



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, May 5, 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
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Justice; Yukon Development Corporation/ Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Doug Graham	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Education
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Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Community Services; Public Service Commission
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Hon. Mike Nixon	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
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Lois Moorcroft	Copperbelt South
Jim Tredger	Mayo-Tatchun
Kate White	Takhini-Kopper King

Liberal Party

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, May 5, 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 remembrance of Earl Bennett

Hon. Mr. Graham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I rise on behalf of all members of the Legislature during National Mining Week to pay tribute to a miner with a heart of gold, Earl Bennett.

Earl was a goldminer, a businessman, an entrepreneur, an art collector, a palaeontologist and, above all, a Yukoner who loved Yukon and its people. Kathy Jones-Gates, in writing about Earl, described him as a “Renaissance man”, and he truly was that. Earl passed away in June 2015 last year in Whitehorse at the age of 87.

Originally from Alberta, Earl moved to the territory in 1946 to work for the Yukon Consolidated Gold Corporation. He worked first as an underground miner, and later on the gold dredges, where he met another Yukoner who has become very close to me over the years — and that was my father-in-law, Helge Engren.

In the 1970s, Earl began buying old motels and other businesses to fix them up and resell them. Earl was a savvy businessman who put his trust in people to learn — by doing that, it made him so well-loved. Dawson City’s Klondike Nugget and Ivory shop, which he bought in 1975, was one of those businesses. In 1988, he turned the business over to a long-time Dawson resident, Uta Reilly. Earl helped many businesses take root in Dawson City and Whitehorse, but he was a private person who never took credit for all the work he did.

In addition to all his successful business ventures, Earl was awarded the Beringia Research Award in 2011 for his contribution to palaeontology in the Yukon. Earl contributed a rare mastodon skeleton to the Beringia Centre in 2005. He had kept the mastodon skeleton in his garage for 40-odd years. One of Earl’s co-workers had found the bones during Earl’s mining days and wanted to sell it to a buyer outside of the territory. Earl told the man that he would buy the skeleton, whatever the cost, in order to keep it here in the territory.

Grant Zazula, the Yukon government’s palaeontologist, described Earl as one of those real champions of the Yukon. Grant Zazula, in fact, dedicated a recent scientific paper on American mastodons to Earl.

Earl Bennett will be remembered by many as a friend, colleague, mentor and a true Yukoner who loved the territory and its people.

He is survived by his wife, Amy.

May he rest in peace.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity to introduce a number of people here in the gallery, who have come today in tribute to Earl — one of whom requires no introduction to this Legislature.

Archie Lang is a former member of the Legislature but, more importantly, Archie was vice-president of the F.H. Collins student council in 1967 when I was the president — a very important contribution. Archie is with his wife Karen Lang, and Laura Horte, who was a long-time caregiver for Earl. Nick and Elaine Smart are sitting above Archie and Elaine; and Chris Sorg is here as well. Welcome to the Legislature.

Applause

In remembrance of Joe Fellers

Hon. Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As mentioned by my colleague, the Minister of Education, during National Mining Week we often have an opportunity to recognize those who have passed on but have made a significant contribution to the mining industry in the territory. I would like to thank, particularly, John McConnell and the Klondike Placer Miners’ Association for recommending that we pay tribute to Joe Fellers.

Joseph Harmon Fellers, the second child of Nibs and Jane Fellers, was born in Dawson Creek on November 26, 1946. Joe left home at the tender age of 17 to work for CNT, putting in telephone pole lines in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. His job brought him to Dawson City in the summer of 1966, where he met his future wife, Wendy. They fell in love and were married in December 1968.

In the early years of their marriage, Joe worked at many different jobs. He ran the skyline across the Yukon River and ran equipment for Dick Gillespie, the Yukon government and Roy McDermott. He even looked after the Pit for part of one very cold winter. In 1969, the young couple moved to Clinton Creek to work. The winters were long and Joe decided to try his hand at trapping. In early 1971, they returned to Dawson City and started their family. J.J. was born in June 1971, and Willy in February 1974. In 1974, Joe and Wendy bought a placer mine on Dominion from Ivor Norbeck, and Joe began his lifelong career.

Joe loved it out on the creeks and he especially loved having his family out there with him. He loved spoiling the children in his life and surprised many a youngster with a new kitty cat, battery car or mini four-wheeler. He also loved plowing snow and for 25 years kept the Sunnysdale roads and the neighbours’ driveways nice and clear.

While living in Dawson, Joe was also a volunteer fireman and was presented with a lifelong membership. He was awarded the Diamond Jubilee Medal for his many years of volunteer work and for his donations of the first-to-Dawson gold for the Yukon Quest. He was also presented recently

with the Robert E. Leckie Award for exemplary reclamation on Ballarat Creek.

Joe will be missed, of course, by his many friends and family, particularly in the Dawson City area. Although none of his family members are able to be here today, I will present them with a copy of this tribute when I travel to Dawson City later this month for the annual gold show.

In recognition of Yukon Mining and Geology Week

Ms. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to recognize Yukon Mining and Geology Week.

One of the key goals of this week is for Yukon citizens to learn more about the mineral industry and the science of geology. This is also the week when we acknowledge the contributions that mining and mineral exploration have made to our quality of life in the territory.

The trickle-down economic effects of a successful mining industry are obvious. With exploration and mining activities come employment, wages and tax revenues. This, combined with other sources of revenue, allows us to invest in infrastructure such as roads, hospitals and schools, as well as programs ranging from arts grants to social programs. The economic spinoffs from the mineral sector benefit local businesses, such as hotels, restaurants and retailers. The industry also relies upon the suppliers of equipment, transportation, health services, engineering expertise and environmental monitoring services.

The education sector has also benefited. A good example is the Yukon College Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining, which trains Yukoners for highly skilled and good-paying jobs in the resource sector.

During this week, our youth have plenty of opportunities to learn more about geology. Families can spend time at the mining exploration and discovery camp at the *SS Klondike* National Historic Site tomorrow. Throughout the school year, the Yukon Geological Survey visits classrooms so that students can learn more about geology and realize that exploration and mining are viable careers in the Yukon.

Geologists with YGS also share their expertise by giving lectures and hosting rock walks for the public. The Yukon Geological Survey is primarily a science organization that produces and houses geological and geoscientific information, which is invaluable in a number of ways. The raw data and analysis provided by the Yukon Geological Survey helps guide the decision-making of Yukon's mineral sector. For example, YGS recently acquired historical data from the national archives from a prominent company that operated in the Klondike from 1923 to 1966 — the Yukon Consolidated Gold Corporation.

Our geologists are pulling key information from these documents, which include 950 maps and 230 reports, to help identify areas within previously mined creeks where gold-bearing gravels may have been overlooked by the original miners. This type of investment by the Yukon Geological Survey produces geological information and supports exploration which, in turn, provides longer term economic benefits to our territory.

Another YGS project this year is the electromagnetic survey of the Livingstone Creek area, a historic placer district northeast of Whitehorse that has been the source of large gold nuggets. The goal of this aerial work is to identify geologic structures that could be the source of this gold. When the geophysical maps and the data from this work are released to the public, prospectors will have a valuable new source of information to guide their work programs in that area.

YGS geologists also have an active presence in placer mines and hardrock exploration properties. In this last season, they visited more than 100 placer operations and quartz exploration camps. During these site visits, the geologists share their expertise with industry clients and collect information to update our minfile database. They also provide the public with an overview of exploration and production highlights.

Last year, an estimated 62,271 crude ounces of placer gold were produced, with a value of about \$73.2 million. These numbers confirm that placer mining continues to be a solid contributor to Yukon's economy.

On the hardrock side, companies invested over \$65 million in exploration — this in spite of a global downturn in commodity prices. The fact that companies — such as Wellgreen Platinum, Kaminak Gold and ATAC Resources, to name just a few — are continuing to successfully raise exploration capital is a testament to the mining sector's tenacity. There's no doubt that exploration and mining have commanded a large role in Yukon's economic well-being for well over a century. We remain optimistic that the next century of mining in Yukon will continue that legacy.

The well-being and success of Yukon's mineral sector is very important. Going forward, the Government of Yukon is committed to improving the regulatory framework while respecting the rights and traditions of First Nations. Together we will determine how to provide the resources we need in a way that respects the environment we all share and enjoy.

Mining and Geology Week is important to our work because it helps provide a better understanding of what this vibrant industry contributes to our territory. I thank the Yukon Chamber of Mines, the Yukon Geological Survey and everyone else who worked together to organize events for another exceptional week dedicated to mining and geology in Yukon.

Before I sit down, I would like to acknowledge — and ask all members to help me — some important folks in our gallery today: Eira Thomas, Kaminak Gold, Yukon Women in Mining; Allison Rippin Armstrong, Kaminak Gold; Paul West-Sells, Casino mining; Mary Mioska, Casino mining, Yukon Women in Mining; Chris Donaldson, Casino mining; John McConnell, Victoria Gold; Anne Lewis, Yukon Women in Mining and Yukon Mining Alliance; Amanda Leslie, Mosaic Communications; Samson Hartland, Yukon Chamber of Mines; Leyla Weston, Yukon Chamber of Mines; John Small, Small's Expediting; Carson Andrews, Yukon Chamber of Mines; Corey Kenzig, Economic Development; Chris Ackerman, Economic Development; Jonas Smith, Klondike Placer Miners' Association;

Cathie Archbould, Archbould Photography; Sue Craig, Yukon Chamber of Mines; and Megan Helmer, PR Associates.

Applause

Mr. Tredger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I was just sitting here thinking that one of the advantages to being an MLA is the people you get to meet and to work with — people who become friends and neighbours. I see many of them in the gallery today and I welcome them.

I rise on behalf of the NDP Official Opposition to pay tribute to the 2016 Yukon Mining and Geology Week.

Mr. Speaker, we offer our congratulations to both the Yukon Chamber of Mines and the Yukon government staff at Energy, Mines and Resources for their ongoing collaboration on this successful annual event — or should I say, “celebration”. The perseverance shown by the members of the Yukon chamber and the industry in promoting and encouraging mining in the Yukon is to be commended. We applaud them for not shying away from addressing the current downturn in the mining sector and, like true businesses, they are not turning away from these challenges, but they’re rolling up their sleeves and getting down to work.

I attended the City of Whitehorse meeting on Monday to hear Mayor Dan Curtis make the proclamation for Mining and Geology Week. I listened to Mayor Curtis speak to the value of mining and miners and how their endeavours over the last 150 years have contributed to Yukon society. It was after he told a personal story that it struck me how interwoven mining is with the Yukon.

It highlighted to me how virtually every Yukoner has a mining story to tell and the many times I have heard from so many Yukoners recounting similar stories — from the placer miner in Scroggie Creek, who, when things got tight, made sure his local suppliers and employees were paid, even going without himself; to the young men and women, some of whom were my students, visiting a mine site and later getting a job at that very mine; to the local tool salesmen, who tell stories of visiting mines and mine service companies to sell quality equipment and tools right at their door. The countless people who live in our towns and in our communities, our neighbours and friends who work within the industry every day, have a story to tell. I have a few myself, if you can believe that. At risk of leaving out many people and deeds, I would like to mention a few people who have made an impression on me and who represent the many miners in our community who contribute to Yukon.

I want to thank Ron Light from Capstone Mining Corp. for his unceasing commitment to employ local people, and now, while prices are down, he has begun closure in a careful, measured manner. He continues to work with EMR personnel and First Nations — in particular, Selkirk First Nation — to ensure that the closure is done in an environmentally acceptable manner while continuing to employ local personnel.

I have spoken of Kaminak previously — their seminal research with Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in citizens on local plans and

their possible use in the remediation of mine sites and their outstanding engagement with the Tr’ondëk Hwëch First Nation. The other day I was pleased to hear that, like true Yukoners, they will be hosting the Yukon River Quest — true Yukon hospitality on the river.

I also want to mention Mike Burke, president of the Yukon Chamber of Mines. He is always looking to promote and improve mining in the territory. I appreciated his willingness to share his ideas and to encourage and to improve, and to involve everyone to advance responsible mining in the Yukon. I appreciated him taking the time to, as he put it, fill me in.

Mr. Speaker, the chamber has developed a series of handbooks and best practice guides. They worked closely with Yukon First Nations to develop *Engaging with First Nations and Communities*. I acknowledge the leadership shown by Victoria Gold and North American Tungsten, which have worked on agreements with the respective First Nations. These actions have established a culture and an expectation for new mining companies to follow. Guides, like the Na Cho Nyäk Dun’s guiding principles for mining interests and cooperative engagement process, were developed in cooperation with mining companies and with elders. It was aligned with the UFA — the *Umbrella Final Agreement* — and with self-government agreements, and now, when I go to communities, I hear citizens and First Nation leaders speak highly of doing business with new companies like BMC, Rockhaven and others, following the lead of the companies before them — the trailblazers of Victoria Gold, Kaminak and Capstone. Whether it is Victoria Gold spearheading an attendance initiative, or Kaminak building and establishing a land-based curriculum, the contributions of the mining industry continue to enhance Yukon life.

The NDP recognize and appreciate the many ways you, the mining industry and those working within the industry contribute to our Yukon community. So on behalf of the communities in my riding — indeed, on behalf of all Yukon citizens — I salute the mining community’s ongoing contributions to our territory and thank you for your commitment to responsible mining in our territory.

Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m also happy to rise today on behalf of the Liberal caucus to pay tribute to Yukon Mining and Geology Week. Mining and exploration are such an important and integral part of our community. Both contribute greatly to our economy, bringing jobs and wealth and supporting our local businesses. They provide the opportunity for community members to educate and train themselves, creating a more diverse and successful workplace. More often than not, mining and exploration companies will pair with the nearest communities to create a community wellness program. These types of initiatives are just the beginning. The list goes on and on, Mr. Speaker.

A strong and vibrant mining and exploration sector is prosperous only with transparent permitting, clearly defined and enforced regulations, solid remediation practices and a partnership with all affected peoples and governments. If

those criteria are met here in the Yukon, our mining sector will have the room to grow, while maintaining a balanced approach to the environment and the social fabric of our territory.

Dawson City is a mining town, Mr. Speaker. Developed as a boom town during the Klondike Gold Rush, it has been a stable placer mining community throughout many stages of mining practices. It started with the old-fashioned shafting, digging deep into the ground over the winter months to collect pay dirt. It soon developed into a process of using steam to thaw the gravel, until finally into hydraulic mining, which is the process we currently use today. It is a perfect example of how the progression of technology, environmental factors and clear regulations push the industry forward, increasing efficiencies, but also decreasing their environmental footprint.

The Yukon's mining and exploration sector has become more than just a placer industry. We have gold, lead, zinc, silver, copper and many other commodities extracted in the past 50 years or so. Without the proper supports in place, mining and exploration will lose its vigour. I believe that a strong mining and exploration sector can have a positive effect on our communities and people, if done properly.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize Kluane First Nation Chief Mathieya Alatini for her recent appointment as Yukon Women in Mining champion. I know there will be a tribute coming up for this. This recognition is placed on an individual man or woman who contributes to the inclusion and to the advancement of women in mining. I just want to say that this is a well-deserved appointment and I am grateful to have someone like Mathieya advocating the industry for women. I want to congratulate her. Being the MLA for the Klondike, of course, I talk about the placer industry, but I have to give a nod also to Kaminak and to Kaminak's president and CEO, Eira Thomas. Through her leadership, this company has earned the respect of the Dawson placer miners. It has earned the respect of our business community, of our mayor and council and our chief and council as well. The company understands the importance of community engagement and, in doing so, I'm extremely optimistic for the production of this company and that range in general, and for the future, and for the economic benefits for my community and for Yukoners at large.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

In recognition of Our Yukon — In It Together campaign

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a true honour today to rise on behalf of all of my colleagues here in the Legislature to acknowledge the Our Yukon — In It Together campaign.

