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HANSARD

Monday, March 18, 2019 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2019 Spring Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Don Hutton, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North

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NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Deputy Premier Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Economic Development; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Government House Leader Minister of Education; Justice
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Pauline Frost	Vuntut Gwitchin	Minister of Health and Social Services; Environment; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Highways and Public Works; the Public Service Commission
Hon. Jeanie Dendys	Mountainview	Minister of Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board; Women's Directorate

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Yukon Liberal Party

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Paolo Gallina	Porter Creek Centre
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Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North

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New Democratic Party

Liz Hanson	Leader of the Third Party Whitehorse Centre
Kate White	Third Party House Leader Takhini-Kopper King

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, March 18, 2019 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

**In remembrance of the victims of the terrorist attack
in Christchurch, New Zealand**

Speaker: I would ask all present to remain standing.

On behalf of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, I wish to express our collective shock and sadness at the terrible loss of life and injuries caused by the terrorist attack at the Masjid Al Noor mosque and the Linwood Islamic Centre in Christchurch, New Zealand this past Friday, March 15.

We unequivocally condemn the extremism that motivated the terrorist. We stand in solidarity with the Muslim communities in Yukon and around the world. We offer our prayers and support to the victims, their families and all those affected by this calculated, deliberate and appalling act of violence.

These offerings may appear completely inadequate at a time of such unimaginable grief. However, it is precisely at times such as this that we must re-dedicate ourselves to the proposition that we are a society dedicated to pluralism and tolerance. Very clearly, it is imperative that we continue to commit ourselves to the goal of living together in peace and harmony today and every day.

We will now observe a moment of silence.

Moment of silence observed

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Are there any introductions of visitors?
Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of the Alcan 200 snowmobile race

Mr. Istchenko: I am pleased to rise in this House today on behalf of all members to recognize the 50th anniversary of the Alcan 200 snowmobile race. In the mid-1960s, there used to be a road rally from 25 mile on the old Haines Road to 75 mile, which is Mule Creek, and then, in 1969, it was decided to turn the road rally into a race. The Chilkat Snowburners club got started and so did the Alcan 200. Names like Mitch and Jeanie Clayton, Leo and Georgina Smith, Jack and Ramona Martin, Ray Rose and Ron Martin — just to name a few of the old-time Haines folks who got things up and running.

The race takes place traditionally on the third weekend in January, although it initially took place for the first few years at the end of February. In the beginning, the race started at 42 mile. You had to stop at Canada Customs for a quick

check-in to the country. A number of us will remember that, at the time, there was no US Customs at the border, and you could check in at your convenience in Haines — my, how things have changed.

It then continued to Dezadeash Lake, and you did laps on the lake to make up the complete 200 miles before you headed back to 42 mile. Back in the 1960s and 1970s, snowmobile racing was very popular throughout Alaska and Canada. Many communities had events throughout the year. Over the past 50 years, we have seen many races come and go, such as the Pine Lake race in Haines Junction, the Marsh Lake race, the Chilkat Lake race outside of Haines, the Tags 200 and Thunder on Ice, to name a few. A lot has changed over the years also, but there is one constant besides the annual running of the Alcan 200 itself — back to the very beginning of the Alcan 200 — it is the incredible number of people who volunteer to make sure this race happens year after year.

There are snowmobiling family and friends — a large portion of whom we like to call our “cousins from across the border”. The race weekend begins in Haines on Friday with registration at Calcutta, which is a drivers’ auction, and Saturday is the big race. You take off from Canada Customs and race to Dezadeash Lake. When the ambulance and sweep rig arrive, you turn around and race back. In the early years, this race would take up to three to four hours to complete, with four mandatory gas stops. Today, the times — the equipment has changed a little bit and the roads aren’t so winding, and there are still four gas stops — are as fast as 1 hour and 20 minutes to complete, with average speeds of 120 and top speeds of 150. There is a minimum speed you have to travel. The oldest sled wins the Red Lantern award every year. There is also a Poor Broke Down Bastard award. Usually the racer who spends more time on the sweeper bus than his own snowmobile wins that one.

There are different classes with trophies. I am sure all of us in here have seen them in some of the local snowmobile shops and in people’s houses. You really can’t miss them; they are really big. At this year’s race, there was \$62,000 US in prizes awarded. There were racers who came from British Columbia, from all over Alaska, and of course, many from the Yukon.

I would be remiss if I didn’t highlight one of those racers, a local here from Whitehorse: Mario Poulin. I believe this was his 35th year in a row racing in the Alcan 200. This year, we also had a racer who raced in the first race and now the 50th. That was pretty cool too.

Many don’t know that the Canada portion of the Haines Road is actually closed on Saturday by an order-in-council signed by the minister. The local Highways and Public Works employees provide radio communication. Safety is of the utmost importance for this race. A sweep rig goes in both directions to make sure that the road is clear before the race starts. During the race, there is an ambulance and a sweep rig that follow right behind the racers.

It does take a lot to put this race on. To all those who volunteer and the sponsors, you should be commended for a

job well done. Without you, this key event that drives our local economies wouldn't happen.

In closing, this race now sees generations of local racers — sons and daughters following their fathers' and mothers' footsteps, even their grandparents' footsteps, actually — continuing a legacy of racing a race otherwise known as North America's last great road race, the Alcan 200.

Remember what I said earlier about average speeds of 120 and top speeds of 150? Mr. Speaker, those are miles per hour. As they always say, "Go fast or go home." So thank you to all those volunteers and racers. See you next year and many years to come.

Applause

In recognition of Nutrition Month 2019

Mr. Hutton: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon government and the Official Opposition to pay tribute to Nutrition Month.

It started actually as Nutrition Week in the 1970s but has gradually evolved, and for the past 30 years now, Nutrition Month has been celebrated annually in March. Each year, a theme is selected by the Dieticians of Canada based on modern facts and issues around food.

This year's theme continues to build on last year's theme: "Unlock the potential of food." There are five fact sheets out there available on the Dieticians of Canada website: The potential to fuel; the potential to discover; the potential to prevent; the potential to heal; and the potential to bring us together. I would encourage everybody to go have a look at that site, print those fact sheets and share them with your constituents.

I would like to start by sharing a story that was told to me by a principal in one of our communities. When this principal began working in the community, they were noticing students exhibiting some behavioural issues and having challenges focusing and engaging in day-to-day activities. It was then realized that a lot of these kids were coming to school having not eaten breakfast and many of them going without a lunch. The school decided to implement a hot lunch program.

The implementation of this program has made a drastic impact on these students. They've seen an increase in positive behaviour and student engagement. This has resulted in increased academic successes. The school is now seeing above-average exam and academic results. They're also seeing higher rates of literacy and numeracy. Even with the most wonderful and dedicated teachers, learning can be a struggle for students who are coming to school hungry.

This is truly a success story, and I'm so heartened to know that we have such caring and dedicated educators in our territory like this principal, who has worked so hard to identify factors such as nutrition that may be hindering students from reaching their full potential. The benefits of healthy eating for children are truly endless. It can stabilize their energy, even out their moods and sharpen their minds. Ensuring that children are taught the importance of good nutrition throughout childhood provides a solid foundation to continue these positive habits into adulthood.

Something that I really like to see with these lunch programs is the engagement that has occurred with the business community as a result. Many of these school breakfast, lunch and snack programs operate on donations from the community. The Casino Mining Corporation, Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, Rockhaven Resources and the Hotel Carmacks are all examples of businesses and organizations that support their local school through donations. This has allowed the school to provide a full-service food program for their students.

In the Yukon, we have a program called Yukon Food for Learning, which raises funds for schools across the territory. Funding for this program is provided through the Department of Health and Social Services and also by the Breakfast Club of Canada. You can also donate to this program through their website: yukonfoodforlearning.ca. I would encourage everyone to do so.

There are over 29 participating schools in the Yukon, including the independent learning centre. In one year, approximately 160,000 breakfasts, lunches or snacks are funded and distributed throughout schools in the Yukon. Thank you to our educators and societies like Yukon Food for Learning for taking steps to ensure that children in our territory are not learning on an empty stomach.

Lastly, I would like to recognize a very important initiative that has been undertaken by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in called the TH teaching and working farm. In 2014, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in signed a memorandum of understanding to develop a sustainable year-round farming initiative on traditional territory within the Dawson region. The idea behind the creation of this farm was to ensure food security and develop the only First Nation working farm north of 60.

