessor — the openness of this government to expanding the base amount that's available in terms of a tax credit, and the number of businesses that have accessed that — if that has changed — and the assessed impact of the small business investment tax credit on Yukon businesses and the Yukon economy.

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Let's see how many of these we can touch on.

First, the municipal economic strategy was actually a specific project that was initiated by the City of Whitehorse. It's not a departmental initiative, and I believe that it is online with the City of Whitehorse website in case that's of interest.

In terms of Internet speeds, we did just hear about the collected Internet speed test information. The CIRA released a study in April — just the other day — summarized the results of the test between May 2015 and December 2015, and it did show that the average result of 6.7 megabits per second of download is substantially below the Canadian average of 18.6 megabits per second download. We have talked to Northwestel. The department was recently at the CRTC hearings at the beginning of April and has advocated for a minimum service standard of 25 megabits per second. We are working on that as well.

In terms of the Yukon film fund review, the government remains committed to reviewing Yukon's media programs to ensure that they are competitive and that they keep pace with the changes in the industry, they keep pace with the changes being made to programs available nationally and in other jurisdictions.

Currently, we have provided 271 productions with \$7.852 million since April 2013. The recent announcement by Canadian Heritage to strengthen Canadian content, creation, discovery and export in a digital world was presented to stakeholders and media creators with an opportunity to reflect on how content is created and distributed in a digital age. Of course, it will be critical to Yukon to ensure that our film funding review addresses any changes to national funding programs.

After meeting with groups and individuals with an interest in a strong economic media industry, the department has prepared a "what we heard" document. The document is currently being analyzed internally and is expected to be made public once the analysis is complete. Government, through the Film and Sound Commission, works with the Yukon's film and sound industries to create opportunities for Yukoners and

to maximize the economic impact of media production in Yukon.

As of January 28 of this year, over \$8.3 million has been awarded to 428 film- and sound-related projects and initiatives. These programs provide funding to Yukon producers for projects that have demonstrated commercial potential. The programs also provide financial benefits to production companies from outside Yukon to film in the Yukon and to hire Yukoners.

From April 1 of last year to January 28 of this year, the Yukon Film and Sound Commission approved 20 film projects for funding under the film incentive programs, providing approximately \$965,000 to support filmmakers. Additionally, during the same period, seven film projects were approved for approximately \$25,000 under the enterprise trade fund.

In the new investor relations unit, the external investment in the territory's investment-ready sectors — such as natural resources, technology and tourism — is key in developing the Yukon's private sector economy. To assist in attracting this investment, the department has recently created this new investor relation unit. The mandate of the unit includes raising awareness of Yukon investment opportunities, to facilitate the connection between investors in Yukon projects, to provide business care and after-care for investors once they enter the market, and to provide advice on and act as advocates for the formation of investment policy within the Yukon government.

The creation of units that target high-priority areas of the economy — such as the investor relations unit, the enterprise development services unit and the Technology and Telecommunications Development Directorate — bring a greater focus within government while providing one-window access points for clients. The department uses a special teams approach to deliver on a broad mandate in an efficient and effective way. The organization of the Business and Industry Development branch allows for teams of skilled professionals to focus on their areas of mandate, and BID now has four teams overseen by one director position. Those four teams include: Yukon film and sound, enterprise development services, technology and telecommunications, and investor relations. The investor relations unit, which was created in November of last year, consists of a manager, three senior business development advisors and a program officer. The investment attraction budget for this year as the member opposite mentioned is \$717,000.

Madam Chair, the enterprise development services unit provides a storefront location for Yukon small- and medium-sized businesses seeking advice, support and resources. In 2015, the EDS staff have had the opportunity to advise numerous small businesses inquiring about local support services and relevant government policy. Some examples of that include: assisting a local company to fully understand how the *Liquor Act* applies to their business by liaising with the Liquor Corporation; advising several small groups and companies interested in commercial greenhouses of available programming and funding from CanNor, Yukon's Agriculture branch and the Yukon Cold Climate Innovation centre;

participating in the BYTE conference to provide start-up advice to young entrepreneurs — and several attendees have had subsequent meetings with the unit and one has expanded her business through the enterprise trade fund as a result; and connecting multiple clients with federal funding programs to advance significant projects.

They have advised local business owners on Yukon tax policy and available resources for filing business taxes for the first time, worked with tourism operators to explore options for connecting their remote location to the power grid, advised local companies on how to fully take advantage of the rising American dollar by expanding into Alaska, worked with a wilderness lodge to secure a temporary permit to maintain a government-owned road to avoid suspension of winter season renovations, helped companies take advantage of the Canada job grant offered through partnership with Advanced Education to build workforce capacity for their business, and researched and identified local and external expertise for companies looking to open or expand current businesses into new industries.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 21, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, 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.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.