It's working to help Yukoners better understand the significant benefits and opportunities that a healthy and responsible mineral exploration and development industry provides the Yukon individuals, businesses and communities.

This important campaign profiling and celebrating the people and partners who represent mining, our territory's most vital private sector employer and contributor, was developed

and is being implemented by a talented team at the Yukon Chamber of Mines, with support from the Department of Economic Development.

The Our Yukon — In It Together campaign focuses on: the individuals and partners who move our territory's private sector economy forward in a responsible way; people and partners who uphold Yukon's environmental, social and cultural values; people and partners who inspire a whole new generation of explorers, researchers and innovators; proud Yukon residents who believe that the mining industry can provide opportunities for our territory's youth to stay here, study here, pursue well-paid careers here, appreciate all of the recreation and cultural benefits we so enjoy, and raise their own families here if they so choose; proud Yukon residents who support innumerable community initiatives across the territory, from the MRI at our hospital to training and education programs at Yukon College to family literacy, student attendance, and breakfast and lunch programs, to support our hockey rinks and our rehearsal stages; and proud Yukon residents who personify transparent, respectful and meaningful relationships with Yukon First Nation governments and citizens alike.

I would just like to quote one of the Our Yukon — In It Together campaign champions, Mr. Brad Thrall, who is the chief operating officer of Alexco Resources — and I quote: "I think it's very important, not only myself but the entire Yukon mining industry, to give Yukoners — all Yukoners, and youths as well — the opportunity to have a well-paying job here in the Yukon, to be able to raise their families and really enjoy the quality of life that they have here. If we can do that, that really is the definition of a sustainable industry."

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Yukoners to learn more about how our territory's mining industry enriches all of our lives through the Our Yukon — In It Together campaign.

In recognition of the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun and Victoria Gold benefit agreement

Hon. Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to rise today on behalf of the government caucus, as well as the Third Party, to pay tribute to a groundbreaking agreement in the Yukon — and is in fact groundbreaking across Canada as well — between a First Nation government and a junior mining company.

This agreement between Victoria Gold and the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun is an unprecedented, forged-in-the-Yukon example of how a strong and meaningful partnership can help to ensure open communication, collaboration and opportunities for First Nation citizens and for communities.

The comprehensive cooperation and benefits agreement, or CBA, between Victoria Gold and Na Cho Nyäk Dun was signed in October 2011. As outlined in the agreement, the goals of the agreement are: to provide stability for the development of Victoria's Eagle Gold project and ongoing exploration; to provide NND with employment, training and economic development opportunities while respecting and promoting NND's desired environmental protection

objectives; to establish a process for ongoing communication between Victoria Gold and NND so that both parties may pursue contracting and partnership opportunities; and finally to provide financial support and profit-sharing opportunities from a successful project.

Since the agreement was established, Victoria Gold has contributed over \$36.5 million to NND and its citizens, to the Village of Mayo and to the socioeconomic strength and vibrancy of the entire Yukon. This significant contribution includes scholarships to 42 NND students to pursue their post-secondary studies.

I'm pleased to help shed a greater light and echo Victoria Gold's and NND's — this is a quote from the document: "... hope that their collaboratively developed and implemented CBA can serve as a model for transparent, effective and mutually respectful industry-First Nation relations across the territory and across the country." Indeed, this particular document has been used as a case study at national ministers of mines' meetings with industry as an example of how industry and First Nations should and can work together.

I would like to now ask members to join me in welcoming two individuals who played an important role in putting this agreement and the 2015 CBA committee annual implementation report together — of course, both have been introduced before, but I'll single them out: president and CEO of Victoria Gold, John McConnell, and Amanda Leslie from Mosaic Communications, who worked on the drafting and other work with this document. Congratulations to Victoria Gold and NND for this great document, which I will be tabling later on today in the Legislature.

Applause

Mr. Tredger: On behalf of the NDP Official Opposition, I am pleased to rise and congratulate the Na Cho Nyäk Dun and Victoria Gold for the signing of their benefits agreement and perhaps most importantly, for the successful implementation of that agreement.

I want to especially thank Victoria Gold for recognizing First Nation values and including elders and citizens in the formation of the agreement and in the implementation of that agreement, making this not only an agreement between governments — between Victoria Gold and the government of Na Cho Nyäk Dun — but also supportive and inclusive of the citizens, and therefore a much more powerful agreement. I've been impressed, as I mentioned earlier, with how Victoria Gold has set a standard for engaging First Nations in the development of resources on First Nation land and on their traditional territory. First Nations have stated over and over again that they support and will work with responsible mining in their territories, but such mining must honour the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and their self-government agreements. It must be environmentally acceptable and benefit their citizens — and perhaps, most importantly, it must consider their children.

This agreement paves the way forward and I want to thank Victoria Gold and Na Cho Nyäk Dun for their leadership. Mahsi' cho.

In recognition of Yukon Women in Mining

Ms. McLeod: It gives me great pleasure today to rise on behalf of all members during Mining and Geology Week to recognize Yukon Women in Mining. Yukon Women in Mining is a non-profit organization that was founded in 2012 by Anne Lewis, who is its current president and is with us here today in the Assembly, I believe.

Yukon Women in Mining partners with Yukon mineral exploration and mining industry leaders to organize events and activities and to develop tool kits to help attract, retain and advance women in one of the most important sectors in Yukon's economy.

It works to create awareness of opportunities for rewarding careers for women in the mineral and mining industry. Yukon Women in Mining has had a busy week and has a number of initiatives and activities planned for the coming months that celebrate mining and the important role women have played — and continue to play — in the industry. Just two days ago, the organization announced the appointment of its newest champion, Chief Mathieya Alatini of the Kluane First Nation. A Yukon Women in Mining champion is an individual who uses their voice for inclusion and advancement for women in the mining industry. Their main role is to provide an advisory and mentor role to our members and they must have demonstrated contributions toward the advancement of opportunities for women in the industry. Chief Alatini has done just that. She is a strong, empowering role model for women interested in dynamic, rewarding careers that can have a significant impact on Yukon's economic, cultural and social prosperity. Her vision of the future is of a progressive, inclusive and modern Yukon mining industry that will encourage young women to seek careers in their own backyards.

As part of Mining Week, Yukon Women in Mining is launching, via newspapers and social media, a three-part series of stories, called *Remembering remarkable Yukon women in mining*. These stories recognize the remarkable women who blazed a trail and helped shape an industry that today is valuable, high-tech, safe and environmentally and socially responsible. The first of these focuses on Martha Black, who, as we all know, broke through multiple stereotypes, taking on the business world, the mining industry and, most notably, national politics. She staked gold claims, operated a sawmill, managed a gold-ore crushing plant and, many years later, would become the second woman ever to be elected to the House of Commons in Canada.

The second story is about Janeane MacGillivray. In the early 1970s, Yukon was host to three underground mines. Due to a little regulation called the *Yukon Mining Safety Ordinance*, women were not allowed to work underground at those mines. This would all change in March 1975 when MacGillivray applied for a job working underground. With the help of expeditor Trudy Vanderburg, the Yukon's *Mining*

Safety Ordinance was ruled to be unconstitutional, giving Yukon women the opportunity to earn fair wages and participate in this vital part of the economy. Women who work in the industry today or are interested in exploring a career in mining can do so thanks to the hard work of women like Janeane.

The third story is of president, CEO and director of Kaminak Gold Corporation, Eira Thomas. Currently a Yukon Women in Mining champion, Ms. Thomas has several incredible diamond discoveries under her belt and has built a hugely successful career with multiple companies. Currently, Ms. Thomas spends her days developing and promoting Yukon's Coffee gold project with the Kaminak gold team, which also includes three women in senior management. Kaminak is an exceptional example of changes we are just starting to see in the mining industry. It's a trailblazer in its inclusion and engagement strategy with women, First Nations, government and all Yukoners. Later this month, Yukon Women in Mining is attending the annual gold show in Dawson City. That weekend, it will be offering "learn to fly" flights for girls and youth. This is an exciting opportunity for young people to experience a flight over the Klondike and learn more about the diverse and dynamic careers that exist in the mining sector.

This special event is made possible — and thanks to the generous support of Alkan Air, Vaxandi Group, Chief Isaac, Kaminak Gold and Casino mining.

I would like to acknowledge Wendy Tayler, president of Alkan Air, and her business partner, Jeff Faulkner. Ms. Tayler is another incredible role model for young women who are interested in building their careers here in the Yukon.

Also at the gold show, Yukon Women in Mining will be unveiling a reproduction in Lego of Kaminak Gold's Coffee mine. This innovative idea — and truly innovative, as Minister Taylor will know — is a way to engage young Yukoners and spark their interest in mining. It's a partnership with the Copperbelt Railway & Mining Museum and Kaminak Gold. Other Yukon communities will also have an opportunity to see the Lego mine later this summer.

The exploration and mining industry has been an integral part of Yukon's history and culture for decades. Today we can celebrate the changes that have made it an attractive and rewarding career choice for both men and women, bringing economic and social benefits to all Yukon communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In recognition of the Yukon/Stikine Regional Heritage Fair

Hon. Mr. Graham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to get off the mining theme for a little while just to pay tribute to the Yukon/Stikine Heritage Fair, which is taking place today at the Yukon Transportation Museum.

Each May, this event showcases the learning and talents of grades 4 to 9 students from across the Yukon and northern British Columbia. These young people spend weeks researching and preparing creative presentations about Canadian heritage. This event is truly unique. Students choose

a historical area of interest, as well as the medium in which they wish to present their findings. It's always such an interesting event. Students are encouraged not only to explore stories and events from Canadian history, but also the stories and events that shaped the histories of their own families.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity this morning, along with the minister responsible for heritage, to attend and see some of these creative and wonderful projects put together by students from across the region. At this year's fair, over 50 students presented projects on the people, history and cultures of Canada, Yukon and their own communities.

These bright, young minds were engaged and excited to share their learning with others. The Minister of Tourism and Culture and I both felt that we learned probably as much as many of the students. The Yukon has a vibrant and dynamic heritage, from the traditional knowledge of First Nations to the gold rush era. It is also changing, though. It is becoming more multicultural. It's something that becomes apparent as one walks through the diverse projects on display. In fact, I believe that there were more First Nation heritage presentations today than there were non-First Nation, and it was a wonderful thing for all of us to see.

The depth of research that some of these students put into their projects is admirable, from genealogy and family stories to First Nation oral histories, to archeology, palaeontology, explorers, inventors, war heroes, immigrants — and there were major events and celebrations as well. The Yukon heritage fair truly does it all.

Students are also recognized across a broad cross-section in the awards ceremony. It really gives everyone at the heritage fair an opportunity to shine. Students are recognized for excellence in the categories of research and writing, graphic design, historical research, use of oral history and use of archival materials.

The fair couldn't happen, though, without the dedication of the organizing committee at heritage Yukon. Thanks to the members of the committee for their hard work to coordinate this event. Thanks also to the sponsors for their ongoing support of this experiential learning program, which sparks the imagination of so many young minds in the Yukon and Stikine region. Lastly, big congratulations to all of the students who participated in the fair. From the Minister of Tourism and Culture and myself: a great thank you for inviting us, not only to see the fair, but to be able to speak to the students themselves.

Applause

In recognition of International Day of the Midwife

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I rise today, along with 50 nations around the world, to pay tribute to midwives on International Day of the Midwife. The International Confederation of Midwives established the idea of recognizing midwives throughout the world and, on May 5, each year since 1991, the international confederation asks the world to focus on the role of midwives and midwifery.

Across the country, there are approximately 1,200 practising midwives, including three here in Yukon. These

trained practitioners are responsible for approximately 10 percent of all Canadian births. Unlike other countries where midwives are responsible for the majority of births, the provision for midwifery care is relatively new to Canada. It has only been within the last 20 years that there has been any growth in this profession, and different jurisdictions are growing at different rates with midwifery treated somewhat differently in each jurisdiction.

Since 2008, the National Aboriginal Council of Midwives has promoted excellence in reproductive health care for Inuit, First Nation and Métis women. The National Aboriginal Council of Midwives consists of approximately 70 aboriginal midwives, midwife elders and student midwives.

In Yukon, we continue to engage with midwives and their advocates in discussions and we clearly recognize the role that midwives can play within the health care system. The Government of Yukon recently funded a midwifery symposium that brought together stakeholders, the public, medical professionals and the government to discuss the future of midwifery locally. I attended a portion of that symposium, along with the Minister of Justice and the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, and I can tell you that the variety of speakers and experts who presented that morning was truly inspiring. We support the role of midwives in the delivery of infants and in care of mothers.

Tonight the Community Midwifery Association of Yukon will be screening *A Mother is Born* at the French community centre at 6:30 p.m. Please join them in celebrating midwifery.

Applause

Ms. Stick: I too rise today on behalf of the NDP Official Opposition to pay tribute to International Day of the Midwife. In the Yukon, we have the Community Midwifery Association of Yukon, and in Canada, we have the Canadian Association of Midwives and the National Aboriginal Council of Midwives. These groups represent the many highly-trained midwives across Canada.

The theme for 2016 is "Women and Newborns: The Heart of Midwifery". Mr. Speaker, midwives have been providers of women's and babies' health and a part of community health for a long time — and I do mean a long time. Midwives have been providing mother and newborn care forever. My own husband was born at Aishihik village with the assistance of traditional midwives 64 years ago. It was the norm.

Today, midwives across Canada, including Yukon, are highly educated and trained birthing experts. They provide professional care to the pregnant woman, and to their families, and prenatal care up to a year after the birth of a baby. Midwives across Canada are part of a model of collaborative care that places women and families at the centre of healthy child birth options.

I too had the opportunity to attend the midwifery symposium a few weeks ago, and I was struck by the professionalism and passion that midwives shared for the work they do. I learned about the principles of care that include, but are not limited to, professional autonomy, partnerships, continuity of care, informed choice, and choice

of birthplace. I was impressed with the thought and the beliefs expressed that midwifery, with legislation in place that provides for publicly funded choice, could be sustainable and give healthy birthing options for women and their families in Yukon to consider. Without that legislation, many Yukon women do not have that option.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard the research on outcomes of midwifery-assisted birth, on the positive health outcomes of the mother and of the baby. We heard of models of collaborative care that include midwives, hospitals, family physicians, nurses, community nurses, and these work in a variety of communities, from major urban centres to remote communities. I recognize that this government is working with midwives to consider midwifery legislation for Yukon and commend them for that, but I also commend the midwives on that working group who are volunteering their valuable time to work on a plan that will see midwifery legislation for Yukon, for Yukon families, and for pregnant women.

I want to thank midwives especially for the care and support they provide to mothers, to babies and to families. I have seen the result of their hard work among children of my friends and I commend them — "Women and Newborns: The Heart of Midwifery."

Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to rise today on behalf of the Liberal caucus to pay tribute to International Day of the Midwife. Each year on May 5, we mark International Day of the Midwife. This year's theme is "Women and Newborns: The Heart of Midwifery". The theme highlights midwives, ensuring women and newborns receive the quality of care that they deserve during and before and after delivery.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a quote out of my last year's tribute to midwifery — and I quote: "There's much work to be done here in the Yukon to support midwives... midwife-supported home births are not recognized in the same way that hospital births are... those who are from the communities who choose to travel to Whitehorse for midwife births are not offered the same support that they would receive if the parent had chosen to... come to Whitehorse because they want to be close to a hospital with maternity professionals, but they would prefer the privacy and the dignity that comes with having their baby in a home."