The farm is located 14 kilometres southeast of Dawson City — I think that should actually be northeast — on the banks of the Klondike River. In 2016, the first cohort of students came through the farm. The students ranged in age from 16 to 64 and were made up of various Yukon First Nations and one non-First Nation student. The first run was a success, which has only continued.

In February, the TH teaching and working farm was a recipient of \$1 million at the Arctic Inspiration Prize award ceremony. They received the maximum award of \$500,000 from the Arctic Inspiration Prize fund as well as an additional \$500,000 from the federal government, which was presented to them by our Member of Parliament, the Hon. Larry Bagnell. The money will be used to build a greenhouse that will allow farming to take place for up to 10 months of the year. This will allow the farm to expand outside of its current operational capacity of late spring to fall of each year.

Congratulations to all those involved in the implementation of this wonderful program. I am very much looking forward to seeing this project continue to grow and evolve.

This farm not only helps to enhance food security, but teaches our younger generations the value of good, healthy, whole foods from a young age. This is an exemplary project

and one that will serve to promote and enhance nutrition in the north.

Wonderful work. Mahsi' cho and thank you.

Applause

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to acknowledge March as Nutrition Month in Canada.

No one disagrees with the theme of “unlock the potential of food” — discovering the potential of food to improve our health and well-being, but again, just like last year, it doesn't go far enough. The healthy snack ideas again include things like almond butter on slices of banana, Greek yogurt with berries or whole-grain toast with avocado and sesame seeds — all great suggestions if you have the access or the means to afford them.

When you look at the fact sheets through the lens of poverty, the problem of nutrition becomes a different and bigger issue altogether. I suggest that everyone look at the *Surviving in Yukon* guide put out by the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition earlier this month to better understand the issue of poverty in our territory.

Within the guide, there's a Yukon-wide list of locations where a person can get a free meal from places that specifically target youth and women — because both of those populations face need — to those locations and communities like the Dawson City or Watson Lake food banks.

There is even a daily calendar that lists the free meals available in Whitehorse by date and time. We know that food bank visits in Whitehorse are up. We originally thought that it was 30 percent of Yukon workers who earn less than \$30,000 a year, but it is worse — 33.5 percent of all Yukon workers earn less than \$30,000 a year.

We know that across the country, including Yukon, one in seven people live in poverty. That means that for those nearly 5 million people, good nutrition is often a choice they can't afford to make. You just need to think about the 160,000 school lunches and snacks that the Member for Mayo-Tatchun just mentioned to understand poverty.

In an effort to lift the gloom and find something positive to say, I decided to focus on the work of community dieticians just ahead of Dieticians Day on March 20 — those wizards who problem solve to answer the question: How do you eat healthy food when you don't have the means to buy it? I have been lucky to see the community dieticians at work in the kitchens for Whitehorse Connects as they walk high school students through preparing meals and then seeing them offer school presentations on the new Canada's Food Guide.

So today, the Yukon NDP salutes the dieticians who work across the territory, helping us to better understand the complexities of nutrition and showing us the workarounds when faced with poverty. We agree with the need for people to be able to make good nutrition a key part of their lives, but we believe that in Canada and the Yukon we have a responsibility to recognize that barriers exist for at least one in seven people as they attempt to make nutritional choices. Once that reality is recognized, we need to decide what

specific measures Yukon will make to ensure equitable access for all to healthy, nutritious and affordable food.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I have for tabling three legislative returns. The first is a response to Written Question No. 32 from the Member for Copperbelt South regarding an update on all current land withdrawals and staking bans within Yukon. The second is a response to the Motion for the Production of Papers No. 9 regarding government-led renewable energy programs since December 3, 2016, and the third is a response to matters outstanding from a discussion on March 19, 2018, related to energy supply and demand.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to:

(1) work with the private sector to allow the sale of cannabis via the private sector; and

(2) work with the Government of Canada to regulate the use of cannabis edibles.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon, in the interest of economic, social and public certainty, to establish an independent expert commission similar to the 1992 Schwindt Commission; and

THAT the commission be charged with developing principles to guide Yukon government policy with respect to expropriating and compensating renewable and non-renewable claim holders in the event a land use plan determines that public uses take precedence over those existing claims; and

THAT the commission be charged with considering public policy principles including but not limited to:

(1) that compensation policies should not induce private investment in resources that may have a higher value in public use;

(2) that taxpayers are to be protected against being made “insurers” against the risk of expropriation;

(3) that a methodology be required to determine the value of investments made and the compensation, if any, that might be paid if there was a decision made not to allow further mining exploration or development in a given area; and

(4) that there be recognition of the significant federal and territorial incentives, tax deductions, et cetera provided to investors in mining exploration activities.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?
Is there a statement by a minister?
This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: School catchment areas

Mr. Hassard: Last week it was revealed that, in a March 8 letter, the Department of Education told the Hidden Valley elementary school council that the Liberal government had decided to adjust the catchment area for Hidden Valley elementary, Holy Family elementary, Jack Hullah Elementary and Takhini Elementary schools. Essentially this means that the minister has decided that she's going to start shuffling kids around town.

In January, the combined enrolment of those four schools was 833 students. That means that there are hundreds of families that could be impacted by this Liberal decision to adjust catchment areas.

Last week, the minister agreed to hold public meetings before the catchment areas are adjusted. Can the minister tell us when these public meetings will occur?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It won't surprise anyone that I don't agree with the way in which this question was worded — based on the facts of what the member opposite reports is in the letter that the department wrote to various school councils. As a matter of fact, all school councils in the City of Whitehorse got such a letter indicating that we would be setting out what is in the five-year capital plan with respect to schools and school communities and indicating that we were planning, of course, to work with them and to determine their interests in the process going forward.

Certainly part of our discussions about building a new elementary school in the City of Whitehorse will involve a review of catchment areas and extensive conversations with the school communities that will be affected.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I'll just remind the minister, as I reminded the Premier last week, that everything that's said in this Assembly is recorded, and it's in fact there for everyone to see.

Last week, we asked the minister to commit to hold public meetings with all affected school councils before adjusting the attendance areas. The minister said that she would. I just want to confirm that the minister will actually attend those meetings, rather than delegating it to officials like she so often does. If the consensus at these meetings is that parents do not want the catchment areas adjusted, will the minister actually listen to them and cancel those plans?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm puzzled a bit by the idea that I would say something here that I then wouldn't do. I'm pretty sure the members opposite are keen about watching such things.

Of course, I will attend meetings to meet with school councils to determine the future of catchment areas, the future

of elementary schools — their own individual elementary schools as well as a new school that is planned to be built here in the City of Whitehorse — because it will take all of us to solve these issues of growing enrolment in the City of Whitehorse and how we will properly meet the needs of each of those schools.

Mr. Hassard: Last week, we asked the minister twice to confirm whether or not she will be adjusting the catchment areas of schools other than the ones that I just mentioned in my previous question, and twice she dodged the question. So I'll ask it again: Can the minister confirm if, in addition to the four schools that we just discussed, she will be adjusting the catchment area for other elementary schools in Whitehorse, such as Golden Horn Elementary School?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As we continue to assess and prioritize the needs of Yukon school communities, some of the meetings that will take place over various periods of time — I hesitate to set dates for such meetings, because in my view, Mr. Speaker, those meetings need to be ongoing. We need to engage with the school communities and the elementary school communities here in the territory — particularly in Whitehorse — to deal with the issues of growing enrolment that we see at all elementary schools.

The letter that the member opposite is noting was an information letter from the Department of Education to all school councils in the City of Whitehorse — and actually across the territory — indicating the effect of the five-year capital plan and the more than \$30 million being allocated in that five-year capital plan to education projects, explaining what those were and explaining that we would be engaging with them and frankly needing their help as is properly set out in the *Education Act* for the role of school councils to determine how we can best assess these issues as a team, together, in the best interests of our students.

Question re: French immersion programming

Mr. Kent: French immersion continues to be a very popular program for families in the territory. According to Canadian Parents for French in BC and Yukon, the 2017-18 school year saw 766 students enrolled in French immersion across the Yukon. This represents 14.3 percent of the entire student body and is the fourth consecutive year of increase.