In this budget, we will see over \$100,000 to be added on to the Many Rivers contract to address issues in the communities of Faro and Ross River. Unfortunately, this is still true today. We do know that there has been a lot of discussion around the regulation of midwifery in Yukon and I want to thank the government for that. We do, however, remain one of the only jurisdictions in Canada that does not have legislated midwifery.

I would like to recognize on the floor of this House that women and families have an inherent right to choose how they give birth. As Members of the Legislative Assembly, we should support this right.

In many cultures represented in Canada and also across the Yukon, midwife-assisted home births are preferred and

practised. Many of these cultures have ceremonial aspects to the birthing process and can be much less procedural-focused than a hospital setting. This is what we need to foster, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank those who have worked in support of Yukon midwives and the women and families who choose to hire them. Midwifery contributes greatly to the Yukon and it has my appreciation and my support.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce and ask all members to join me in welcoming a number of extremely hard-working officials from the Department of Health and Social Services. We have with us in the gallery Brenda Lee Doyle, who is the assistant deputy minister of Health and Social Services; Dallas Smith, who is a project manager under THIF; and Sonya Parsons, manager of policy and program support. Also joining us, but who has just stepped out momentarily, is Sherri Wright, the assistant deputy minister of Health and Social Services. Welcome.

Applause

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I would also encourage all members to extend a warm welcome to Ms. Shelley Penner, who has joined us here — a long-time resident of the Tagish community, and obviously a contributing member to the community that she serves. Welcome.

Applause

Mr. Barr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In joining with the minister, I would also like to say hello and ask folks to recognize Shelley Penner, friend and constituent. She is on the councils and with the volunteer ambulance, and she has kids and takes people in her home. She is just very welcoming — and would be very missed if you weren't there, Shelley. Thanks for all that you do. I ask the House to join me in restating that.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Kent: I have two documents for tabling, the first being the *Comprehensive Cooperation and Benefits Agreement (CBA): CBA Committee 2015 Annual Implementation Report* between Victoria Gold Corporation and the Na Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation.

The second document is a publication that the Yukon Chamber of Mines participated in, which is the *Whitehorse Copper Belt Heritage and Recreation Guide*.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have for tabling the long-awaited *Forward Together — Yukon Mental Wellness Strategy 2016 to 2026*.

Speaker: 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

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to use the 2016-17 budget to provide capital funding in the amount of \$1.123 million to Yukon College to provide a Yukon solution that will educate students for current and future skilled labour opportunities in the local mining industry.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to use the 2016-17 budget to support the tele-mental health system pilot project, which allows counsellors to connect with clients in several rural Yukon communities.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to join Northwest Territories, Nunavut, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador in regulating midwifery.

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

THAT the Chair of the Members' Services Board shall convene a meeting of the board at which the board shall consider Bill No. 107, entitled *Act to Amend the Elections Act, with Respect to Political Contributions*; and

THAT the board shall report its recommendations regarding Bill No. 107 to this House on or before May 16, 2016.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Mental wellness strategy

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I rise in this House to inform all members that earlier today, standing side by side with Kwanlin Dün Chief Doris Bill, Council of Yukon First Nations Grand Chief Ruth Massie, and vice-chair of the Mental Health Association of Yukon, Kim Solonick, we released the Yukon mental wellness strategy, *Forward Together*.

This strategy addresses mental wellness in Yukon by taking a needs-based approach to planning for the future of Yukoners. It concentrates on improving access, mental health, trauma- and addiction-integrated services, child-, youth- and

family-focused initiatives and capacity-building. This work builds on the many reports that have come before this one.

The implementation plan, which is included in the strategy, recognizes and builds upon past and current work within Yukon as well as the learnings from other Canadian and international jurisdictions. We anticipate that, by 2020, mental illness will surpass all physical disorders except for coronary disease. It is already the second-largest cause of human disability and premature death. We know that for most mental health problems, onset occurs in adolescence and early adulthood.

Members in this House have heard me say many times that mental wellness, or mental health, is not the sole responsibility of government. Everyone has a role to play: individuals, families, communities, care providers, non-government organizations, advocacy groups, health professionals, and all levels of government. Our list of partners includes the Yukon Hospital Corporation, non-profit organizations, our own staff who are leading these programs, and departments within government that have clients with mental health issues. We have travelled the Yukon communities to meet with RCMP, social workers, First Nation workers, nurses and elders, and we have worked diligently with Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Council of Yukon First Nations. Our shared goal is to improve outcomes and lives for those experiencing mental health issues. Because of the input and feedback we have received since the commencement of the strategy — and particularly over the last couple of months — the document is very different from the document we started with.

The strategy represents the views of our partners and provides what we all agree is a reasonable and possible way forward. The mental health of Yukon residents is high on the list of priorities for this government — high because we care for the people who live in our territory and high because of the impacts that mental wellness has on all of our other services.

This strategy provides a road map for a way to move forward with our First Nation partners and community groups toward improving the mental wellness and mental health of Yukon citizens. I am grateful for the contribution of our partners and department staff.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Member for Riverdale South, on a point of order.

Ms. Stick: We were not informed that there was going to be a ministerial statement today. This should have been something that we were given information about, in order that we might have responded and been given the opportunity to prepare for that.

Speaker: The Leader of the Third Party, on the point of order.

Mr. Silver: I would like to reiterate the concerns of my colleague from Riverdale South. Also, if we're going to do ministerial statements on documents that are going to be received in the Legislative Assembly, it would be great to get

a copy of that so that we could prepare ourselves for a response to ministerial statements.

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

Mr. Elias: On the point of order, to my knowledge, we followed the rules in terms of letting the Assembly know before 11:00 a.m. this morning that there was going to be a ministerial statement today — just for the record.

Speaker: The House Leaders met this morning. I'll ask the Government House Leader: At your meeting, was it not discussed that there was a ministerial statement?

Mr. Elias: No, there wasn't.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I don't see any other option but to deal with it later. We're certainly not going to deal with it later today.

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Political donation rules

Ms. Hanson: Yesterday, the Yukon NDP called for debate on a bill that would ban corporate, union and Outside donations from Yukon politics. Yukoners want to have a conversation about the presence of money in Yukon politics. Rather than allowing all elected members of this Assembly to express their views, the Yukon Party used their majority to stall progress on this legislation by sending it to a behind-closed-doors committee.

Their actions show that the Yukon Party does not want to talk about reforming our political donation rules, but Yukoners have a right to know where members of this Legislative Assembly stand on a simple question: Does the Yukon Party government think that corporate, union and Outside donations should be eliminated, or do they not think so?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, first of all I should point out that the motion that was passed yesterday was voted on unanimously by all members to send the bill to the Members' Services Board for further work. As we noted yesterday, the bill tabled by the NDP was deeply flawed and needs work; however, there are some principles behind that, that we think are meritorious and deserve a discussion.

I noted extensively yesterday our belief that we are interested in having a conversation about the possibility of limiting corporate or union donations. We also talked about donations from outside of the territory. We expressed that opinion very clearly yesterday, Mr. Speaker, and I encourage members opposite to review the Blues to see a more thorough articulation of our point there.

In order to get there, we need to do it in a way that is inclusive of all parties — of the different viewpoints of all parties. We can do that through the Members' Services Board. That's the way we've done it successfully in the past when we amended the *Elections Act* as recently as last fall.

We do support having that conversation, Mr. Speaker; we don't support having that conversation, Mr. Speaker; we don't support the bill in its current form and we think it needs

more work. That's why we'll send it to Members' Services Board for discussion there at that all-party committee.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite can try to deflect all he wants by debating the process or the motives, but his government's actions show that they don't want to have a public debate on the merits of limiting political donations. This government refused to address this proposal yesterday. Instead, they voted to send it behind closed doors. Individuals vote; corporations do not vote, unions do not vote — yet our current rules allow those interests to contribute as much as they want to our political parties. We, as elected officials, are beholden first and foremost to Yukoners. That relationship is twisted when individuals or corporations from outside Yukon can donate as much as they want to political parties.

Does this government agree that there should be limits on political contributions? It's a simple question.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, both the Minister of Community Services and I answered that question on behalf of the government yesterday and indicated we're open to the conversation. Again, I have to remind the member that the Chief Electoral Officer asked political parties over two years ago for input on proposed election changes. The Members' Services Board discussed the changes and the report of the Chief Electoral Officer from 2014 on several occasions, and unanimously agreed on the content to be tabled last fall.

I would remind the member that the very sections that she proposes changing through Bill No. 107 — those sections of the act — those clauses — were amended last fall and unanimously passed. The member had ample opportunity to propose changes during all of that process and chose not to so — chose to wait until an election year, 10 days after they held their last Outside fundraiser of the year.

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister continues to deflect from answering the question. Yukoners have a right to know where their elected officials stand on this issue. If members opposite do not think that corporate, union and Outside contributions should be banned, then they should have the courage to say so in this Legislative Assembly on the record in front of all Yukon citizens.

Yukon is falling behind the rest of Canada in passing legislation limiting political contributions so the political process reflects the interest of everyday Yukoners. This Yukon Party government says they want to be part of the conversation, but only if they control the dialogue.

Democracy means respecting citizens above all other interests. Does this government agree with the principle that we, as elected officials, are accountable to Yukoners and not to Outside interests?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: It's also critical for democracy that members listen to the answers we're providing.

We have been very clear about our positions. Are you saying we are not taking a position? I can't disagree more. We have been very clear. No, we don't think corporate donations should be banned — we think they should be limited — and the extent to which they should be limited is something we

want to have a discussion about. That's why, all of us, including the NDP, voted in favour of the motion to send this bill to Committee, so that's what we will do, Mr. Speaker.

They voted for this motion to send it to the Members' Services Board as well, so for them to suggest that we have somehow forced this into Members' Services Board is counterintuitive. They voted for the motion, so I think the NDP members need to take a look at themselves here and understand what they're trying to accomplish. We know it's not a genuine attempt at making reforms to the law. If it had been, they would have brought it forward two years ago when we reviewed the legislation at hand.

Mr. Speaker, we are happy to have a conversation in Members' Services Board about what limits, or how to limit, corporate and union donations. We've made our position clear, both yesterday and right now on the floor of this House. The NDP have their thumbs in their ears, though, and they won't listen to the answer. We've been very clear about our position; the NDP have been clear about their position. We'll try to work with them in Members' Services Board to come up with a solution, but, Mr. Speaker, make no mistake — this is purely political grandstanding by the NDP. It has been all along. Yukoners see it; everyone else sees it for what it is.

Question re: Mental health services

Ms. Stick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning, the government released their long-awaited mental health strategy and the document identifies systemic problems and gaps in our mental health services, and that's good. It acknowledges the need for collaboration with First Nations, communities and health care professionals, but what I was hoping for in this strategy would be clear goals with timelines and measurable outcomes and I didn't see that, Mr. Speaker.

An example — suicidal patients with no support systems currently wait up to 48 hours to be seen. Patients at risk of self-harm can wait up to two weeks. The document identifies a need to reduce suicide rates, but doesn't outline concrete items or measurable outcomes, except that we need lower rates.

Mr. Speaker, what concrete action in this mental health strategy will decrease the suicide rates in the territory?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly extend my thanks to the member opposite for this question. This morning really was a historic moment in the territory as we tabled this mental wellness strategy alongside Kwanlin Dün First Nation, the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Mental Health Association of Yukon. It was certainly a proud moment for the partners at hand and we're certainly looking forward to starting today to address and implement the mental wellness strategy, also taking into consideration that this isn't a starting point; this is a continuation point. There has been some great work done in the territory, but I think what we heard time and time again through the consultation is that the work that we are doing just isn't coordinated enough. We're certainly happy to have partners on board with Kwanlin Dün, the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Mental Health

Association, along with a number of other partners and stakeholders, such as Many Rivers, for example.

As I said earlier, mental wellness and mental health is not just a government responsibility. This is about reaching out to communities. This is about reaching out to First Nations and other stakeholders and partners, and moving forward with services in our territory.

Ms. Stick: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I recognize that collaborative and community involvement, First Nation involvement and other organizations' involvement is important, and it was recognized in the strategy.

You're right; we shouldn't be starting today. This is something that Yukoners have been waiting for, for a long time. Wait times are a big issue with mental health, whether it's for children, youth or adults, those in crisis or those just needing help.

Mr. Speaker, the strategy recognizes the need to reduce wait times, but it doesn't present clear action items or timelines to accomplish this.

Mr. Speaker, how does this strategy address the eight-month-long wait-list for mental health assessments? What is this government's target when it comes to reducing wait times? Just saying it is not enough.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. We have certainly been working for many years on establishing solid strategies for treating mental illness and increasing the mental wellness of our citizens. As I indicated in my first response, we were very proud to partner with Kwanlin Dün First Nation, with the Council of Yukon First Nations and with the Mental Health Association on the creation and ultimate tabling of the wellness strategy just today. There is no quick or easy solution. We know that this is a struggle all across the country. One only needs to read or listen to the news to be certain of that. Mental wellness and addictions are something to be tackled by working together with other community groups, non-profit organizations, First Nations, and all government departments.

Mr. Speaker, just a few weeks ago, we announced an additional \$1 million to be provided to community groups to build that community capacity. That's something that we see as very important in the short term — working with communities and NGO partners across the territory to fill in the gaps within some of those communities. As I indicated earlier, we're very proud to be working with our partners and First Nations along with the Mental Health Association. I believe and I am very optimistic that there will be good work being done as a result of —

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Stick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite is correct: Yukoners have waited a long time for this mental health strategy — a long time. We've been asking for it since we started in this Legislature.

This morning, we received a document that falls short of committing to an action plan to address significant gaps in mental health service in the territory. It has broad goals; it has strategic priorities that are good — but we're missing those

clear timelines and measurable outcomes, as well as significant funding and personnel commitments. Our mental health professionals in Whitehorse, in the communities, whether they're government or NGOs, are working hard. They need additional support to achieve the objectives of this strategy. This year's one-time, \$1-million commitment is not enough.

Mr. Speaker, what long-term financial commitments is this government —

Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question from the member opposite. As I indicated in my first two responses, this mental wellness strategy certainly has the support from Kwanlin Dün First Nation, from the Council of Yukon First Nations, from the Mental Health Association of Yukon. We have invested this year an additional \$1 million into Mental Health Services to provide some capacity-building within a number of communities.

Mr. Speaker, this document — the member is speaking as though it is being tabled and shelved. This is a living document for the next 10 years. The member opposite will have seen that from the cover. But we are optimistic in moving forward with our partners. We recognize that there is a lot of hard work ahead of us, but also recognize the good work that has been done before this. This government will continue to invest in the area of mental health as we have in the past number of years and are very proud of this mental wellness strategy.

Question re: First Nation participation in mining sector

Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this week, the Premier received a scathing letter from the Chief of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in that accuses the Government of Yukon of "bargaining in bad faith" over mining rules. The chief went on to say, "As the 2016 mining season commences, TH is weighing the value of our continued participation in the negotiation process. We cannot point to any concrete gains from our months of engagement. Unless Yukon takes quick action to address the issues that we have been raising, we will be forced to conclude that the political will is just not there."

Mr. Speaker, if the Government of Yukon's relationship with Yukon First Nations is as good as it claims, why are we seeing letters like this arriving in the Premier's mailbox?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe the letter the member opposite is referring to is one that was copied to me as well as the Leader of the Official Opposition.

With respect to some of the issues raised by the Chief of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, of course, many of those matters are being dealt with at the officials level through the devolution transfer agreement protocol table. Our government remains committed to working with Yukon First Nations to resolve a number of mining-related matters. Many of them are being dealt with at that table of course. We're seeking practical solutions that promote a vibrant and competitive mining sector while protecting aboriginal and treaty rights.

Our government remains committed to clarifying notification requirements for staking and exploration activities, including class 1 throughout the territory. Our government is engaged in dialogue with First Nations and industry on resolving issues related to staking, prospecting and mineral development on settlement as well as on Commissioner's land. I know this is being led through our Strategic Initiatives branch of Energy, Mines and Resources. Work continues on this front and we're hopeful that officials can come to resolution on the issues that were raised by the Chief of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in the letter to the Premier, which was copied to me and leaders of the opposition parties.

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, we all got up in this House just a half hour ago and we all talked about how much we support the mining industry, but the reality contained in letters like this one that arrived in the mail on May 2 is telling. The letter says the government is negotiating in bad faith and that TH is set to pull the plug unless the government changes its tune. Now leadership from the Yukon Party is lacking in this file.

Deadlines for agreements have come and gone and the First Nation is fed up. For example, new rules for class 1 notifications which were supposed to be in place for 2016 are simply not happening this year. The government has taken an adversarial approach with the First Nation governments and it is causing huge uncertainty for the very mining industry that it is supposedly trying to help.

Mr. Speaker, why has the government failed to accomplish having class 1 notifications in place for 2016, as it promised it would?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to the class 1 notification, obviously members will recall a few years ago — I believe it was the fall session of 2013 — where we were responding with changes to the *Quartz Mining Act* and the *Placer Mining Act* to bring those notifications into the Ross River area.

Subsequently, we advanced those notifications into the traditional territories and transboundary territories of the unsettled First Nations and the First Nations that have asserted traditional territory within the Yukon. Again, for the settled First Nations, we're working through the DTAP table on this very initiative.

Class 1 activity has been described to me by prospectors as their bread and butter — it's very important to them. They need to ensure that there are thresholds put in place that perhaps will allow them to continue to use hand tools and that type of activity, while respecting some of the more invasive class 1 activities that are there. The Yukon Prospectors Association and the Chamber of Mines have provided us with a list of thresholds and we're discussing them with First Nations. This isn't a unilateral decision — it's in discussion with First Nations and industry. It has taken longer than we wanted it to take, but work continues.

Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can appreciate that. It takes a lot of work to build a collaborative relationship with other levels of government, but when your partner at the table says that you are negotiating in bad faith, things aren't

going well. When your partner at the table is thinking about leaving because they don't believe that the political will is there from this government to find solutions, it is also a big problem.

Another issue the letter addressed is the stalled mineral development strategy. TH says that the government has an unrealistic deadline for finishing the project that suggests the strategy is "more about election-year politics than transparent policy-making".

Where is the leadership on this issue? When is this government going to start reducing uncertainty for both First Nation governments and the mining industry?

Hon. Mr. Kent: That's exactly what we've embarked on. This isn't something we embarked on in this calendar year. Work has been underway for a number of months, but, of course, the member opposite was quite critical of us missing a deadline in November of this year and now is critical of us working with First Nations in continuing to move forward on this mineral development strategy. We're looking for a comprehensive 10-year strategy that will help to guide the responsible management of our mineral resources over the next decade. It's going to help build a sustainable industry that adheres to high environmental standards and is engaged with First Nations and communities.

We are working with First Nations — there was a workshop held here in Whitehorse by the Strategic Initiatives branch just prior to the start of this session. We feel that this is important work and we want to make sure that this document allows us to emerge from the current downturn in better shape than we went in. We're already seeing signs of success — investments into Victoria Gold, Kaminak and Wellgreen by a major US funding partner are indications that the Yukon will be well-positioned to emerge from this downturn in better shape than when we went in.

We have mines that are currently permitted and some that will be moving through permitting. We're in much better shape than we were in the early part of 2000-01 when it comes to the mining sector of the territory —

Speaker: Order, please.

Question re: Liquor pricing

Mr. Barr: I have a series of questions for the minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation on his leadership of the corporation. The Yukon Liquor Corporation is responsible for preparing and publishing an annual price list for its stock so that restaurants can budget for their alcohol purchasing.

Can the minister responsible for Yukon Liquor Corporation tell this House when the 2016 Yukon Liquor Corporation price list was published?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: I guess I don't know what day that price list was published. I know that there have been concerns with pricing of liquor here in the Yukon through the Yukon Liquor Corporation.

We have worked diligently with the board and the Yukon Liquor Corporation to try to rectify that problem. We have met with many licence holders throughout the Yukon and

talked to them about that issue, as well as many others. We'll continue to do the good work that the department does in order to satisfy the customers that we have. We'll continue to talk to people and do the work we need to do.

Mr. Barr: Mr. Speaker, the price list was supposed to be published on April 1 — nothing. Then it was scheduled to be out on April 22; it's still not done. The Yukon Liquor Corporation's price list is an important tool for local hospitality businesses that need to write their budgets for the upcoming tourism season. The first buses have already started arriving through town and the minister responsible for the corporation needs to show some leadership.

Mr. Speaker, why hasn't the minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation made the 2016 price list a priority? When will he support local businesses by giving them the information they need to plan for the summer tourism season?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the prices haven't changed from last year to this year, so I guess, if somebody thought there was going to be a drastic change, in order to plan for their upcoming season, I don't think that's the case. We have talked about the pricing structure over the course of the last number of months and how to create a new pricing structure that's easier to understand, not only for business owners, but even for the staff.

But in terms of a new price, to the best of my knowledge, we don't send out prices. We don't have price changes on a yearly basis — on a set date each year, Mr. Speaker, but if I am wrong, I certainly will get the information and provide it to the member opposite as soon as I can.

Mr. Barr: It's the businesses that are waiting for this list. We have had a fluctuating dollar, which has been brought to my attention and which would create some differences.

The minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation's failure of leadership is causing some real discomfort. Yesterday in the Legislature, he said that a proposed liquor store in his riding would — and I quote: "... be led by the private sector, in a privately built and privately owned building leased back to the government. It would maximize private sector opportunities and minimize capital costs to government."

Some Yukoners are wondering whether this is all part of a move toward privatizing the corporation altogether. Mr. Speaker, can the minister state for the record that he is opposed to privatizing the Yukon Liquor Corporation?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, this issue has nothing to do with pricing, but I will say that what I said yesterday was "if" the project was to move forward in Teslin, not that it "was" going to move forward — I would like to keep that very clear.

Mr. Speaker, if a project was to move forward in Teslin, it would be led by the private sector, just like the liquor store in Whitehorse. The government does not own the building that houses the liquor store here in Whitehorse. I guess I don't really understand where the member opposite is going with this question, because it would be done just like it's done here in Whitehorse.

Question re: Employment equity policy

Ms. White: Last April, I asked the minister responsible for Economic Development why neither equal pay, nor gender-based economic equality were goals in his department's strategic plan for 2012 to 2017. The department's 16-page strategic plan does not once use the words "women", "equity", or "equality". Income equality is an important indicator of gender equity in society. Economic inequality places women at greater risk of being left behind on housing, mental and physical health, child care, education, social supports, food security, safety and employment. The newly launched Yukon gender equality website shows that in Yukon's sales and service sector, women earn 85 cents to the dollar earned by men. This wage gap is unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate commit to working with the Department of Economic Development to include pay equity as a strategic goal for economic development in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Gender equality, of course, is an important feature of the Public Service Commission's role. All departments, of course, all fall under the rules put forward by the Public Service Commissioner and, of course, gender equity and equal work for equal pay is a principle that we have instilled throughout the government departments. Regardless of individual departments' strategic plans, that is something we enforce throughout the entirety of government.

A number of indicators over the years have demonstrated that we have made great strides in terms of promoting gender equity within the public service — that includes the Department of Economic Development and other government departments as well. We've seen salaries come closer to parity. We've seen tenure improved. All these are positive indicators, Mr. Speaker. We have more work to do — we know that — but between the Public Service Commission, the Women's Directorate and other government departments, we will continue to ensure that we promote gender equality throughout the Yukon public service.

Ms. White: In April 2015, the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission stated that he was unaware of any issues of pay equity with the public service in Yukon but, if that was the case, then he would move to address it. Mr. Speaker, in 2014, women in regular full-time positions in Government of Yukon earned an average of six percent less than the average salary of men in regular full-time positions in Yukon government. Despite a policy of pay equity for women, the Government of Yukon still has a wage disparity problem.

Mr. Speaker, how will the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission address the pay disparity between men and women in the Government of Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've seen a fairly positive direction taken by the Public Service Commission over a number of years to improve gender parity and improve gender equality throughout the public service. The member does correctly note that in 2014 the salary gap between women's and men's average full-time salaries was

much smaller than it has been in the past, but there is still a small gap there. I don't believe that is necessarily because of discrimination or because of discriminatory practices by the public service. I believe it's based on a demographic breakdown of certain aspects of our public service. However, we do have more work to do and the gender equality website launched by the Women's Directorate is one of the initiatives we have to that effect.

We also, of course, have seen an improvement across the board in through a number of metrics that we measure, Mr. Speaker, with regard to women's representation in the workforce. As I've said, we've seen more women at higher levels in the Yukon government public service. We've seen job tenure improve and we've seen salaries improve.

There is more work to do, of course. It is a priority for the Public Service Commission. We do work closely with all Yukon government departments, especially the Women's Directorate, when advocating for these types of things. There is more work to be done, but we are proud of the work that has been done far.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2011, women made up only 31 percent of those persons in Yukon with an annual income over \$100,000. Those tend to be senior level and management positions within the Government of Yukon. We have made some progress in income equality in the Yukon, but not enough.

Does the government recognize that there is still work to do on economic equality for women in the territory, and what concrete actions will be taken to address this problem?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have absolutely acknowledged that there is more work to be done, and I said that in my first two responses; however, I do need to note that we have done a lot of good work on this front. Of the 168 management group positions in the year 2000, about 40 percent were held by women. As of the most recent data that we have — last year — over 53 percent of management positions across government were held by women.

We have seen an increase at those management levels of women's representation in the public service. We have also seen, as I noted before, improvements to a number of other metrics, including job tenure, representation in the management levels and salaries. We do acknowledge that there is more work to do. We do work closely with the Women's Directorate on this front, and all government departments, but the indicators that we have seen to date are positive and we know that there is good work that has been done, but certainly more to do.

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. 98: *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third Reading, Bill No. 98, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Cathers.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 98, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 98, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I won't spend long in speaking to this at third reading, since I have spoken to it and I think explained it to members both at second reading and at Committee of the Whole. I will briefly recap that a miscellaneous statute law amendment act — for those who are not familiar with it — is a relatively common thing for government to bring forward to clean up — a piece of legislation that includes minor corrections to a series of Yukon acts. Some of them are simply the addition of a letter that was omitted through typographical error — for example, in one document, the word "sheriff" was missing an "f".

The changes contained within this legislation are not policy changes or of a controversial nature, but to correct language errors, grammatical and numbering errors, remove incorrect references, make corrections to the French version to ensure it matches the English version, and vice versa. This current piece of legislation amends a number of acts, which I explained earlier, both at second reading and Committee of the Whole.

With that, I will conclude my remarks and commend this legislation to the House.

Ms. Moorcroft: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP Official Opposition to support Bill No. 98, the *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*. This legislative work is done regularly to remove outdated provisions, to correct editorial mistakes and make other minor changes to ensure that the acts operate as intended. I want to acknowledge the work of public servants across government departments who identified the miscellaneous amendments that were needed to some 53 statutes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

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. Moorcroft: Agree.
Ms. White: Agree.
Mr. Tredger: Agree.
Mr. Barr: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 15 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for third reading of Bill No. 98 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 98 has passed this House.

Bill No. 200: *Technical Amendments Act, 2016* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 200, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Cathers.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I move that Bill No. 200, entitled *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 200, entitled *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, as I've spoken to this previously, both in second reading and at Committee, I will not take long in my introductory remarks. I will again note that this legislation is one that makes some relatively minor changes to several pieces of legislation. But, because it's beyond the scope of what, in our view, would be deemed appropriate for a miscellaneous statute law amendment act, since a miscellaneous statute law amendment act is not supposed to make any policy changes, we did bring forward this in a separate bill.

The changes themselves are relatively minor in scope. They include amending the child support administrative recalculation service and clarifying processes in the new *Land Titles Act, 2015* and the amended *Summary Convictions Act*. Although the amendments are minor, we have again put these into a separate bill for a miscellaneous statute law amendment act because of the scope of the changes.

Very briefly, the amendments are as follows: the *Child Support Administrative Recalculation Act* amendments enable a change — currently, if child support orders include special expenses for things like sports costs, parents cannot use the service and must go to court. Family lawyers have told us that many child support orders now include special expenses, so by expanding this service, families will be able to go through an administrative method rather than going back to court and

this will save both on legal costs and time, as well as avoiding putting that additional drain on the courts themselves.

As well, the amendments to the *Land Titles Act, 2015* are changing references to Yukon First Nation final agreements, and this is based on input received from First Nations after the legislation was changed last fall. Secondly, changes were made after additional consideration of the most effective way to implement the regulations that will allow the registrar of land titles to create and modify the forms and establish processes for registration documents as required, without having to seek an order-in-council to approve the forms themselves. That will speed up the ability to implement the act.

Last but not least, the amendments to the *Summary Convictions Act* create efficiencies for court registries that administer summary convictions and police officers who issue tickets. This is changing from what was passed in the *Act to Amend the Summary Convictions Act*, which required the enforcement officer who issued a ticket to appear before the judge. The change that is contained in the act will allow one officer to appear in front of the court but will not require each and every individual officer to be waiting and take time to personally appear in that case. That change does not negate the need for an officer who is a witness to be available if the matter actually were to proceed to a trial, in which case the officer who was a witness to the event would, in most cases, likely be called to testify before the judge by either defence, prosecution or both.

That, I think, summarizes the amendments themselves. Therefore, I will conclude my remarks and hope to have the support of all members for these improvements to legislation. I would like to thank staff of the Department of Justice and other departments involved in this for their work on these legislative amendments.

Ms. Moorcroft: The Yukon NDP Official Opposition supports Bill No. 200, *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*. These are small but important changes amending the *Child Support Administrative Recalculation Act*, the *Land Titles Act, 2015*, and the *Summary Convictions Act*.

The amendments to the *Child Support Administrative Recalculation Act* allow for child support orders with special or extraordinary expenses to be recalculated administratively, rather than requiring that the parents go to court.

The Minister of Justice noted at second reading that, due to the sheer volume of work that staff and legal drafters dealt with in getting the large new *Land Titles Act, 2015* ready for debate, there were adjustments and corrections needed.

Finally, the amendments to the *Summary Convictions Act* mean that an enforcement officer can swear a complaint on a ticket issued by another officer.

Mr. Speaker, we support these technical amendments and are voting for this bill. Thank you.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Order, please. Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

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 17 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for third reading of Bill No. 200 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 200 has passed this House.

Bill No. 95: Student Financial Assistance Act, 2016
— Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 95, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Graham.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 95, entitled *Student Financial Assistance Act, 2016*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Education that Bill No. 95, entitled *Student Financial Assistance Act, 2016*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On April 11, I had the pleasure of tabling the *Student Financial Assistance Act, 2016*. This new act will replace and update the *Students Financial Assistance Act* that was previously in place.

The Yukon government student financial assistance program has been supporting the ability of Yukon students to access post-secondary education for a large number of years. Almost 50 years ago, I took advantage of the assistance program during my university days.

However, over time, a number of issues have arisen that create challenges in administering these programs in a consistent and equitable manner. The act was last revised in 2002, and we're updating this legislation to address changes

that have occurred in Yukon and in the post-secondary education landscape.