In response to enrolment pressures, the previous government expanded French immersion programs in Whitehorse to include Selkirk Elementary School in addition to programming at Whitehorse Elementary School. Officials told us at a briefing last week that this upcoming fall will include five kindergarten classes between the two schools. So given the popularity of French immersion, we asked the minister last fall if she would consider expanding French immersion to other schools. At the time, she said no. Is she willing to reconsider that answer?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The online kindergarten pre-registration process for Whitehorse area schools, which is what the member opposite is referring to, started on February 11, 2019. The registration numbers are still being finalized. Spaces are allocated for new kindergarten students, as he is

well aware, including French immersion students each year based on our projected enrolment numbers, staffing allocation, school capacity and historical enrolment trends.

French immersion programs continue to be popular. They are offered at École Whitehorse Elementary, École Selkirk Elementary and of course in later years at F.H. Collins Secondary School. This year, the greater demand for the enrolment in French immersion has resulted at this time in 11 parents not being able to enrol their students. There is no indication that an expansion of the French immersion program is appropriate at this time.

Mr. Kent: Last week, the Department of Education officials briefed us that the government had to hold a lottery this year for French immersion, and I believe that is what the minister just mentioned in her response. It seems a rather unfortunate approach for the minister to essentially make families enter a raffle when trying to determine the education for their children.

Can the minister confirm again that a lottery was held, how many applicants were in the lottery and how many spaces were available?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The kindergarten pre-registration, including French immersion, opened at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, February 11. Parents in Whitehorse pre-register through forms that are online or by contacting the Department of Education. Once we have processed the pre-registration forms, the department contacts parents in March with the school that their child has been assigned to. Parents fill out additional forms at the school to finalize their registration. The Department of Education typically uses a first-come, first-served format to enrol children who are pre-registering for schools. When a family does not immediately have access to the school that they choose, the Department of Education works specifically with that family and their information and speaks to them about options. It is only after that process proceeds that there may be a lottery. It certainly is not something that is done every year. The member opposite is well aware of that being a last-resort process.

Mr. Kent: As I mentioned last week, the Department of Education officials briefed us that the government was holding a lottery this year for French immersion. Could I get the minister to confirm that this lottery has been held?

Last fall when we asked about expanded programming, one of the excuses that the minister used was — and I quote: “As the members opposite may know, or certainly some Yukoners know, there is a shortage across Canada for qualified teachers at the French immersion level.” Last week, Department of Education officials briefed us that the Yukon is doing pretty well in attracting and retaining French immersion teachers. The minister has also told this House that there are 700 empty spaces in Whitehorse area elementary schools. Since teachers and space aren’t concerns, why is she holding a lottery for French immersion instead of expanding the program?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think it would be faulty to leave Yukoners with the impression that there are 700 empty spaces across all schools in Whitehorse at the elementary school level

for French immersion students, which was alluded to here in the question. The 700 empty spots are certainly across all grades and are across all schools. As the member opposite well knows, the kindergarten classes in Golden Horn Elementary School will likely be full this year, so there would be no spots there — an example of the faulty reasoning.

The concept of physical space is absolutely required in schools for enrolment. The concept of a qualified teacher is in fact the case. There is a shortage across Canada of qualified teachers for French immersion. It is something that has been growing. It is an issue for the Canadian ministers of education at their annual council meetings, and it will continue to be. We will work with our partners across Canada to try to continue to attract the best qualified French immersion teachers so that our students here in the Yukon benefit. We appreciate the opportunity to do that with the Council of Ministers of Education Canada.

Question re: Mining sector development

Ms. Hanson: Recently, local media again raised the spectre of payment to individuals in mining companies holding mineral claims in the Peel River watershed. Throughout the Peel planning process, there were suggestions — sometimes veiled threats — that the Yukon government and in turn Yukon citizens would owe millions if the recommended plan was accepted.

Had the Yukon government done their due diligence and considered how it might deal with compensation or expropriation for mineral claims outside of the Peel land use planning process, we could be having a much different conversation today. Instead we hear that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is just now planning to raise this with his colleagues while refusing to describe his position or thoughts on the matter.

Can the minister now elaborate on the principles that guide government when considering calls for compensation for claims in the Peel River land use planning region?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The Government of Yukon, Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in, the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and the Gwich’in Tribal Council are collaborating to finalize, approve and implement the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan*.

Last year, we completed a joint consultation process on the Peel Watershed Planning Commission’s 2011 final recommendation plan. There were over 2,000 responses that were received, and a summary report is now publicly available.

Our intergovernmental consultations are now underway to reach a consensus on a final plan, and our work is being guided by the First Nation final agreements, the *Gwich’in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement* and of course the Supreme Court of Canada’s decision on this matter. This is work that’s ongoing. Of course, there’s a responsibility that lays on me to understand what the implications are of a final plan and when it’s implemented, but that’s work that has been going on and will continue to go on as we get to the end of this process.

Ms. Hanson: The issue of whether or not there should be compensation within a land use planning area is not the responsibility of the land use planning commission. The minister has indicated that he would only begin discussing potential compensation for claims just now after the Peel plan is finalized. Yet this position fails to consider the need for territory-wide policy enshrining the principles to guide the circumstances in which government might provide for compensation and expropriation of claims.

We currently have a regional land use plan underway in Dawson and another land use planning process in the Beaver River area. In the event it is deemed that removing land for resource development is in the public interest in those areas, calls for compensation currently being made in the Peel will be repeated. The minister said that he would consult his Cabinet and his caucus.

Does this government recognize the need to conduct this process in an open and transparent fashion with the input of the Yukon public, Yukon First Nation governments and industry stakeholders rather than behind closed doors?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, there was an article last week that the member opposite refers to. It was an interview that I had done with the *Whitehorse Star*. It was clearly stated in that article that this is an extremely important matter. I want to understand all impacts and aspects of this. I have asked the staff and my colleagues — when I say “my colleagues,” it is more about ensuring that I get support and understand the implications on this legally from Justice. I am working of course with my colleague from Environment to finalize the plan. This is a very serious matter.

As the Leader of the Third Party has said, all of the things that are said in this Chamber are recorded in Hansard. I go back and look, and I know that the opposition, on a number of occasions, talked about the potential legal implications of this and potential financial — these are all things that it is important for me to weigh. I have the responsibility of taking into consideration what the impacts are to Yukoners. That is first and foremost my responsibility to understand.

I appreciate the motion that was tabled earlier. I appreciate the points that have been made by the Leader of the Third Party. It is an extremely complex issue, and I want to ensure that we look through all the due diligence before making a public comment on this.

Ms. Hanson: There are in fact precedents elsewhere on how to determine whether compensation or expropriation is appropriate in the case of lands being removed from development. Both Alberta and British Columbia have regulations.

In 1992, in response to requests for compensation from the Windy Craggy mine, British Columbia established the Schwindt Commission to examine whether or not mineral claim holders, in this case a mine development, should receive compensation for their claims, or in that case, the mine. The commission’s findings ultimately led to the creation of the British Columbia mineral compensation regulation. Now is the time to begin discussions on what principles will guide Yukon practice.

Does this minister — and in turn, the government — support the establishment of an independent commission to conduct a comprehensive review to determine whether, under what circumstances and how much, if any, compensation should be paid in the event that regional land use plans conflict with existing mineral claims or exploration?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I just want to state to the Assembly that I appreciate the points that were brought up today by the Leader of the Third Party. When I say we are doing our due diligence, this is exactly it. I previously, in my professional work, spent time in that area where the Windy Craggy file was handled. Of course, I am aware of that process that had taken place with the NDP government of the day in British Columbia.

I appreciate the points here, but the Leader of the Third Party is not going to, by asking me a question, get me to commit in the Assembly today on behalf of the government that I am going to form a committee or a commission — an idea that was just brought today. Are we going to do our due diligence? Absolutely. Are we going to ensure that we look at previous case law? Yes, we are. Are we going to ensure that we understand all of the impacts? Absolutely; that is our job.

Again, I appreciate the points brought forward. I am interested to read through the language of the motion that was touched on earlier, and I look forward to discussing this further in the Legislative Assembly of Yukon.

Question re: Children in care

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, it was nearly a year ago that news broke of a young person being asked to leave a group home with hours’ notice because the group home needed to make room for another youth. It was nearly a year ago when we heard about another young person being locked out of a group home in the winter and forced onto the streets.

These revelations were dismissed as untrue by the department, but it came to light that it is indeed what happened. To be clear, these are children who were the legal responsibility of this government. The minister then offered a personal apology.