The Department of Education conducted an in-depth public engagement process on potential changes to the Yukon grant, including consultation with First Nations. Six-hundred and eighty-five people provided input on an online survey that ran from May 1 to June 30 of last year. Additionally, 22 direct consultations were held with First Nation governments and other education partners between March 15 and August 31 of last year.

Responses were compiled in a “what we heard” document, which is available on the Department of Education website. Officials then engaged with First Nation governments and other stakeholders on the report from October 30 to November 30, 2015. We heard repeatedly from many of our partners in education that parts of the act were not meeting the needs of students interested in pursuing post-secondary education.

After listening to and talking with our education partners, we have brought forward the bill you see before you today. I am pleased to say that the concerns and input from our partners are reflected in this student financial assistance act. The act has been renamed and has been substantially rewritten. The Department of Education staff are extremely happy that we are finally removing the “s” from “students” to meet current style and grammar conventions.

Under the current *Students Financial Assistance Act*, there were three categories of students who were eligible for the Yukon grant. Independent students are eligible if they have lived in the Yukon for the previous two continuous years and have completed two years of secondary education in the Yukon school system. Dependent students are eligible if at least one of their parents is a Canadian citizen or permanent resident who has lived in the Yukon for the previous two continuous years, and new resident students are eligible if they are less than 24 years of age, were less than 19 years old and were a dependent of their parent when they and their parent became resident in Yukon, completed at least one year of secondary education in the Yukon school system before reaching the age of 19 and have resided with at least one of their parents in Yukon continuously since becoming a Yukon resident.

There are multiple eligibility categories, yet the majority of students qualify under the independent student category. In addition, under the current system, a student who has never set foot in Canada may be eligible for the grant. Therefore, the new act proposes to remove the three categories of students — which are “dependent”, “independent” and “new resident” — and base eligibility solely on being a resident of the Yukon for the past two years and completing two years of high school in Yukon, or being a resident during high-school years, and achieving entry into post-secondary education.

The implementation of First Nation self-government agreements has led to an inequity in the financial assistance that can be provided to some First Nation students. Under the current act, students who receive financial assistance from the federal government are not eligible to also receive financial

assistance from the Yukon government. However, students from self-governing First Nations that have taken over responsibility for post-secondary education funding from the federal government are eligible to receive funding from both their First Nation and the Yukon government. Students of those First Nations that have not taken over responsibility must choose between funding from the Government of Canada or the Government of Yukon.

As a result, the playing field is not level for all First Nation students who wish to pursue post-secondary education. To address this inequity, the new act will allow students who are receiving federal funding to also receive the Yukon grant, increasing the eligibility of First Nation students for this funding program.

Another issue is that Yukon residents who were born and raised in the territory and completed high-school equivalency in the Yukon, but did not complete two years of high school, are not eligible for the Yukon grant, yet a student who moved to the Yukon to complete the last two years of high school is eligible for five years of the Yukon grant. Under the new act, eligibility would be based on a student completing two years of high school in the Yukon, or being a resident during the high-school years, and achieving entry into post-secondary education.

Students studying outside the Yukon currently receive a travel grant of \$1,800 per year, whether they study at UBC in Vancouver, at the University of Saskatchewan or at Memorial University in Newfoundland. We heard from our partners that Yukon students studying outside the Yukon do appreciate the additional financial support; however, we don't want to provide a disincentive to students who are interested in studying here at Yukon College. The Yukon grant and travel allowance will be set out in regulation rather than in the act, but I can tell you that we intend to reduce the amount of travel assistance while increasing the amount of the base Yukon grant. Students studying outside of the territory will not see a reduction in the overall funding that they receive. However, Yukon College students will receive an increase in the Yukon grant.

Under the current act, students are required to have continuously resided in Yukon during the two years immediately before the start of the academic year. The act does not specify how to determine continuous residency. Can the student travel outside the country for the previous six months? If they were volunteering in a developing nation, would that make them ineligible? What if they spent three months living and surfing in Tofino before going to university? What we've done with the new act is to clearly define "residency" to ensure that students or their parents, if applicable, maintain a close and substantial tie to the Yukon.

The new act also proposes the following amendments to improve post-secondary students' access to funding for their studies. We are moving from an annual, quarter or semester amount to a weekly amount. Students will be eligible for a maximum of 170 weeks under the new act, allowing students up to two additional years of funding under the student training allowance to take courses to meet post-secondary

entrance requirements. We will no longer require students to maintain certain grades to receive full funding amounts in subsequent years of study, and we will be expanding the role of the Student Financial Assistance and Awards Committee to include reviewing matters related to completion of two years of high school and high-school equivalency and drawing on the expertise of the committee to provide advice to the minister at the minister's request.

We're also ensuring that students who are being funded under the current criteria and who will otherwise lose eligibility for the program — for example, because they moved away from the Yukon once they graduated from high school and maintain no close ties to the Yukon — will remain eligible for the grant until September 2017.

The new weekly amount of financial assistance for which students would be eligible would still need to be defined in the regulations to this new act. We're committed to ensuring that students will not see any decrease in their current level of financial assistance, and the vast majority of students will see an increase to their total level of financial assistance through these changes.

The purpose of these amendments to the *Students Financial Assistance Act* is to make it easier for Yukon students who maintain an endearing connection to Yukon to access the grant and pursue post-secondary studies.

We have worked hard to remove the barriers faced by First Nation students to access the Yukon grant, and we want to make sure that we do not provide a disincentive to people who want to remain in the Yukon and study at our very own Yukon College. We recognize that students do not always take a traditional approach to post-secondary studies, nor do they always follow the two-semester-per-year approach. Our grant program needs to be flexible to respond to their individual needs. I believe that we have hit the mark with the new *Student Financial Assistance Act, 2016*, and I look forward to discussing it further in Committee.

The only other item that I wanted to address is that I sincerely hoped to have the regulations available during the Legislature for Committee of the Whole. Unfortunately, we simply haven't managed to complete the regulations; however, I have specific information with respect to what we intend to do as far as the reduction in travel grant and the weekly amounts available to students when they attend universities or colleges outside the territory. I will provide that information to members as quickly as I can.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for his introduction and comments on Bill No. 95. I would also like to thank the Department of Education officials and the Department of Justice officials for their work on this bill, the *Student Financial Assistance Act, 2016*.

The NDP Official Opposition is pleased to see this bill before the House as it makes a number of improvements that help Yukon students seek higher education. In today's work force, education beyond high school is highly desired by employers and other organizations. Pursuing that education can be a very expensive decision for many Yukoners. The act

was last revised in 2002, and financial support for Yukon students began with the students grants ordinance of 1967. Looking back at discussions, I believe the idea was that, because we did not have a university, this would allow our students to go to the university of their choice, and it has been very successful. I have talked to former students who have studied in Australia, at Dalhousie University, University of Victoria — across Canada and across the world. What is really exciting is that many of our students are excelling at these institutions.

Our Yukon grant is exemplary in supporting students to pursue careers and an education that helps them. Yukon, as I have noted, has a long history of supporting our students. As a teacher, I saw many of my students take advantage of the financial assistance, gaining advanced degrees and becoming productive and successful members of their communities. As I said, it is just amazing to see the number of universities and schools around the world that our students attend.

Someday it might be — I don't know if the minister has the information — and it's not pertinent to this bill — but it would be very interesting to see the number of our students and what universities they are going to. It would be an interesting read and a very rewarding read for many of their former teachers to see the scholarships and the students at the various universities.

The next step is changing our hiring practices and placing a priority on the return to the Yukon of these students. I know we are in various labour agreements that have slowed down our ability to have our students return to our communities, but I would encourage the government to look at that very closely when they're signing the next agreement on internal trade. I would also like to thank the Yukon First Nations, the students and the parents and their educational institutions, as well as the broader community, which provided input into the proposed changes. The government is proposing these changes to improve the process for post-secondary financial assistance and to ensure that the assistance is awarded in a fair and flexible manner.

The Yukon NDP has always placed a high priority on the education of Yukon youth to ensure we have a highly educated workforce. We presented to the House the Yukon *Education Act* in the 1990s, an act that provided new governance and introduced school boards. We also established École Émilie Tremblay, Yukon's first French language school. We also brought forward the *Yukon College Act*, creating autonomous, citizen-led board governance, built the Ayamdigut campus, five new Yukon College campuses, the Yukon College trust fund, and the Northern Research Institute. The Yukon NDP takes pride in our record of Yukon's educational future.

The minister highlighted a number of the proposed changes, and I'll just go through some of them to ensure we're on the same page. The proposed changes will increase funding available by \$367,000. Will that be indexed to future increases in the cost of living? The changes will allow more students to qualify for the Yukon grant. It will increase funding for

students studying at Yukon College. It also will maintain a cost-of-living increase for post-secondary financial assistance.

Students who currently qualify for funding from the Government of Canada will now be eligible for the Yukon grant as well. Students eligible for the Yukon grant must have completed at least two years of high school or equivalent in Yukon. They or their parents must be residents of Yukon and also not be eligible for post-secondary funding in another province. I will have some questions for the minister on that in Committee of the Whole.

The proposed amendments also expand the eligibility for Yukon First Nation citizens to be eligible for the Yukon grant. I have talked to a number of the First Nations around Yukon, and they are fully in support of that. I again extend their thanks to the minister for bringing it forward.

The travel amount for students studying outside the territory will be reduced from \$1,800 a year to \$1,500. Maybe I should say thank you to Air North for that one. The cost of air travel has come down significantly — this still may be a concern for students who are attending further areas and, again, we'll probably discuss that in Committee of the Whole.

Changes are also being made to the student training allowance: students who utilize upgrading courses at Yukon College will be eligible for two years of training allowance and will then receive the full five years of the Yukon grant — that's a nice touch and a real boost for a lot of students who are going back to upgrade at Yukon College so that they can proceed to a university.

Another change I noted was the change in the elimination of the 65-percent grade average to maintain eligibility for continuing the Yukon grant — again, I think that is a wise decision. Universities use different ways of determining marks and I think that us trying to put our marking system on Outside institutions will be problematic, to say the least. Again, I'll discuss that in Committee of the Whole with the minister.

On the whole, I commend the minister and the Department of Education, as well as the Department of Justice, for bringing this forward. I and many of my constituents appreciate the extent to which the department and the minister have gone to include them in the discussions and in the consultation as a lead-up to this act. I will have some questions in Committee of the Whole and I thank the minister for bringing this forward.

Mr. Silver: I am happy to rise today to speak to the new *Student Financial Assistance Act, 2016*, and I'm delighted to see this government continuing to support Yukon students attending post-secondary education. I agree that there was room for increased clarity and redefined eligibility requirements to the act and I'm very happy to see those in front of us today.

These changes will make the Yukon grant more accessible — as the minister says — to Yukon students, while restricting access to non-Yukon students. First Nation students who belong to the Kluane First Nation, Liard First Nation, White River First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Ross

River Dena Council will have the opportunity to receive funding equal to other Yukon First Nations — that's a great step forward and the minister and the department should be commended for this work.

The more accessible that we make these grants and funding to our students and residents to pursue further education will only come back to us tenfold. An educated and aware public contributes greatly to our community — that's the bottom line. It's a matter of sharing knowledge and a matter of sharing expertise. Many of these people become role models to younger generations, which only compounds the positive effects of advancing education.

The likelihood of a student returning to the Yukon after post-secondary education to work has a great impact on our economy. The Yukon grant, along with the Yukon training allowance and government scholarships, are very wise investments. I will be supporting the new *Student Financial Assistance Act, 2016*. Thank you.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I appreciate the comments made by both members opposite, and I have to tell you that this bill took some time to develop, and I have to thank both previous ministers of Education who had a hand in this. I look forward to discussing the bill in Committee of the Whole, because I believe it is a good act that we have worked very hard on and we are very proud of, so I look forward to Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

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. Stick: Agree.

Ms. Moorcroft: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Barr: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for second reading of Bill No. 95 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. 95, entitled *Student Financial Assistance 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. 95: Student Financial Assistance Act, 2016

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 95, entitled *Student Financial Assistance Act, 2016*.

Hon. Mr. Graham: I would like to first of all take the opportunity to introduce a member of my department and a member of the Department of Justice — the drafter — here today. Judy Thrower is the ADM of Advanced Education and Lawrence Purdy is the member of the Justice department who did the drafting on this bill.

I don't think I am going to give a long introduction at this point because of the fact that the second reading speeches were today; however, I know there are going to be a couple of issues that the members opposite have already brought forward, so perhaps I can do that first.

The act is intended to clarify a number of things, but what it is also intended to do is to allow us to cut funding to students whose parents have left the Yukon and who do not return to the Yukon — the students themselves do not return to the Yukon. They don't maintain a close tie or connection to the Yukon, and normally we would never see them back in this territory. We believe that funding those students on a continual, ongoing basis is not a good use of taxpayers' funding and we would rather see that funding allocated to current students whose parents are here and there is a very good possibility that they will return to the territory. That is one of the issues.

Another is the Student Financial Assistance Committee. Under the current act, the committee is very limited to hearing appeals that are related to maintaining residency, late applications and ensuring that the act is being followed. Under the new act, we intend to expand the powers of the committee to such things also as hearing appeals for high school completion, appeals by students who feel that they have maintained a close and substantial connection to the Yukon, and they will also be able to take on an advisory role to the minister.

One of the reasons that the regulations weren't able to be completed on time is quite simply that we want the input of the committee in the drafting of those new regulations. Some decisions have been made, such as we're fairly clear on the amount of money that students will be receiving and the change from semesters to weeks of funding. But, realistically, there are many things in the regulations that we would like to have the input of the Student Financial Assistance Committee, a committee that has members who have been there a number of years and, in fact, one who was just recently reappointed to the committee and who served as a committee member back in the 1990s. We're talking about committee members who have a great depth of knowledge about the territory and about the *Students Financial Assistance Act*.

I think it is very important that it is understood that we consulted, face to face, with 10 First Nation governments. We also held consultations with the First Nations Education Commission, or FNEC, and they also provided valuable input into the process and the recommendations that came forward. We believe that there were a number of First Nation organizations and First Nation citizens who have completed the online survey. We're not exactly sure how many additional First Nation students will become eligible because we don't know who is currently attending from those First Nations — post-secondary education institutions — who will now be eligible, but we hope to know those fairly quickly.

That's probably all I will say at this point and I look forward to questions from the members opposite as we go through the bill.

Mr. Tredger: Some of these questions may have been answered in our briefing and I thank the officials for the excellent briefing that we were given. It did answer a lot of my questions; however, I may repeat some of them to get those questions on the record and to have confirmation of my understanding.

When we talk about the definition of "residency", what definition is the government going to apply and would filing taxes in the Yukon make one a resident?

Hon. Mr. Graham: "Close and substantial connection" means that students or their parents, where applicable, will be expected to be resident of the territory, according to common law. The definition will be further defined in the regulations or in guidelines.

The draft definition we are considering is: you must normally reside in and consider Yukon your home; it is the place where you routinely return at the end of temporary absences; you do not always need to be physically present in

the Yukon, but absences must be temporary, both in time and in the sense that Yukon remains unequivocally your home. Generally a Yukon resident files as a Yukon citizen with Canada Revenue, has valid Yukon health care insurance and, if you drive a vehicle, you have a valid Yukon driver's licence. That is the definition we're currently looking at.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that answer.

Have the timelines for disbursement changed? Will the grants be given out at the beginning of each semester, or are they going to a monthly disbursement? Has any of that changed? Are the changes to the act going to increase any administrative costs?

Hon. Mr. Graham: We're going to a weekly amount, and the reason for going to a weekly amount is quite simple. When you and I went to school, university was 15 weeks per semester, two semesters per year and you got the rest of the summer off to earn enough money to go back in the fall. That's simply not the way students are doing things nowadays.

What we've done is change to a weekly schedule because many universities are changing to a 16-week semester. What we intend to do is to not disburse money for periods of time in excess of 20 weeks. A student would have to apply after each 20-week term. If it's a normal university term, we would expect them to reapply each term, or they can apply at the beginning of the year for the full year, but we would only disburse the money in segments.

Some students, as you know now — especially nursing students and students in those kinds of programs — are attending three semesters and so we would expect them to apply for the full year, which would be three semesters, but the money would be disbursed on a semester basis — if that's 15-, 16-, 17- or, in some cases, 20-week periods.

Mr. Tredger: Will that affect the amount of administrative costs or is it just an administrative measure?

Hon. Mr. Graham: It shouldn't increase the administrative burden of the staff here. In fact, with the simplified rules in determining residency, we believe that in itself will free up staff to do some additional tasks that they have perhaps not had time to do in the past. When the member opposite mentioned during second reading that it would be nice to know where students are going, my staff managed to get at least the top 10.

I was not surprised. In fact I picked the top one, which was Yukon College, but I was very surprised to see that second was University of Victoria. UBC Vancouver is next, at 40 students.

I will give you rough numbers: Yukon College, 311; University of Victoria, 89; UBC in Vancouver, 40; University of Calgary, 33; UBC Okanagan, 30; University of Alberta, 23; Thompson Rivers, 23; Lethbridge, 15; and then some college I don't know back east where I'm sure they don't have any graduates at all — St. Francis Xavier was also on the top 10 list.

Mr. Tredger: As my colleague from Takhini-Kopper King said, that's awesome. It is. I think the Department of

Education and teachers can really take pride in that accomplishment and the accomplishment of their students.

There are families residing whose children have not completed two years of high school. Would those children be eligible for the grant? Could they qualify for the training allowance?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Yes, in a word. As long as they were present in the territory during their high school years and they became eligible for university under that definition, they would be eligible for the grant. But this is the reason that we decided to allow two years of training — the student training allowance — prior to receiving the grant. The reason for that was quite simply that there are a number of Yukon students whom we all know who dropped out before completing high school — or at least not completing an academic stream in high school. If they upgrade at the college and are Yukon students, they become eligible for the grant when they're accepted into a post-secondary institution.

Mr. Tredger: I guess the one category I sometimes wonder about is for students who have dropped out of high school. They may not have completed high school but they return to school as adults. They are Yukon students and may be in a school in the Yukon but they don't have high school. I assume a high school is 10 to 12, but correct me if I'm wrong there.

Then, as adults, they realize they do want an education and that an education is beneficial and life circumstances allow them to go back to school. Would they be eligible for the two years of the Yukon upgrading and then the Yukon grant — not having had high school?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, virtually everyone is eligible for student training allowance if they decide to go back to the college and either take upgrading, a trades program or even, in some cases, arts and science programming.

They can take and get a training allowance while they go to Yukon College even though they aren't eligible for the Yukon grant. A student who is normally a resident in the territory, and he or she is living in the territory during their high school years — that means grades 8 to 12 — if they are normally resident in the territory during those grades, and they become eligible to go to university — so by whatever means, either going to the college, taking correspondence courses or some children are home-schooled — once they become eligible and are accepted by a university, they then become eligible for the Yukon grant. That is something that wasn't done previously and it opens the grant up for a number of additional students.

Mr. Tredger: I believe that answered my next question. It was around home-schooling. Is there a process in place to determine a student's eligibility if they are home-schooled? Part of that was answered, and I am just wondering if the minister has contemplated that would like to comment on it.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Home-schoolers are now treated the same as students in a regular school. They are registered through the Department of Education, and even though they

are home-schooled, they receive an allowance of some \$1,200 a year. They are registered and tracked through the education system. Yes, those students are eligible for the grant as well.

Mr. Tredger: How do you determine what full-time students are at universities? I know the number of courses varies from institution to institution in determining what an institution considers a full-time student — as well as at Yukon College. I know we have many students who go there for one or two courses — maybe they have a family at home or they are upgrading. That would be particularly where it is, but I am sure it happens in other institutions. Does this act contemplate “part-time” — and a definition for “part-time” and “full-time” students — and determine how the grant is going to be awarded based on that?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I spent a great deal of my career at Yukon College on this particular issue. Only full-time students are eligible for the Yukon grant. The institution itself makes the decision about what is considered full-time and what is considered part-time. Through my dealings with this lady sitting opposite me — I negotiated with her on the telephone many, many times over the last 10 to 15 years. The department was always able to make allowances for special cases. In many cases, when I would call to say that we have a student here and the student has a verified learning disability, and that we believe that it's not in the student's best interest to take three or four courses per term because they wouldn't be successful, the department made the determination based on our recommendation that it was okay. That is still available to students.

In other words, full-time is what the educational institution determines; however, exceptions can be made. That's one of the reasons we wish to expand the role of the Student Financial Assistance Committee, because they will be able to assist the department in those kinds of determinations.

Mr. Tredger: I wasn't aware that part-time students — I thought there would be a portion of that. Was that contemplated? I know single mothers or people who are working and want to go to school may not be able to take a full-time course load, but are only able to take one or two courses a year. One of my teaching colleagues went to school for 12 years, taking one or two courses by evening course at night and finally got her teaching degree. She ended up in the last year having to go full-time because she needed to work in the classrooms for that.

Had the minister contemplated part-time or partial Yukon grants over a number of years, so we could meet the needs of, say, single-parent families and people who are working on the side and just can't afford — to my mind, the Yukon grant is very generous, but that amount is hard to live on for a year. If one has a family and other stuff, they have to make choices, I guess. Has that been contemplated?

Hon. Mr. Graham: No, Madam Chair, we didn't contemplate it under the Yukon grant process. Again, drawing on my experience at the college, if a person presented themselves as a single parent or some other difficulty at the college — because these are people we would talk about as being at the college — because I can't see a part-time Yukon

person moving out of the territory to take courses on a part-time basis — basically we're talking about people at the college. We found that we were generally able to cobble together some kind of funding arrangements because, as the member opposite said, the Yukon grant — or, in this case, the training allowance, probably — would not see a person through if they had a family to look after at the same time.

The simple answer was no, it wasn't, but I know from my experience at the college that we were generally able to cobble together some kind of funding arrangements so that, if a person truly wanted to, we would get them the courses they wanted or needed.

Mr. Tredger: Does the minister — and perhaps in his former role, he would have a good idea of what the definition is of a full-time student at Yukon College?

Hon. Mr. Graham: It has changed over the years, surprisingly enough — or maybe not so surprisingly. When we first established the university transfer program at Yukon College, four courses per semester was considered a full-time load. A few years before I left the college — and again, the college has an academic council that makes those kinds of decisions — the decision was made to reduce a full-time load to three courses per semester, so actually nine credits per semester was a full-time course load.

Mr. Tredger: I'm just wondering what happens when a student struggles with a course and either fails that course — say they're taking four or five courses in a normal university course load and they fail one or two, or they go below the established threshold, do they have to reimburse the money or is there contemplation of that if they don't have passing grades?

Hon. Mr. Graham: It's interesting that the member opposite would ask that question because I know it is always something that is in the mind of students. I can remember many, many times advising students when they were selecting courses and would take only three courses, telling them to just remember that they can't afford to drop one of those courses, ever, during the school year.

I know that the *Students Financial Assistance Act*, as long as they were considered a full-time student to the end — it didn't matter if they failed the course, but if they dropped below that three-course minimum, we were obligated to advise the Department of Education at that time and the department then had to contact the student. So there would be a repayment required in some of those cases, yes.

Mr. Tredger: I guess I'm just running scenarios through my mind. If a student then drops a course and loses the threshold for full-time residency, they would then have to repay the grant from the Yukon.

Hon. Mr. Graham: That's correct, Madam Chair, and that's why many — well, not many, but a few — students every once in a while have to make the decision between failing a course or dropping below a full-time load and having to repay the money. I think we can speak for most students who say, "I'll fail the course."

Mr. Tredger: Yes, and that would be an unfortunate decision to make, knowing the importance placed on the grade

point average. I know a number of students, myself included, who have chosen to withdraw from a course rather than have a failing grade put on their grade point average, which affects your ability to go on to do a master's or to achieve a degree — so that would be an unfortunate circumstance there, but it's a decision we have to make at some point.

The government did remove the 65-percent grade point average. Could the minister explain the thinking behind that? Do we have an account of the number of students who did not maintain that 65-percent average and therefore were not granted the Yukon grant, I assume, in the following year? If I could also refer to that first question: How many students are we talking about who ended up dropping courses and having to repay their grant?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, there are very few students who actually drop below full-time and become part-time and then we have to invoice them for the funding.

The reason for dropping the 65-percent average was very clear: it's an extremely difficult thing to police and that was one of the reasons why I'm saying that we won't require an increase in people at the department level because dropping this alone will be a huge administrative burden taken away from the department.

The reason why we did it was quite simple: the universities and colleges police their own students. They determine if a student is on probation or if a student should be dismissed. It's up to the university or college to dismiss a student for non-performance. Usually — and during second reading debate, the Minister of Tourism and I both glanced at each other and said, we know what it's like to have a bad semester once in a while and should that one bad semester impact your whole university career? We don't think that by taking away that 65-percent average or — what is it, two points? It's about a 2.2 or 2.3 GPA, I guess. We don't think that this will have a material impact. We do not track the number of students who have dropped below part-time, but we know that the average is about \$20,000 per year so that probably means three to five students, in that range.

Mr. Tredger: Is there an appeal process? As you were speaking, I thought of that one bad semester. If a person with a young family — if something occurs, if there's a crisis within the family or a parent has a crisis and a person struggles that semester or that school year and doesn't want to see their grade point average brought down for the remainder of their career, and drops out, would there be an appeal process so that they do not have to return that funding? Is there someone that such a person could go to and say, look, this wasn't intended, I am a good student but I'm having one bad semester?

Hon. Mr. Graham: That's something that isn't provided for in the act, but in the act it states that those are things that can be done in regulations — so that's one of those things that we'd probably consult with the Student Financial Assistance Committee on and determine whether or not this is something we should contemplate. I'm not sure — I know from my dealings with the department over the years — twenty-some-odd years with students at Yukon College —

that if we had students who really had a difficulty that prevented them from continuing on with school, we were always able to negotiate something. I know from the department's part of view that those kinds of things can be dealt with in cooperation with a college or university. We have the ability to do that in regulation and it's something that we would discuss with the Student Financial Assistance Committee.

Mr. Tredger: If a student wants to make an appeal of either the amount they are granted or their residency, is there an appeal process in place? Is it evident to the students that they do have options or there is somebody identified whom they can talk to? Will that be in regulations and will there be someone the students can turn to?

I think a lot of times we just assume — and I agree with the minister that the people in our educational institutions care about kids, and if they know of a situation, they work hard to resolve it, but sometimes our students aren't confident enough or they are in such a situation that they don't want to bring it forth, and they just disappear or they just drop out. My concern is that we have a system in place that identifies and helps to catch them.

In terms of funding, I assume the universities or the institutions would also have some. But sometimes, Yukon being Yukon, it's a smaller and friendlier place, and if they have somebody they can identify with and can say, "Mr. Graham, I'm having trouble with this and I'm not going to be able to get the grades. Is there somebody I can talk to?" Is there assistance that way — an appeal process?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Under the new act, anybody who is rejected for either not being a resident or not meeting any requirement of the act — they automatically get a letter. They must be informed, and I know that Advanced Education sends any student who is rejected a letter informing them why they have been rejected, that there is a process of appeal and how that appeal can be done. That's done for any student who has been rejected for any reason. That's available, and I know from past experience that there are a number of financial assistance officers at the department who are available to take calls from students on an ongoing basis. So yes, they are informed, and, yes, there is an appeal process.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that and I think it's important to catch some of the kids.

In this act, the government reduced the travel portion but increased the living allowance. What was the reasoning for that? Is there contemplation — if travel prices go up — of changing that?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, we did reduce the travel by \$300 but we've increased the grant itself by about \$800 per year.

The reason for this was fairly simple, and again I look back at Yukon College. The students attending the Yukon College felt that they were being underfunded because they were only eligible for the grant portion and they were not eligible for travel. To some extent I agreed with them because, in many cases, they are taking the exact same courses,

especially the arts and science students, as a student outside of the territory.

In an attempt to bring the two groups closer together, we increased the base amount — the grant amount — by \$800. That way every Yukon College student who gets the grant will receive an extra \$800, and students who are going to school outside of the territory will get slightly reduced travel, but they will also receive an \$800 increase to their grant. Overall, the number of dollars going to students will increase.

Mr. Tredger: This is for information. I assume I should know it, but I don't. Is the amount in the act or is it in regulations? The reason I ask is because, if it's in regulations, it can be changed by the minister or in council, but if it's in the act, then we have to come back to the Legislature every time we want to increase the amount. The other aspect to that is: Has there been any thought about indexing the amount so that, as the cost of living goes up and as the cost of travel goes up, that amount would automatically go up?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I will answer the first one. The indexing is on the grant itself. It doesn't apply to travel, but it does apply to the grant itself. Over the previous five years — I will just read it: in 2012-13, there was a three-percent increase; 2013-14 was 2.3 percent; 2014-15 was 1.8 percent; and last year it was only 0.4 percent. The CPI is applied to the base grant each year.

The amounts will be in the regulation, but they are changing. This year the grant is \$1,870 per semester. If a student is going to a 15-week semester, I believe that, under the new regulations, the total of the base grant will increase by over \$200 per semester depending on the number of weeks of their semester. That is the intent. Instead of doing it on a semester basis — on a quarter basis — it will be on a weekly basis. We have done the grants in such a way that they will increase.

In the eventuality that there is someone out there who, for some reason, would receive less under this than previously, we have made the commitment that they will get the same as they would have. No one can possibly get less, but we might find one or two students who, because of the way their program is set up, may find that they are actually going to get a little bit less. What we have said is that we have made the commitment that nobody will get less than they currently get under the system.

Ms. Moorcroft: I note in the explanatory note to this *Student Financial Assistance Act, 2016* that eligible students can receive the Yukon grant even if they also receive financial assistance from the Government of Canada.

The minister spoke at second reading about the measures in this act that will provide for citizens from First Nations who receive financial assistance from the federal government to now be eligible for grants under this act. I understand from the notes at the briefing that the five First Nations that will now have an eligibility to apply for grants are Kluane First Nation, Liard First Nation, White River First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'an Council, as well as the Ross River Dena Council.

The first question I have is whether the department has done any preliminary estimates of the financial impact of this

change to the eligibility. The second question that I have is: What, if any, consideration was given to the other First Nations whose students are not receiving funding from the federal government? I think those are First Nations that have drawn down the student financial assistance themselves. What discussions, if any, occurred with them?

Hon. Mr. Graham: As I said in the preliminary discussion here, we had face-to-face negotiations with 10 First Nations. First Nations that have drawn down the funding from Ottawa won't be impacted by this because we assume they are giving grants to their students that are approximately equal to what Ottawa was giving them previously, so it will have absolutely no impact on those students at all.

We estimate that the impact of the new First Nation students coming into the system will be in the \$250,000-to-\$300,000-a-year range and that the increases to the other student grants will be in addition to that, but for the five First Nations we anticipate it will be in the \$250,000-to-\$300,000 range.

Ms. Moorcroft: The minister responded that, in order to provide the Yukon grant to First Nation students who receive financial assistance from the federal government currently, it will cost between \$250,000 and \$300,000. I thank him for that.