From this example of the mishandling of youth in care under this government and from a litany of complaints by youth, the Child and Youth Advocate agreed to conduct an independent review.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit to sharing the report from the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate with the public once it’s complete and further commit to follow the recommendations made in its report?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would say that of course we are committed to continuous improvements, and we are looking at ensuring that we address the concerns that are raised by the youth and of course by the various commissioned reports.

We said that we would share it, and I will commit to that again that we would share the information that we receive.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer.

As part of the debacle around group homes last spring, both the Minister of Health and Social Services and the Public Service Commission assured employees that they could come

to them personally or to the deputy ministers with their concerns. The Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner issued her own advice to employees, reminding them that the protection from reprisals could only be offered if the correct steps laid out in legislation were followed. A few individuals who did bring forward their concerns were disciplined and proceeded to register complaints with the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner. It is our understanding that the commissioner has completed this report and provided it to government.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister inform this House when the PIDWA report will be shared publicly and assure this House that the recommendations of the commissioner will be followed?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act* is a mechanism for addressing serious wrongdoing that may be committed within a public entity covered by the act and affords specific reprisal protections to employees of those entities.

The act's obligations of each public entity include the obligation to ensure wide communication to the employees about the act, including how to disclose the wrongdoing. The Public Service Commission works closely with the Ombudsman, who is now the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner, to coordinate active implementation and communication activities.

Mr. Speaker, we are working within the civil service to make sure that there is widespread understanding of the public interest disclosure of wrongdoing legislation, and we are working with the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner to make sure that communication is comprehensive and acceptable to the office.

When the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner releases her report, I am sure — I'm a supporter of providing information to the public, Mr. Speaker, and I will apply the rules of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* to make sure that the appropriate information is released to the public at the appropriate time.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for a replay of his answers from last year, but I asked about the PIDWA report specifically, which we look forward to reading.

Another revelation last year was that group home staff were being asked to do more with less. Staff were regularly required to work alone, and when things fell apart, it was staff who faced discipline and not those responsible for the management and supervision of these programs.

Recently, the Public Service Commissioner issued a directive that employees working in government-run group homes or residential settings would no longer be required to work alone. Mr. Speaker, can the minister confirm that residential staff working in group homes are no longer required to work alone?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I can say that the department has looked at the composition of group homes and looked at ensuring that we do not have staff working alone and that we have coverage as required, and we will continue to ensure that we do that. So yes, that is correct.

Question re: School replacement

Ms. Van Bibber: Last week, we asked the Minister of Education to explain why last year's five-year capital concept listed Holy Family School and Christ the King Elementary School, but this year's capital concept does not. In response, she gave a non-answer that spoke about the French first language school, planning for a Whistle Bend school and Kluane Lake School.

Just to clarify, this question is not about those schools. This question is specifically this: Why did the Liberal government list Holy Family and Christ the King schools in the capital concept last year and then remove them this year?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Unfortunately, just because the members opposite don't necessarily like the answer I give doesn't mean that I don't answer these questions. It is my responsibility to do so, and I work very hard to make sure that Yukoners have the correct information that they need.

The Government of Yukon has a comprehensive plan to modernize Yukon schools and to meet the current and future needs of our education system. We have to balance a number of factors, including enrolment pressures, increasing enrolment in the City of Whitehorse, as well as the fiscal responsibility and the needs of our school communities.

We have a number of ways to address the needs of school buildings — all in the short, medium and long term. That includes renovations and repairs, optimizing classroom space and building schools. The initial information last year with respect to Takhini Elementary and Holy Family schools were changed this year in the long-term five-year capital plan based on the needs of the other schools that have been noted here, including the building of a Whistle Bend school.

Ms. Van Bibber: On March 13, the minister told this House — and I quote: "Though Christ the King Elementary School is not currently in the government's five-year capital plan, the school remains a priority for renovation or replacement, as it is among one of the older schools in the territory." This is despite it being removed from the five-year capital concept, so it is a priority for the Liberals but just not a priority in these five years.

Can the minister tell us: If Christ the King Elementary School is not included in the five-year capital concept — when can Yukoners expect to see the school renovated or replaced?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am going to take a moment to explain to Yukoners how proud we are of the concept of a five-year capital plan at all — never mind a five-year capital plan that includes school planning, which is absolutely critical for a growing territory and the growing City of Whitehorse. The five-year capital plan is a thoughtful opportunity to introduce and improve government's planning for construction and infrastructure projects, including schools, to be more transparent to Yukoners and to assist business opportunities for the private industry as well. The five-year capital plan informs industry of government's priorities and that we are there to help Yukon businesses to prepare for upcoming projects. The concept of a school — I think the last one built here in the City of Whitehorse at the elementary

school level — that was not École Émilie Tremblay — in 1992. That was some 27 years ago. Planning improvements to the school, conceptive planning and improvement to our education system in providing proper spaces for students are absolutely critical. It is the work we are doing.

Ms. Van Bibber: On March 8, 2018, the Minister of Education said — and I quote: “The schools that are currently being considered in the five-year capital plan include: Christ the King Elementary School, Holy Family Elementary School, Kluane Lake School, Selkirk Elementary School, Takhini Elementary School, Whitehorse Elementary School and the Wood Street Centre — primarily for the reasons of age of the buildings.” Of those seven schools, only two appear in this year’s five-year capital concept. In the case of Selkirk Elementary, the work contemplated in the capital concept has nothing to do with the actual building; it is for upgrades to the staff parking lot. Can the Minister of Education explain why, out of the seven schools that she said her government was considering to include in the five-year capital concept because of the age of the buildings, only one made the cut?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The capital plan for 2019-20 includes the schools that I noted earlier and that the members opposite are not too keen to have me repeat. They include the new French first language high school, initial planning for a new Whistle Bend elementary school, the relocation of Kluane Lake School to Burwash Landing, ongoing repairs and maintenance to the Ross River School and the portable for Golden Horn Elementary. It also includes, as noted by the member opposite, some upgrades for Selkirk Elementary as well as hopefully some renovations for both Christ the King and Holy Family schools for issues that they have brought forward with respect to some repairs that need to be done.

Last year’s capital plan had identified Christ the King and Holy Family schools, which have been replaced by the Whistle Bend and Whitehorse replacement of the elementary school for Whitehorse Elementary and the five-year capital plan.

The department has met with the Catholic school councils and the CEAY to frame this information and to discuss their expectations moving forward.

The responsible thing to do is to work with school communities and spend taxpayers’ money in a responsible way where we get maximum benefit.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 209: *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2019-20* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 209, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 209, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2019-20*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 209, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2019-20*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I rise today to speak in support of Bill No. 209 or, as it is otherwise known, the *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2019-20*. If passed, this bill will provide spending authority for two months, or 61 days, of the fiscal year in order to deliver public services that Yukoners rely on.

The total value of the *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2019-20* is approximately \$315 million. This includes \$266 million in operation and maintenance spending. There is approximately \$49 million in capital spending. These amounts will ensure that the government can meet immediate priorities as the Legislature completes debate for the full-year spending authority.

Our government’s main estimates for 2019-20 outline a strong and thorough approach to managing Yukon’s finances and making investments for an entire year. This interim supply bill follows the same practical application while being open and transparent with Yukoners. The intention is to fund operation and maintenance and capital spending for the first two months of the fiscal year. In general, the special warrant will cover will cover one-sixth of personnel and non-personnel costs. This will ensure that health care facilities, long-term care homes, schools and other public services will have the resources to operate effectively.

While the interim supply bill provides roughly one-sixth of all government spending, the amount included for operation and maintenance spending represents more than one-sixth of the total funding outlined in the main estimates. This is because there are commitments that require advances to be paid on the first day of the year in order to support organizations over the first quarter of the year — organizations such as Yukon College or Yukon Hospital Corporation and RCMP services as well. They require certainty for their funding at the beginning of the year in order to provide the services that Yukoners rely on.

Municipalities also receive their annual operating grant on April 1. Other specific grants are also approved by the Legislature as part of this interim supply.

Therefore, the bill seeks authority to spend \$25 million specifically on grants. These grants include \$19.1 million for the comprehensive municipal grants, just over \$1 million for post-secondary student grants and approximately \$4 million for grants under Health and Social Services, including social assistance.

Last year, there was a request to provide additional information about projects funded in the interim supply bill, so I have endeavoured to meet this request. During Committee of the Whole, I will provide a more detailed accounting of the costs and how they make up the interim appropriation figure.