I still don't understand, though, why the government is creating a mechanism where First Nation students whose financial assistance is administered through Ottawa are now going to be able to apply for additional funding through the Yukon grant, but the First Nations who receive, as the minister just said, the same amount from Ottawa will not be eligible to get the Yukon grant.

Hon. Mr. Graham: The member opposite, I guess, misunderstood, because those students have been eligible for years. They are currently receiving the Yukon grant in addition to their First Nation's funding, and that's where the inequity was. By changing this act, we're bringing those other five First Nations up to the same level as the ones that have drawn down the funding. I'm sorry if I didn't make that clear.

Ms. Moorcroft: I would like to thank the minister for clarifying that. I understand now.

The other question that I have for the minister is: What amounts have been budgeted to administer the increased amounts that this bill contemplates. Is that something that they won't know until after they have developed the regulations or do they have an estimate?

Hon. Mr. Graham: We anticipate, as I said, \$250,000 to \$300,000 with the additional five First Nations. I informed my colleagues, as we must, during contemplation of this act, how much I felt we felt — I'm sharing the blame with the department now — that the additional funding would be and we felt that it would be somewhere in the range of \$400,000, which was budgeted in the budget that we just agreed to. Further, shall we call it "refinement", indicated that it might be a little bit higher than \$400,000, but if you don't tell these guys, Madam Chair, I won't either.

Mr. Tredger: I would like to thank the officials and the minister for bringing this forth and again commend the

Department of Education and the Department of Justice, as well as all those in our communities and in Whitehorse who contributed to this.

Chair: Does any other member wish to speak in general debate? If not, we will proceed with clause-by-clause reading of the bill.

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Clause 3

Clause 3 agreed to

On Clause 4

Clause 4 agreed to

On Clause 5

Clause 5 agreed to

On Clause 6

Clause 6 agreed to

On Clause 7

Clause 7 agreed to

On Clause 8

Clause 8 agreed to

On Clause 9

Clause 9 agreed to

On Clause 10

Clause 10 agreed to

On Clause 11

Clause 11 agreed to

On Clause 12

Clause 12 agreed

On Clause 13

Clause 13 agreed to

On Clause 14

Clause 14 agreed to

On Clause 15

Hon. Mr. Graham: I just have one thing to add here that probably wasn't clear when I was speaking. By making it 170 weeks instead of five years, we actually anticipate that students will be eligible for slightly more than five years' of funding. We did that on purpose.

Clause 15 agreed to

On Clause 16

Clause 16 agreed to

On Clause 17

Clause 17 agreed to

On Clause 18

Clause 18 agreed to

On Clause 19

Ms. Moorcroft: Clause 19 is the clause that deals with the regulations. The minister explained that he wasn't able to have them available as soon as he had hoped. If the minister did indicate when he thought they would be ready, I didn't hear that, so I would just like to ask the minister for an answer to that question.

Hon. Mr. Graham: The obscure way of saying when they will be done is "before Lawrence retires". The more appropriate way would be that they will probably be in the

department in our hands within the next month to a month and a half. We will then go out to consultation and we will be meeting with our partners and with First Nations and all others associated to go through the exact regulations. We anticipate that should take a month or more, and then they'll be brought into force.

Ms. Moorcroft: In asking that question, I did not mean to put any undue pressure on to the legislative drafter, and I would like to acknowledge Mr. Purdy's work in the past on many bills that we've debate in this Legislature in past years, and wish him well on his retirement.

Clause 19 agreed to

On Clause 20

Clause 20 agreed to

On Clause 21

Clause 21 agreed to

On Clause 22

Clause 22 agreed to

On Clause 23

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, I did kind of skim over this in second reading, but I just thought I would bring this to everyone's attention. This one is quite simple: anyone who, because of changes to the act, becomes ineligible for funding will basically, to put it in plain language, get one additional year of support from the Yukon government before being cut off. That's what this section is about; it is giving one extra year of support to those people who will be cut off.

Clause 23 agreed to

On Clause 24

Clause 24 agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 95, entitled *Student Financial Assistance Act, 2016*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Graham that the Chair report Bill No. 95, entitled *Student Financial Assistance Act, 2016*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Chair: We're going to be moving on to general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources in Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Do members wish 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 general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources in Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources

Hon. Mr. Kent: Before I begin my introductory remarks, I would like to welcome two officials to the floor of the Legislature here today — two assistant deputy ministers from Energy, Mines and Resources: Mr. Lyle Henderson and Ms. Shirley Abercrombie. I would ask members to join me in welcoming them.

It is indeed my pleasure to introduce the 2016-17 main budget for the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. EMR's accomplishments span across Yukon, and I look forward to talking further about how this department contributes to our economy, our quality of life and protection of the environment. This budget provides details on how EMR allocates funds and collects revenue in carrying out this important work.

The overall budget for the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources for 2016-17 is \$83.5 million. The operation and maintenance, or O&M, budget is \$78.4 million with the capital budget coming in at \$5.1 million. Total revenues this year are estimated to be \$40.3 million. Total taxes and general revenues are expected to be \$3.3 million. Third-party O&M recoveries are estimated at \$203,000. Recoveries from Canada total \$36.8 million and comprise the most significant single inflow of funding for EMR's O&M budget.

This year's recovery is decreased by \$8.2 million, or approximately 18 percent from last year's amount. By far the largest part of the contribution is for work undertaken by the Assessment and Abandoned Mines branch on type 2 mine sites. Other recoveries from Canada include \$766,000 to the Agriculture branch, primarily for the Canada-Yukon Growing Forward 2 program, and \$950,000 to the Yukon Geological Survey for the multi-year funding under the targeted investment program strategic investment in northern economic development, or SINED, for geology-related projects.

That is a summary of the overall picture of Energy, Mines and Resources's budget for the upcoming year.

I would like to take moment to share some highlights of Energy, Mines and Resources's main budget and outline some key initiatives the department is leading, starting with land management and land planning.

Under Land Management, EMR recognizes the continued demand for land over the last decade. The demand for residential and commercial lots has been constant in most communities and especially within the City of Whitehorse. EMR continues to demonstrate its commitment to make land available to meet demand and has an inventory of several developed lots for sale in the City of Whitehorse and all rural communities.

The overall budget for the Land Management branch is \$2.9 million. I'm proud to highlight the important work of the

Land Management branch and the accomplishments that it has made: land availability has increased through a number of efforts of government working with municipalities, communities, First Nation governments and the private sector; Agriculture branch's planned land program, which provides land through multi-lot subdivisions and infill projects; the ongoing effort of Land Management branch to identify additional sites for recreational lots for future lottery; government's spot land application program, which has approved approximately 144 rural residential applications and 103 agricultural applications from 2002 to 2016; and approval of approximately 137 new lots since 2004 through subdivision of private residential land in the Whitehorse periphery.

The success of the Government of Yukon's approach to providing planned land development over the period 2002 to 2016 has led to the creation of approximately 1,413 lots. As part of our commitment to land availability, EMR is working closely with the City of Whitehorse to review land development opportunities for the 5th Avenue and Rogers Street site for both market and private development and affordable housing. Planning and development of this large, undeveloped parcel is being undertaken in cooperation with the City of Whitehorse, given their previously endorsed downtown south master plan, which received full public input.

In response to the need to provide both development options and design solutions, Stantec engineering and planning consultants have been contracted to engage stakeholders in a master planning exercise to examine affordable housing, market housing and commercial opportunities on the site.

As part of the 5th Avenue and Rogers Street project, EMR will work closely with the Department of Health and Social Services to ensure land is secured for replacement of existing facilities located in the project area. This includes the recently opened St. Elias adult residence as well as a youth group home that exists in the area now.

The Whistle Bend subdivision in Whitehorse is the largest development project in Yukon. Through 2012 and 2015, the Yukon government released Whistle Bend phases 1, 2(a) and 2(b) lots to the public. The two phases of the development consisted of the following: 175 single family lots; 20 restricted residential lots; 29 duplex sites; 12 townhouse sites and 18 multi-family lots, which were made available through tender to private sector developers.

Other land lotteries that have taken place in 2015-16 are six recreational lots on Bennett Lake and Tagish Lake. This is in addition to the previous release — I believe there were 14 lots released previously — bringing it to a total of 20 lots for those two lakes. Obviously this is something that we heard loud and clear from Yukoners in 2011, and continue to hear on a daily basis, which is that recreational lots being made available is something that is important to Yukoners — waterfront recreational lots in particular. There were: two multi-family lots and one townhouse site, which had four lots, in the Ingram subdivision; one industrial lot at McCrae; one lot at the Marwell Industrial Area; and eight residential lots

and one country residential lot in Dawson — that was for the 2015-16 land lotteries.

The following lots were also released during the time frame of 2012 to 2016: 20 industrial lots in Dawson City; 49 residential and three multi-family lots in Haines Junction; four Ingram subdivision residential lots; a tender sale for Lot 1547 on Range Road here in Whitehorse; three residential and two industrial lots in Carmacks; 21 country residential lots in Teslin on Sawmill Road; 20 remote recreational lots, that I spoke of earlier; and four country residential lots in the Whitehorse Copper subdivision.

Land development also includes partnerships with Yukon First Nations. Our relationship with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation has led to a joint MOU on a variety of development initiatives, including the following: the September 2014-15 release of those 20 remote recreational lots that are located within their traditional territory; the extension of Tagish Avenue in Carcross to provide access to both settlement and Yukon land; and finally, consideration of a potential eco-tourism development at Millhaven Bay, through an expression of interest process.

In addition, EMR entered into an MOU with Kluane First Nation to support the development of recreational lots at what is known as "Dutch Harbour" on Kluane Lake. Ongoing discussions are focused on further development opportunities within the Burwash-Destruction Bay area. EMR and the Teslin Tlingit Council have worked together, using common planning and engineering criteria, in joint land development initiatives. The result has been the release of recreational leased lots at Little Teslin Lake, as well as the May 2014 lottery of 21 country residential lots in Teslin on Sawmill Road.

Other land initiatives include exploring new recreational lot locations within a three-hour drive of Whitehorse; the release of vacant, single-family lots on Commissioner's land in Dawson City through a fall 2016 lottery; planning and development for rural residential and agricultural lots in Mayo; and planning and development for urban and country residential lots in Carmacks.

As part of YG's commitment to streamline community-based land development initiatives, government has completed land development protocol agreements with the following municipalities: the town of Dawson City, the Town of Watson Lake, and the villages of Carmacks, Faro, Haines Junction, Mayo and Teslin. These protocols are assisting government and the municipal governments in identifying lands for potential development.

The Land Planning branch assists communities in developing local area plans and zoning regulations to ensure orderly development and resolve competing land issues. They do this work by providing residents and First Nations with the opportunity to develop balanced land use policies that provide certainty over future land use.

The Land Planning branch has a \$1.5-million budget for the coming year. The Yukon government has continued to prioritize planning and zoning initiatives in the Whitehorse periphery, where the population continues to grow and land

development pressures are the greatest. An example is comprehensive amendments allowing the subdivision of rural residential and agricultural lots in Mount Lorne, which was approved in March 2014 and is similar to approval for other areas.

In other areas of Yukon, the Carcross local area planning process was approved February 2014, and the Marsh Lake plan is expected to be recommended for approval by the steering committee during this calendar year. Planning is also underway in Fox Lake and Tagish — all of these processes are good examples of First Nation, community and Government of Yukon collaboration.

Zoning regulations are guided by local area plans and provide development criteria to manage compatible land uses, separate incompatible land uses from each other and manage population densities. Priority zoning initiatives include completion of a comprehensive amendment to allow subdivision of rural residential and commercial lots on the Hot Springs Road, continue consultation with property owners and the public in regard to allowing subdivision of rural residential lots in the Shallow Bay area, and development of zoning regulations for recreational lot development at Dutch Harbour on Kluane Lake, a cooperative land development project with Kluane First Nation.

The Land Planning branch has also been assigned responsibility for regional land use planning for the territory. The Government of Yukon has supported the establishment of four regional land use planning processes. Only one plan — of course, the *North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan* — was jointly approved by the affected parties.

Land use planning is important for current and future generations of our citizens so, at the outset, we need to have a strong understanding of the Government of Yukon's and the First Nations' role and responsibilities under the final agreements. Once the parties have concluded the current process underway on the Peel watershed land use plan, Government of Yukon looks forward to collaborating with the Yukon Land Use Planning Council and CYFN on a review of the common land use planning process that is currently used by the planning commissions and the council to implement chapter 11 of the First Nation final agreements.

We are optimistic that a revised planning process, and the clarity provided by the outcome of the Peel court case, will establish the framework to develop approvable regional land use plans on time and on budget.

Madam Chair, I'm going to turn my attention now to agriculture. Energy, Mines and Resources supports the agriculture industry through policy, programs and enabling legislation. The budget is \$2.2 million for the Agriculture branch this year. Agriculture branch programs that support the industry include the following: release of agriculture land by way of spot land sales for farming and livestock raising; planned agricultural land sales through multi-lot subdivisions and infill projects; providing professional educational and technical services to farmers; research and demonstration projects designed to improve the economic delivery of northern agriculture; meat inspection services, including

operation and maintenance of the mobile abattoir and animal health and testing programs; as well as delivery of the Canada-Yukon Growing Forward 2 agreement, which provides up to \$1.48 million per year on a 60-percent federal and 40-percent territorial cost-shared basis.

The Yukon government is committed to the promotion of local food production and consumption in the north. This will ensure fresher, higher quality food for Yukoners. This food uses less packaging, conserves energy, supports local farmers, builds community and economic diversity and creates resilient farms and farm-supported businesses.

Proactive and positive consultation has been completed with the agricultural community, First Nations and the public on a series of initiatives. Some will be inexpensive with significant potential while others will require an investment to increase production.

Objectives for a local food policy will be met through a variety of tools that include the following: (1) create initiatives to enhance competition, resiliency and responsiveness in the agri-food sector; (2) develop a framework that offers local food producers opportunity and profit; (3) promote local food so that it is conspicuous and widely available; and (4) to inform consumers about the value of supporting a local food system.

The final strategy, which will be approved and released soon, will augment our existing policy and program tools, including the current agricultural policy, the multi-year development plan and the Growing Forward 2 program. For agriculture land development, capital expenditures in this budget amount to \$420,000.

I'm going to speak about forestry now, before turning to the other resources that are the responsibility of EMR. The Forest Management branch's budget for the upcoming year is \$3.5 million. The branch supports continued investment in the forestry industry by ensuring wood is available through construction of road infrastructure and approval of new timber harvest planning areas in all communities.

The Forest Management branch is working proactively with the Yukon Wood Products Association, the Department of Economic Development and forest products innovations to stimulate industry development. In October 2015, the second of three industry workshops was held in Haines Junction. Topics included forest harvesting methods to increase the efficiency of the industry and best management practices. A further biomass-focused workshop took place in March of this year.

The Forest Management branch also provides client services and develops guides and plans to assist industry. Recent publications include the *Yukon Forestry Handbook* and the updated Haines Junction wood allocation strategy. Implementation of the recently released biomass energy strategy is top of mind and is supported by the completion of several forest resource management plans, ensuring opportunity for a long-term timber supply. The Forest Management branch is developing a silviculture program and undertaking consultation on regulatory amendments that will improve client service and administration.

The Government of Yukon has begun a process to undertake a review of the *Forest Resources Act* and regulations, as is required by the legislation.

Under capital expenditures for forest engineering, the branch is seeking an increase of \$85,000 to a total of \$435,000 to develop infrastructure, such as access in approved timber harvest areas of the territory. The increase reflects planning in areas approved by Forest Management, which are now being developed.

Of course, the eyes of the country will be on Yukon this year as we host the federal-provincial-territorial ministers responsible for forestry. That meeting will take place in early June in the community of Dawson City. I know the response has been quite good from ministers and their officials across the country. Everyone always wants to take advantage of the opportunity to travel to the Yukon for these types of meetings, and we have some very interesting topics that we are looking forward to discussing with our colleagues and counterparts. The new federal Minister of Natural Resources Canada will be in attendance, as well as a number of provincial and territorial colleagues.

Madam Chair, I am about halfway through my opening remarks and I see that I am running short on time, so I will yield the floor to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun and give him an opportunity to ask questions and then I will conclude my opening remarks after he has had that opportunity.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for half of his opening remarks. I would welcome the officials to the Legislature — Mr. Henderson and Ms. Abercrombie — and I would thank them and the department for the very thorough briefing that they provided to me and to the Third Party.

I will be brief so that the minister can finish his remarks, but I would like to highlight two departments within EMR that sometimes we don't get a lot of time to discuss and debate and, given time constraints, we may not get back to them.

The Agriculture branch has been working very hard with consumers and agricultural growers in the Yukon over the last number of years. I must commend them for the work that they have done. One only needs to go to the farmers' markets in Mayo, Dawson or Faro — go up to Pelly or Carmacks and see the greenhouses and the renewed interest in growing our own food. Much of that has been led by the Agriculture branch and the work that they are doing looking at new strains.

I have been out to Mickey Lammers' experimental farm a few times, and it is very impressive. Of particular note, just the other day I was by the library and checked out the local seeds — just a shout-out to the Agriculture branch as well as to the Forest Management branch.

A number of years ago, my phone was ringing off the hook from people who wanted to deliver wood commercially and weren't able to get access to the lots, especially in terms of timing. Some of them were getting access in springtime, much after the wood season. That seems to have cleared up and the number of commercial enterprises that I have talked to have said that it's not perfect, and they are not jumping up and down, but they are certainly satisfied — individually as well.

I have talked to a number of people in and around the Pelly area and people from around here who are going up to Fox Lake or out to the Haines Junction area to harvest wood, and they have commented on the accessibility and the roads that have been put in and the support they're getting from Forest Management.

I was really excited to hear and read about the emphasis on looking into biomass and using our wood products and expanding our use. That holds a lot of potential. I know there are a number of areas in Europe — and our leader from Whitehorse Centre, when she was in Germany, got to visit an area that had some biomass. It's an opportunity whose time has come. It may solve a number of our problems locally, in terms of storage of energy. If we can use biomass to do that, that's a great step forward.

Having given those two shout-outs to the Agriculture branch and the Forest Management branch, I will turn it over to the minister to finish his remarks so we can get into questions.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I'm going to turn my attention now to minerals — obviously an important part of our natural resource endowment and an important contributor to the Yukon economy. The Mineral Resources branch is allocated \$4.3 million for this upcoming year. The Mineral Resources branch is the primary regulator of one of our cornerstone industries. From recording of claims in the communities to licensing of major mines, this branch ensures that our mining and exploration industries operate responsibly and provide benefits to Yukon communities.

An important part of their budget is to support organizations, such as the Mining Association of Canada, the Yukon Chamber of Mines, as well as the Klondike Placer Miners' Association. These important organizations ensure that our government is responsive to industry and is able to ensure that our mineral sector develops and grows in a responsible manner.

Our government continues to support First Nations by providing information on mineral potential for settlement lands. We support First Nations during the assessment and regulatory stages of mineral exploration and development projects. We also facilitate full participation and consultation with First Nations in the environmental assessment and licensing of resource developments and cost-shares with First Nations on YESAA reviews.

We support industry and First Nations by providing funding to attend conferences that bring parties together and deliver educational workshops around specific mining technologies. We support First Nations for negotiation of benefits agreements with companies.

Madam Chair, an awful lot of the work that Mineral Resources and the Yukon Geological Survey undertake will be on display. Earlier today, we had a number of mining-related tributes in the Legislature for Yukon Mining and Geology Week. There is an exploration discovery camp being again hosted by the Yukon Chamber of Mines, with participation of the Yukon Geological Survey, starting tomorrow at the *SS Klondike*. We encourage anyone who

wants to, to take that in. I believe there's a lunchtime barbecue where proceeds will be donated to a local charity. It's a great opportunity to visit with some of our government and private sector companies that are engaged in the industry here in the territory.

With respect to Assessment and Abandoned Mines, this is obviously one of our larger line items, as I mentioned earlier. The budget this year is \$36 million, with just slightly less than 100 percent of that budget funded by the federal government.

The largest part — over three-quarters — of the total \$36-million budget for the Assessment and Abandoned Mines branch falls under contracting for the abandoned Faro mine complex. The government of Yukon is committed to protecting human health, safety and the environment at the four abandoned type 2 sites in the Yukon. Of the total estimated O&M costs for the four type 2 mine sites, the breakdown is as follows: Faro will receive \$28 million; Ketza will receive \$1.2 million; Mount Nansen will receive \$3.1 million; and Clinton Creek will receive \$2.1 million. Transfer payments of \$310,000 are provided to affected First Nations to assist with their participation in type 2 mines cleanup activity.

The Government of Canada remains accountable for environmental liabilities at abandon mine sites — of course, which are called the type 2 sites — which were incurred prior to the devolution of responsibility in 2003. Canada is developing funding approaches to meet their ongoing accountability, recognizing that the current federal funding mechanism expires in 2020.

Now to oil and gas — the \$3-million budget for the Oil and Gas Resources branch is largely for the Management Board-approved action plan on oil and gas. The Government of Yukon regularly improves our existing legislation to ensure that Yukon's oil and gas regulatory regime is robust, relevant and versatile for responsible oil and gas development that ensures the safety of the public, property and the environment.

We continue to work collaboratively on policy and legislation development with the First Nation oil and gas working group. This working group, as members know, has existed since 1998 and is a model for government-to-government collaboration. A recent example, of course, were the amendments that we made to the *Oil and Gas Act* last fall in collaboration with the oil and gas working group and affected First Nations.

Transfer payments of \$240,000 are provided to First Nations for participation in oil and gas initiatives and include the working group agreements. As I mentioned, on December 10, 2015, the *Oil and Gas Act* was amended for the fifth time since 1998, after a three-month consultation period with the public and First Nations.

The Government of Yukon employs qualified and experienced professionals in the Oil and Gas Resources branch to provide regulatory oversight of oil and gas activities. They also work with other regulators to enforce compliance with regulations via regular inspections, audits and the issuance of enforcement orders. This regulatory collaboration was evident in August 2015 during the

management of the spill situation at the Kotaneelee gas plant and the recent venting incident at the Yukon Energy Corporation's LNG facility.

Yukon also has service agreements with responsible regulators such as the National Energy Board, as well as the BC Oil and Gas Commission, to advise or assist on regulatory issues in Yukon.

The Oil and Gas Resources branch also works with the Yukon Geological Survey to conduct studies and provide information on development opportunities in Yukon. This information is available in publication such as the Yukon oil and gas annual report and the Yukon exploration and geology annual report.

Our government believes that the path to Yukon's self-reliance includes the safe and responsible development of our natural resources. Shale oil and gas resources are but one part of that mix. To date, Yukon has seen very limited oil and gas exploration and no development of our shale-based resources. With this in mind, we're taking the time necessary to gather other important baseline information and conduct research before further decisions related to shale oil and gas resources are made. As we have stated time and time again, we will work government to government with First Nations to discuss their concerns around oil and gas development, as well as the opportunities that development could provide for their communities. We will work in partnership with First Nations in the development of this industry, and when it comes to the development of shale resources, we will not proceed without the support of the affected First Nations.

The Government of Yukon recognizes that people have questions and concerns. People have requested accurate, readily available information that takes environmental sustainability, safety and economic concerns into account. Our action plan on oil and gas will ensure that we have a dialogue with Yukoners so that we can develop a common understanding of the industry and how it could develop in our territory.

Madam Chair, I'm going to spend a bit of time talking about the important work of the Yukon Geological Survey. The Yukon Geological Survey, or YGS, continues to provide information on our geology and mineral potential, which supports exploration efforts and land and resource management decisions. The budget for the Yukon Geological Survey is \$6.5 million for the upcoming year. Projects underway that are of direct relevance to the mineral sector include the following: upgraded mineral potential maps for parts of the Selwyn Basin to support land use planning and increase certainty around land access, as well as a new electromagnetic survey in the Livingstone Creek area.

Recently released and soon-to-be released maps include: bedrock maps for the Aishihik Lake, an area in southwestern Yukon; Frances Lake, located in southeastern Yukon; Teslin Mountain in the south-central part of the territory; and Glenlyon, which is in the central Yukon. Mineral deposit probability maps, based on modelled stream sediment geochemistry data for southern and central Yukon are also soon to be released, or have been recently released. There is a

community geohazards map for Old Crow, and — something I know that our geologists are very proud of — a new digital bedrock geology compilation map that can be downloaded from the YGS website.

The Government of Yukon continues to assist the mineral exploration industry by maintaining its funding commitment of \$1.4 million for the Yukon mineral exploration program in this fiscal year. The intent is to sustain exploration activity and the economic benefits it provides for Yukon.

YMEP provides funding to individuals, partnerships and junior mining companies to proceed with their mineral exploration projects. Part of the program's function is to provide a portion of the risk capital required to locate, explore and develop mineral-potential projects to an advanced stage. Historically, this program leverages industry investment at a ratio of 3:1. The Yukon Geological Survey also has transfer payments that provide \$215,000 for universities and resource assessment work.

Madam Chair, another important aspect in the Energy, Mines and Resources portfolio is Compliance Monitoring and Inspections. The Compliance Monitoring and Inspections branch, or CMI, has a budget of \$6.5 million for the upcoming year. The branch conducts inspections and monitors activities on public land to ensure compliance with legislation and regulations pertaining to lands, land use, forestry, water, placer mining, mineral exploration and development. The department works diligently to ensure that all requirements under natural resource legislation and regulations are inspected and, when required, enforced in a timely and professional manner.

The department's inspection and enforcement activity is governed by policy and principles, and is consistent with the practices of all modern natural resources regulatory enforcement agencies. The branch provides service to the public and maintains an effective field presence by staffing offices in eight of our communities. In general, compliance monitoring and enforcement activities adhere to the principles of education, encouragement and enforcement.

The following principles also apply to compliance monitoring and enforcement activities: the first is that compliance with all regulatory requirements is mandatory; secondly, inspectors apply the legislation in a manner that is fair, predictable and consistent and use rules, sanctions and processes securely founded in law. Further to that, inspectors administer the legislation with an emphasis on prevention of harm to the environment or human health. Finally, inspectors examine every suspected violation of which they have knowledge, and take action consistent with written compliance monitoring and enforcement policy.

I'm going to also speak about the Energy branch in EMR. O&M estimates for the Energy branch have increased to \$3.2 million. This increase is largely due to an agreement with the Kluane First Nation for their wind energy project. The Energy branch is providing \$850,000 this year, as part of a \$1-million three-year project to support the Kluane First Nation in the development and implementation of a wind diesel project.

The branch is also conducting research into the viability of developing Yukon's wind and solar energy resources, including a wind resource assessment program for private sector clients.

The Government of Yukon offers a comprehensive suite of energy-efficiency initiatives and incentives programs that are proving to be successful in encouraging Yukon residents and local businesses alike in increasing their energy conservation and their efficient use of energy.

Energy efficiency is a priority for the Government of Yukon. The energy saved and the jobs created through these efficiencies are welcome. The energy saved is cheap, clean and reliable, and the jobs created are what we've often referred to as green jobs — even those that are underway right now at the main administration building and the significant work that's being undertaken to remove the siding, reinsulate and replace our windows.

By participating in the government's energy incentive programs, Yukon residents and businesses are choosing to realize significant cost savings, as well as lower their greenhouse gas emissions. The good energy program encourages, through rebates, the use of eligible, high-efficiency home appliances and heating equipment to encourage a market transformation to best-in-class equipment. The program is an important element in the Yukon government's efforts to help Yukoners lower their energy costs and their greenhouse gas footprint.

Announced in January 2015, the residential energy incentives program offers incentives to improve air tightness and insulation levels of existing homes, to achieve an EnerGuide rating of 85 or better in new homes, and to install renewable energy systems for generating electricity.

The commercial energy incentive program, announced in May 2015, offers incentives for improving energy use in multi-family dwellings and commercial buildings through building retrofits or lighting system upgrades. Through all of these incentive programs, the Yukon government has provided annual energy cost savings to clients of approximately \$313,000.

The Government of Yukon also supports the addition of affordable and renewable energy sources to our existing electricity-generating infrastructure to improve the security of our electrical supply, while contributing to economic growth. We are actively working with partners to develop local, renewable and clean energy technologies that help diversify Yukon's electrical supply and encourage Yukoners to become part of the energy supply solution.

Our renewable energy initiatives include the next generation hydro project, microgeneration policy and production incentive, the independent power production policy, and the biomass energy strategy. We also recently released a geothermal favourability map, which was announced this week, obviously identifying some opportunities for power production through that renewable source of energy, with wind and solar energy research to support the development of these resources in the Yukon as well.

Madam Chair, I haven't had the opportunity to speak about strategic initiatives, but I will do so the next time Energy, Mines and Resources is up for debate. Seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

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

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Dixon 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. 95, entitled *Student Financial Assistance Act, 2016*, 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?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Before receiving a motion to adjourn the House, the Chair will rule on a point of order that was raised earlier today by the Member for Riverdale South.

During today's Daily Routine, the Minister of Health and Social Services delivered a ministerial statement — the first we have had in about five years. The ministerial statement was regarding the government's mental wellness strategy.

The Chair then recognized the Member for Riverdale South to respond to the statement. Instead, the Member for Riverdale South raised a point of order. The Member for Riverdale South informed the House that she had not been informed that there would be a ministerial statement and that she had not received a copy of it prior to its delivery in the House. This, she argued, was a violation of the House's established practice regarding ministerial statements.

The Leader of the Third Party then intervened on the point of order and affirmed that his experience was the same as that of the Member for Riverdale South.

The rules regarding ministerial statements are found in Standing Order 11. Standing Order 11 does not include a requirement to provide the opposition caucuses with notice that a ministerial statement is to be delivered. Similarly, Standing Order 11 does not require the government to provide the text of a ministerial statement to the opposition caucuses

before it is delivered in the House. Therefore, the Chair cannot rule that there is a point of order because the matters raised by the Member for Riverdale South and the Leader of the Third Party are not covered by the Standing Order. In short, there is no point of order.

However, it is clear that what occurred earlier today was not in keeping with the manner in which this House has dealt with ministerial statements over the years.

As such, the Chair believes that the members of the opposition caucuses were entitled to expect that, if there were to be a ministerial statement, they would be informed in the same way that members had been informed in the past, regardless of what is and what is not in the Standing Orders. If matters were allowed to stand as they are, the opposition caucuses would, through no fault of their own, be deprived of the opportunity that the Standing Orders provide them to reply in an informed manner to the ministerial statement.

The minister has provided the House with the ministerial statement; therefore, when the House proceeds to ministerial statements on Monday, the Chair will recognize a member from the Official Opposition caucus to respond to the ministerial statement. The Chair will then recognize the Leader of the Third Party to do the same. The Chair will then recognize the Minister of Health and Social Services to reply to the opposition responses to the ministerial statement.

The Chair would like to thank the members for their attention in this matter.

I would like to just bring to your attention and recognize that Cinco de Mayo is today — the 5th of May, 1862, the Mexican victory over the French army at the Battle of Puebla.

The hour being 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. Monday.

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

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Forward Together — Yukon Mental Wellness Strategy — 2016-2026 (Nixon)