Today, however, I want to signal my intention that we will continue to meet the expectations of Yukoners as we

debate the main estimates. We are paying for contracts that help fund our private sector. We are also keeping commitments to partners — such as municipalities, non-governmental organizations and institutions — that deliver valuable programs and services.

Our government looks forward to a full and robust debate on our fiscal approach and its associated legislation when we debate the main estimates. We are committed to providing transparency in public financing and being accountable to the Legislature and all Yukoners for spending decisions.

We expect the *First Appropriation Act 2019-20* to receive assent by the end of May, which will provide spending authority for the full year. The passage of this interim supply bill will ensure that Yukon begins the fiscal year with the financial resources to deliver on its commitments and to continue progress in making public services more effective and efficient.

Mr. Cathers: In rising to speak to the *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2019-20*, I would note of course that the use of interim supply bills is quite common here in the territory. We recognize the need and the value of expediting debate on the interim supply bill while getting into a more fulsome debate on the *First Appropriation Act 2019-20* itself, but there are a few areas that I would just ask the Premier — in the interest of transparency — if he could provide a little more detail on.

The Premier made reference, as a matter of course, that in most cases, he indicated that departments have been provided with two months' worth of resources, or one-sixth of the fiscal year, but that there were exceptions to that. The Premier gave some exceptions to that, but did not provide much detail beyond that.

I would ask, particularly in the area of non-governmental organizations that are funded by the Department of Health and Social Services — we have seen here recently the issue around NGOs that had seen their funding frozen. We have seen in other departments that NGOs have also had their funding frozen, or in some cases, we have even seen reductions in their funding agreements. I would appreciate it if the Premier could provide information on whether there is funding for NGOs included within the appropriations, and if so, whether they are getting a pro-rated amount for one-sixth of the year or whether those NGOs are going to have to wait until sometime in early May when the *First Appropriation Act 2019-20* — the government's budget for the year — is passed to receive their funding, because this is an area that has caused concern for non-governmental organizations.

I would also ask, in the case of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, if the Premier could elaborate on what they're being provided here in terms of both operation and maintenance and capital. When one looks at the interim supply act itself — for those who are listening and watching — there is really not a lot of detail. It provides the high-level numbers on the operation and maintenance amounts by department, but in the area of Health and Social Services, which funds the Hospital Corporation as well as the NGOs to

which we have referred — including such examples as the women's transition home society and the Child Development Centre and others where we have seen their funding frozen in this year's budget — again, the question of what resources, if any, are being provided in the interim supply bill would be appreciated.

As I mentioned in the case of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, since we don't see the breakdown on what the Health and Social Services line item is and that is a concern that has come to our attention — we just ask for more information on what NGOs in the hospital are receiving in this *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2019-20*. By NGOs, I mean especially in the area of Health and Social Services, but also other departments would be welcome.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to spend a long time here in debating interim supply just beyond noting again that we have seen a situation here where this year, as a result of the increases to the federal transfer, the government has seen an increase of \$53.4 million in the amount of the major federal transfers to the Yukon, despite having received that increase which was substantially higher than expected — an increase which works out to more than \$1,000 for every man, woman and child in the territory. The government has managed to squander much of that on unnecessary spending.

There are of course some items in the government's increased spending that we do agree with, but the increase in total — by the Premier's own admission — of an additional 160 full-time employee positions across government is not necessary, in our view. It is higher than it needs to be. In the case of Salvation Army, we see as an example there where the government has demonstrated that, quite literally, they would rather increase the size of government by 40 full-time equivalent positions than find a way to work with an NGO and appropriately fund their needs.

I should also note that — as I noted earlier in debate on the budget — we have criticized and we will continue to criticize the government's choice to use special warrants this winter. We believe that funding for those projects could have been approved either in the fall supplementary budget or early in this Sitting. As I noted in debate on the government's supplementary estimates for the 2018-19 fiscal year, they could have included the funding for those projects in that bill and expedited debate early on in the Sitting. They also could have chosen to include it in interim supply for this year and bring forward this bill for debate — in fact, earlier than this week — and could have approved it through that mechanism. Again, that would have been a way that would have kept to the Premier's commitments to Yukoners before the election instead of breaking them, as the government chose to do.

Mr. Speaker, in wrapping up my comments, I am going to ask the Premier for an explanation of the matter where we saw some changes at the top level in the Department of Finance.

The Premier, on March 4, issued a press release announcing that the Deputy Minister of Finance was departing government. The Premier stated in that release that the last day she would be with the government would be April 26 and noted specifically in the press release: "This timeframe for

White's departure will allow for a smoother transition to new leadership for the department." The Premier was also quoted in the press release as saying, "I would like to thank Katherine White for her exceptional knowledge, service and leadership. She has been an important mentor to me personally and to our government." The press release itself goes on from there in quite glowing language, I should note.

We see this rather surprising change in what has occurred from March 4, where the Premier, in glowing terms, announced the departure of the Deputy Minister of Finance, with the departure date of April 26. At the end of last week, on March 15 — also known as the Ides of March — the Premier announced the removal of the deputy minister and the appointment of an acting deputy, effective March 15. In the language in that, there was a marked difference in the tone and the way in which the Premier referred to the departing deputy minister in those press releases. In the course of a mere 11 days, we see a very marked change in plan and a marked change in tone from what was announced previously. It does affect of course the implementation of the interim supply legislation as well as the government's budget for the year. In contrasting the two press releases, the choice to make a change — it does look like the — let me put it this way: The language in the second press release was rather terse, and it does leave one asking the question of whether the Premier chose to relieve the deputy minister at an earlier date or what exactly went on.

I just would note, Mr. Speaker, that in reference to the interim supply legislation, the monies contained within, the Premier, prior to the election and during the election campaign, made commitments about being transparent with Yukoners about any severance costs associated with deputy ministers. So we are asking him to explain what went on, to explain why this change in plan, whether the individual in question was removed prior to the planned end date — or just what exactly occurred and what the costs may have been from government.

With that, I will wrap up my comments on interim supply and look forward to hearing the Premier's answers to all of the questions that I outlined here in my speech at second reading as the Finance critic for the Official Opposition.

Ms. Hanson: I will be brief in reply to the *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2019-20*. I think we accept generally that it has been and is government practice to introduce these interim supply acts in order to ensure the ongoing operation of essential government services.

Perhaps the fact that we have one-sixth of our annual operating budget and a significant portion of our capital budget being determined prior to Members of the Legislative Assembly being able to debate them or having any information speaks to perhaps changes that this Yukon Legislative Assembly needs to think about in terms of having earlier sitting dates, if we're actually serious about responsibilities for public accountability.

Echoing the Premier's statement about the importance of transparency in public accounting, I just want to reiterate the

request that we have made repeatedly. We seek full disclosure for information that is presented to Members of the Legislative Assembly in terms of a rollup summary for every department and agency for the Government of Yukon, with little or no information to back it up. So we're asked to come into debate around millions of dollars — in some cases, hundreds of millions of dollars — of public expenditure that's being proposed. We have to dig to find where and how and why and to what end those monies are being proposed. In some cases, there are in fact strategic plans, there are operational plans, there are objectives that perform as indicators that departments have set and have been operating under, but they're not publicly available.

Similarly, if we're being asked to agree to a fait accompli with respect to the interim supply, it would be helpful — in the interest of transparency and public accounting — to provide that information with a greater degree of granularity. So don't tell me it will be X-hundred million dollars, and then say, "Trust us; it's fine." It probably is, but in terms of accountability, it doesn't give a lot of assurances.

I understand that the Minister of Finance has indicated his willingness to get into that level of detail and provide us a list after the fact during Committee of the Whole. So we'll go through exactly what we do in budget briefings, which is some poor officials left there to read out — hit or miss — the various projects that are being funded this year. Well, surely to goodness, for every one of these rollup figures, there is a backup number of projects, initiatives or whatever — the funding must be released in advance of the final approval of the mains.

So I would just ask that the Finance minister consider the rights of all Members of the Legislative Assembly to full disclosure of all relevant information when it comes to making an assessment of what's being proposed in this act so we can do that with a full measure of confidence that we actually have some information and aren't just blindly saying yea or nay.

Speaker: Is there further debate on Bill No. 209?

If the Member now speaks, he will close debate on second reading of Bill No. 209.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I want to thank the members on the opposite side of the Legislature for their comments.

Again, I don't think I need to go over the concept of interim supply, but I do think I need to reiterate that, as far as signalling my intentions to continue to meet the expectations of Yukoners, we are going to continue the debate in the main estimates as well. One-sixth of the spending, of course, in the interim supply bill is an accounting measure, but that does not mean that we cannot — with the ministers and the deputy ministers and the team who are presented here in Committee of the Whole for the mains — have a line-by-line debate in the Legislative Assembly on all of those items and issues, including those ones that are in the interim supply bill. Just for

the record, I recommit that we will expand therein as well when it comes to those particular dollar values.

With all of the rhetoric from the Member for Lake Laberge, it is necessary to point out again that all money is flowing to the NGOs, and this interim supply bill is not a deterrent to that. \$30 million in the interim supply bill is going to the Hospital Corporation. There is another \$12 million in funding for NGOs. Again, all of this money can be discussed in detail at great length if there are some specific questions from the members opposite as far as those line items go in Committee of the Whole main estimates debate.

Again we hear a certain line from the Yukon Party, mostly from the Member for Lake Laberge, as far as what he sees as deficits and the reasons for deficits — those types of things. He keeps forgetting to mention the hot economy that we are in right now and that will actually increase costs to government for infrastructure projects. For example, we have been on our feet a few times in the Legislative Assembly talking about the extraordinary work that Community Services has done to make sure that the private sector has the tools and the infrastructure available in this fiscal situation that we are in. Again we have been speaking about this quite a bit. The Yukon government currently does spend more on services and capital spending than it receives in revenues and recoveries in order to meet those needs of Yukoners — a trend that was established by the previous government. This is what contributes to the deficits, as seen in recent years. Again, we wouldn't be hearing that from the members opposite.

Our economy is forecasted to grow — that is the good news — by 3.3 percent. That is strong growth for any jurisdiction. The Yukon Financial Advisory Panel stated that over the period from 2007 to 2016, our real per capita spending grew at a rate that is 50 percent higher than the growth rate of revenues. That is just simply not fiscally sustainable, and as a result, we are in our current deficit position. The member opposite makes statements of one thing — that the federal government gave us more money that we forecasted — and now I guess the sky is falling.

We have a fiscal strategy to meet the challenges of a hot economy and a financial situation where the government has been spending more than it earns.

These solutions are based upon the results of that Financial Advisory Panel, and it is endorsed by Yukoners to close the gap between the growing need for services and our revenues. So we will continue down that road.

It is imperative at this time as well to point out that we are in a good situation right now. So we want to get ourselves from a good financial situation right now into a better situation down the road in a number of years. A number of performance indicators support the idea of a hot economy. Yukon's unemployment rate averaged a record low of 2.7 percent in 2018, which is below the previous low of 3.6 percent noted in the previous year and also very much below the national average of 5.8.

Our Yukon average weekly earnings continue to rank among the highest in the country, only trailing Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Alberta. So those average weekly

earnings are at a new high of \$1,148 in October — those are the last results that I have here.

The results of a more recent Yukon labour demand survey noted that job vacancies among trades, transport and equipment operators represent 20 percent of all vacancies, which speaks to the strong demand for construction-related employment, Mr. Speaker.

Again, always a good shout-out to the development at Eagle Gold — it has diverted some of the earth-moving equipment used into some road construction. There was a little bit of delay there, but the project seems to be going along smoothly.

We also have to identify that there is a lack of housing available, and we're working on that right now. It's identified as a contribution to the higher cost of local construction. It's the reality which we are in right now. So that's another pressure when it comes to why we are providing a deficit this year. But again, Mr. Speaker, we do have a plan, and that plan is to get back into surplus in 2020-21, and we are on track to do that.

The member opposite again spoke about the deputy minister. He didn't finish my complete quotation, which is too bad, because I stand by those words. Ms. White was a mentor, for sure, and has supplied me with great knowledge, and I want to thank her again for her diligence and for her time here in Yukon government. Again, Yukon government values the experience and the contributions of all of our people who are appointed to serve as deputy heads in the Yukon public service.

Of course, the member opposite knows that the specifics of an individual department head's income or other issues are definitely confidential details of an employment contract, and this type of personal information is not accessible under the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* — suffice it to say that there is not one line item in the interim supply bill in terms of deputy head staffing.

I think that is all of the comments from the members opposite. With that, I will sit and we can get ourselves into 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.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 12 yeas, six nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 209 agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: 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 (Mr. Hutton): I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 209, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2019-20*.

Do members wish to take a 10-minute recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 10 minutes.

Recess

Chair: I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill No. 209: Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2019-20

Chair: This afternoon, we will go on to general debate of Bill No. 209, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2019-20*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will begin by welcoming Chris Mahar to her acting deputy minister role. She is here with me today from the Department of Finance. I am again pleased to rise during Committee of the Whole to speak to Bill No. 209, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2019-20*.

As mentioned, the bill will provide spending authority for the first two months of the fiscal year in order to deliver the public services that Yukoners rely on. The total value of the *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2019-20* is about \$315 million. This includes \$266 million in operation and maintenance spending, and there is approximately \$49 million in capital spending. These amounts will ensure that the

government can meet immediate priorities as the members of the House debate the full year of spending authority in the main estimates bill. Also included in that number is \$24.8 million for legislated grants, including \$19 million for comprehensive municipal grants. Other major operation and maintenance expenditures include \$30 million for the Yukon Hospital Corporation and \$6.8 million to Yukon College as per the terms of our agreement with these institutions.

Also included as part of our contribution agreement is \$12 million in funding for NGOs. This interim supply bill will also ensure our contributions to boards and councils are met with \$1 million in funding. This includes renewable resources councils, the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, Yukon Land Use Planning Council as well as a few others.

Lastly, in operation and maintenance, this bill provides \$7.2 million with respect to RCMP and for 911 contract funding.

I want to now turn to capital spending and outline specifics on the capital projects included in the interim supply bill. As I mentioned, there is \$49 million in capital included in the bill. The largest areas of spending are within the Department of Community Services, Highways and Public Works and Education and the Yukon Housing Corporation. Within the Department of Education, capital expenses will amount to \$7.2 million over the first two months of the fiscal year. Much of this funding relates to the work on the French first language secondary school. The department will spend the first months of the year working to accommodate the purchase of seal and costs associated with mobilization as well as end-stage design work.

The second largest capital expense in the department is for the purchase of 1,200 Wave 2 devices to support modern learning in Yukon schools. These funds will ensure that devices are received no later than May 1. This is a pretty exciting prospect to include mobile technology as we modernize our approach to education, increasing school access to mobile devices and digital resources to empower teachers and students to take their learning beyond the classroom and be able to store and access their work at any time or any place and personalize their learning — it's pretty exciting stuff.

Community Services will see a notable portion of capital expenditures in the first two months of the year at just under \$12 million. The most significant capital expenses will go toward project scoping and related expenses for work on the Haines Junction lagoon, Dawson City water treatment upgrades, pumphouse replacement and the Carmacks arena project. Further funding will also be used to continue administrative work on land planning and related expenditures. While these projects round out the bulk of the capital expenditures for the department, there will also be some capital funds directed toward getting ready for the fire season and to cover expenditures related to the domestic and municipal water well programs.

In Highways and Public Works, \$21 million will be prioritized toward projects that are already under construction. These include the Swift River living complex, the Dawson

airport maintenance facility, the new Carmacks grader station and general repairs on existing buildings. Some funds will also be directed toward work on the diverse fibre line, which will provide reliable and redundant Internet solutions and services for Yukon once completed.

Yukon Housing Corporation is the final vote, with significant capital expenditures for the first two months. The corporation will spend just under \$5 million, mainly on construction projects including the Whitehorse Housing First project, renovations to existing housing stock and planning for new projects such as the Old Crow mixed-use tenplex and the mixed-use Whitehorse housing projects.

The projects that I have outlined here today cover the bulk of capital spending in this interim supply bill. I can answer further questions if the members have any. Our government also looks forward to a full and robust debate on the fiscal approach and the associated legislation when we return to the main estimates. We are committed to providing transparency in public financing and being accountable to the Legislature and to all Yukoners for our spending decisions. As I have said, this interim supply bill will ensure that Yukon begins the fiscal year with the financial resources to deliver on our commitments while we in this House complete our debate on the main budget.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: Ms. Hanson, on a point of order.

Ms. Hanson: I am not sure if this is the correct time to do it, but the Minister of Finance had indicated, prior to breaking into Committee of the Whole, that he would be providing the members opposite with a detailed breakdown. He has just outlined some of it — not all of it — because he had identified before the break that he would be identifying — for example, he mentioned \$12 million in funding for NGOs. He said he was going to provide that breakdown. In the interest of transparency and accountability, it would be helpful to have that, as was promised prior to going into Committee of the Whole.

Will we be getting that, Mr. Chair?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Chair, we offer briefings for the members opposite where they can ask any questions on any line item. They had the opportunity there. I have done a complete breakdown here of a lot of the dollar values and also have provided in my speech, as well, that in the mains, when we go into Committee of the Whole, the members opposite will not only have the ministers but will also have the public servants, the deputy ministers and others, and they can ask any question and have an opportunity there to expand upon in line-by-line debate. There are many opportunities for the members opposite. I am here — in the interim supply bill — in Committee of the Whole right now to go over these numbers with the specifics that I gave. There are more opportunities available for the members opposite to expand.

Chair's ruling

Chair: As far as the ruling, I'm going to call this a point of debate as opposed to a point of order. Carry on, please.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In rising to speak to this as Official Opposition Finance critic, I'm not going to be long in my remarks at this stage. I would note and agree with the Leader of the Third Party that a breakdown on funding for NGOs would be appreciated. I know that the Premier doesn't have all that information at his fingertips immediately, so I would simply ask if that information could be provided in a clear fashion when we get into individual departments or separately via a legislative return to members.

We have heard concern from a number of NGOs about their funding picture. We know that some — including the Yukon Women's Transition Home Society — were so concerned that they felt they had no option but to publicly express their concern on the steps of the Legislative Assembly, which is a strong step for them to take.

So we are listening to NGOs that have told us that they have had their funding frozen. Some have even had their funding cut, and others are seeing situations of lack of clarity, and we're just asking — and again I note that I'm not expecting the Premier to provide all of the information immediately and debate on interim supply. I'm just asking for it later, in the interest of transparency and public accountability, as well as more detail on the capital side of the budget, including how much extra the government is anticipating to spend this fiscal year on the capital side as a result of the steel tariffs in place between Canada and the United States.

In making my opening remarks, I want to again note that we do see a notable increase in the federal transfer of some \$53.4 million in increased major transfers, which amounts to more than \$1,000 for every man, woman and child in the territory.

We do continue to have concerns with some of the government's budgeting decisions this fiscal year. Also in my introductory remarks, I would be remiss if I didn't welcome Chris Mahar as Acting Deputy Minister of Finance. I've had the pleasure of working with Chris in two departments for several years — both Health and Social Services and Community Services. I would just like to wish Chris well in her new role at Finance. With that, Mr. Chair, I will wrap up my introductory remarks.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will just reiterate what I said to the Leader of the Third Party. I definitely encourage the members opposite to use their briefings with the departments and with the public servants to go into detail about certain items there. Committee of the Whole is again an opportunity to speak directly to the minister and his or her team when it comes to specifics when it comes to NGOs. Generally, we're talking about two months out of 12 months here — of the interim supply bill. Exceptions were noted, as I said, so we went over that, giving more information. Those exceptions were noted

because of quarterly payments. There are opportunities to go in-depth, as deep as the members opposite want, and I encourage them to use those opportunities.

Mr. Cathers: With that, I would just thank the officials for their work and the information that we have been provided. I look forward to hearing that additional detail at a later date.

I would remind the Premier that one of the reasons we do ask questions here in the Legislative Assembly instead of just in briefings is so that ministers stand accountable and on the public record for the commitments that they've made. On more than one occasion, we have seen the Liberal ministers contradict information provided by officials. That of course puts officials in a very difficult situation, and asking the Premier and his ministers to stand here in the House and provide information to the public on the record allows for accountability. When the story changes at the ministerial level or at the Premier's level, it also allows the Official Opposition and the Third Party to hold them accountable for the shifting story and remind them of the numbers that they previously gave.

With that, I will wrap up my remarks on the interim supply bill and turn it over to the Third Party for their questions.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair — was there a question there?

Ms. Hanson: With respect to the comments made by the Minister of Finance that opposition MLAs should seek that information in briefings, I think he will find that, if he does consult with his officials, at least from the Third Party's point of view, we have asked each and every group of officials that has come before us to provide us additional background information. What we have said — and I believe I did communicate this to the Minister of Finance — is that what we're aware of is that officials come into the briefing with detailed budget breakdowns. These are not Cabinet confidences. This is basically information similar to what he's reading into the record here today that we're not made privy to. Unless you are a speed writer, it is very difficult to keep up with all that is being provided to you, because you have one hour to get through sometimes a very large department.

I commend the officials for attempting to go through a significant amount of detail, but what we have said is that, in the interest of full accountability and full transparency, the information should be available to all elected members of this Legislative Assembly, not just as part of a briefing book for senior officials to try to get through when they're trying to brief us.

To the point at hand, which is the interim supply, the Minister of Finance has indicated to us that \$12 million in funding has been released for NGOs. I would ask him to confirm — because for many NGOs, yes, it's one-sixth of their funding, but you can't operate if you're an NGO — most of them do not have the backstop of large business corporations or the large backstop of a government like the Yukon.

Can the minister confirm, for example, that Teegatha'Oh Zheh, with a budget estimated this year at \$1,754,000, has received one-sixth of its funding? Can he confirm that the Options for Independence Society, which has a smaller budget projected of \$629,000, has received one-sixth of its funding? Can he confirm whether or not the Child Development Centre has received one-sixth of its funding? Can he confirm whether or not the Yukon Chamber of Mines, with \$100,000 budgeted, has received one-sixth? Yukon placer miners — I'm making a point here. He said that the mandated boards and committees under the UFA, their \$1 million — one-sixth of that, as I understand, has been released.

But what we do not have clarity on is which of the NGOs — we have been told variously that there has been a freeze placed on NGO funding. It is very clear when we look at current and past budgets that there has been a de facto freeze in place for many NGOs, whether or not they are in the health and social services field — which is apparently under review right now, with no terms of reference or any end date for that review — so we are curious as to what the basis is for releasing funds if you don't have a rationale for how and why you are funding them.

It is material to this debate today to know which areas of the budget — whether it is Community Services, Energy, Mines and Resources, Education, Health and Social Services, Justice — you could go across the board and you can find NGOs in a lot of those. Some of them are very small, but that means it is even more vital for them to know whether or not they have the funding.

It is not a vexatious point, Mr. Chair. We raise it because that is our job.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, members opposite can rest assured that the funding is flowing for the NGOs, and we are accounting for one-sixth of that because that is what we do in the interim supply bill.

Back to the opposition briefings — again, this is one opportunity for the members opposite to ask questions of the officials, and the officials have delivered. I see that there were questions asked by the NDP about capital spending categories. Do you use standards that are used in other jurisdictions? They had received an answer there. I hope that this answer is sufficient about investments in education — they spoke about the investments in education when they answered that question.

The other question from the NDP was: Whitehorse and rural land development has no money in each year, just a range at the end — what does that mean? Of course, the officials provided an answer to that, talking to the numbers — and in this case, talking about \$25 million, which was the particular piece that they were looking at that time and identified that this amount was forecast for money to be spent.

There were a couple of other questions — but again, good questions from the opposition — and I don't see any of these questions without answers. If there are some more questions, then we would be happy to again provide the best opportunity for the members opposite to get the clearest answers. Again, seeing as this is just one-sixth of the spending from the main

estimates, definitely the best place is Committee of the Whole to talk with the ministers responsible and their teams with any specific questions that they want answered at that time.

When we take a look at funding specifically for the NGOs, it is the same process, where we have identified the quarterly amounts that have to be identified up front, whether it is for the RCMP or different corporations or the college. We have also, in that, allowed for the funding that is in these collective agreements to flow — so they are flowing. I hope that puts the members opposite's minds at ease, whether it is the Women's Directorate having \$600,000 for NGO funding flowing there or ECO with their money — just over a half-million dollars to the Youth Directorate NGOs — or Environment with one-fourth to the Yukon Wildlife Preserve.

All departments have one-sixth and more of that money flowing. So when departments are in excess of the one-sixth of the higher amounts, those are for funding for NGOs. So again, this is indicative of what the interim supply bill does; it allows these NGOs to provide programs and services that we absolutely rely on them for. Again, because they are one fraction of a larger component of Health and Social Services or partnering in Energy, Mines and Resources or different departments — more clarity can be expanded upon as we get into Committee of the Whole with those particular departments.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Chair, just to confirm then — my understanding is that the Minister of Finance is saying that some, but not all, non-governmental organizations — the \$12 million. I'm trying to get an understanding of what the \$12 million that he cited is for — what organizations — and he indicated prior to the break that he would be providing that breakdown, that information. He said it was a lot of information to go through and he would provide that information. Does that mean that all funding — when I look at an amount that's currently in the estimates for a non-governmental organization, whether it's in the Energy, Mines and Resources field, whether it's in Community Services, whether it's in Justice or Health and Social Services — that all of those entities will have received one-sixth of their budget that's estimated for this fiscal year? That's what I'm asking; that's the question, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Mr. Silver: So as per the agreement, money does flow through the interim for the amount of time that we need for that 61 days. Yes, as per the agreements — it could be one-sixth, but it depends on the agreements; sometimes it's more. Sometimes we need quarterly funding. But again, as per all of the individual agreements, that money is flowing, and this interim supply bill just allows that section to flow as we debate the mains.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that. So that addresses the mechanical or the technical aspect of it, which I understand. I guess what I'm looking for again goes back to my earlier comments that for many, many non-governmental organizations, having money in the bank on April 1 is the issue. It's not whether or not by the end of May, when the budget is approved or when government is going to — I guess what I'm looking for is: Has government, as it has done with

ensuring that within government operations we have the continued flow in terms of projects that are underway — whether it's on the Dawson water and sewage upgrading or on the Haines Junction lagoon — that we have that work under progress — NGOs need, if they are forecast in the current budget to be receiving funding, to have that assurance of continuity of funding, because a break can place them in a make-or-break situation.

So I am simply asking for the assurance from the Minister of Finance that those NGOs listed in the budget will have received, prior to April 1, one-sixth of their funding.

Hon. Mr. Silver: They will receive their funding, yes. Now, again, I've gone over this a few times. It's not necessarily always one-sixth — sometimes it's quarterly — but they are receiving their funding based upon their agreements. So the answer is yes.

Ms. Hanson: To be absolutely clear, that means that every NGO will be assured that as of April 1, if they have some undertaking in this budget that they're going to be funded, there will be that contribution agreement in place? There will be no lag in funding?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don't want to get caught up in anything later, but payments are necessarily on April 1 in most cases, and that's usually the agreements, but again this is the accounting piece — the interim supply bill is for the accounting — so payments being yearly, it's for the fiscal year as of April 1. What we do here is make sure that the accounting is in place so that money continues to flow — absolutely. Yes.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 209?

Seeing none, we will proceed to clause 1. Among the bill's schedules is schedule A, containing the departmental votes.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures
Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$265,532,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures
Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$49,309,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$314,841,000 agreed to

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Schedule A

Schedule A agreed to

On Schedule B

Schedule B agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 209, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2019-20*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by Hon. Mr. Silver that the Chair report Bill No. 209, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2019-20*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 208, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2018-19*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 10 minutes.

Recess

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

Bill No. 208: Third Appropriation Act 2018-19 — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 208, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2018-19*.

Department of Education

Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would like to welcome to the House for the first time Deputy Minister Nicole Morgan, who will be joining me, and seated to my far right, Jackie McBride-Dickson, who is the director of finance. Both of course are with the Department of Education, so I am welcoming them here today. I think Jackie has been here before but not with me, and it is Deputy Minister Morgan's first visit to the floor of the Legislative Assembly. I thank them for their assistance today and welcome them here in the House.

Mr. Chair, I have some opening remarks with respect to the Department of Education 2018-19 Supplementary No. 2, and I will endeavour to make those now, with your permission.

I rise in the House today to speak about the Department of Education's second supplementary budget for 2018-19. We are building healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities in the Yukon through access to lifelong learning for all Yukoners. Education is essential to the success of our young people, citizens and communities. The Government of Yukon continues to modernize learning in the Yukon to ensure that students of all ages are prepared with the skills they need to thrive in their lives and careers. We continue to provide consistent funding for education and ensure that the department's resources and programs are effectively supporting the learning needs of Yukoners, from kindergarten to adult learning and post-secondary education.

Our requests in this supplementary budget reflect some important changes to our operations during the fiscal year. The Department of Education is requesting a net total decrease of \$142,000 in funding. This includes a \$500,000

increase for the operation and maintenance expenditures and a \$642,000 decrease for capital expenditures. This is a result of a \$642,000 decrease in capital expenditures, as I have noted, and an increase of \$500,000 for the operation and maintenance expenditures. The requested changes in expenditures for 2018-19 are to provide increased support for teachers in Yukon schools and ensure the efficient use of capital funding. I will now go over these funding changes in a bit more detail.

With respect to O&M, the department is requesting a total increase of \$500,000 for operation and maintenance expenditures. This increase will support the implementation of the new collective agreement with the Yukon Teachers' Association. We recently reached a new three-year collective agreement after negotiations with the Yukon Teachers' Association. This agreement has been ratified by Yukon educators. The agreement will support our teachers and school staff in their efforts to deliver quality education programs and support Yukon students. The agreement reflects our shared goal of improving student achievement, the needs of educators and prudent fiscal management.

There are many positive changes for Yukon educators in this new agreement, including a 6.7-percent increase to salaries over three years, a 3.4-percent increase to salaries for qualified education assistants and a five-percent increase to the community allowance for school staff working in the communities. The agreement also includes provisions to prioritize Yukon First Nation teachers and enable substitutes to join the Yukon Teachers' Association, subject to changes in the *Education Labour Relations Act*, which was introduced in this Legislative Assembly last week.

When we invest in teachers, we invest in thriving communities. We expect the overall costs for implementing the new collective agreement to be \$1.6 million. This increase will be partially managed within the department's existing budget. An increase of \$500,000 is requested to support the remainder of the costs to implement these positive changes for Yukon educators. This supplementary budget suggests that the \$500,000 comes this year from the capital budget.

Moving on to the capital expenditures, the department is requesting a decrease overall of \$642,000. This decrease is to defer funding into the next fiscal year to support capital projects that have experienced some delays this year and to cover some project costs for this year.

With respect to the F.H. Collins Secondary site works, the decrease in Public Schools' capital expenditures is due to delays in completing the additional site works projects at F.H. Collins Secondary School. These projects include the new weight room building, an outdoor learning centre, a basketball court, a 32-stall parking lot and 13 single-row parking spaces next to the technical education wing.

At the beginning of March, we completed the work on the new weight room building. The school's equipment has been moved, and I am very pleased that we are planning for students to begin using the weight room when they return from the March break.

This is one of the first capital matters that I turned my mind to, being keenly aware through my work with F.H. Collins school council of the success of the specialized program at F.H. Collins school and the fact that the weight room gym was not included in the new F.H. Collins school build — it had in fact been completely neglected. That is now being remedied.

The other projects were expected to be completed in the fall of 2018 but were delayed due to challenges that included the short timeline for fall construction work. We anticipate that the remaining projects will now be completed in the summer of 2019 and ready for the next school year. We will continue to work with F.H. Collins Secondary School community as we complete these features noted above.

Turning to Yukon College, a total increase of \$433,000 is requested for the capital expenditures for Yukon College. The funding deferred from F.H. Collins school projects is being used to cover this capital project funding. The total increase to Yukon College's capital expenditures will go toward the completion of the college's electrical distribution upgrade. This funding was previously in the 2017-18 budget, but the project did face some delays. The project reached substantial completion in October 2018, and this funding will cover the costs that were incurred to complete this project.

This project provides essential infrastructure to the power supply needed to allow for expanding the facilities on the Whitehorse campus as well as nearby facilities such as Yukon College plans, in its future, as Yukon university as well as the Yukon Arts Centre, Yukon Archives and the existing buildings on that site. This important work was partly funded through the Government of Canada's post-secondary institution strategic investment fund.

Mr. Chair, the changes presented in this supplementary budget demonstrate our continued commitment to supporting Yukon citizens and communities through access to education using a consistent and prudent approach to funding. We will continue to work with our partners and all communities to enable learners to lead healthy, productive and happy lives and contribute to a thriving Yukon economy.

This concludes my remarks this afternoon, and I look forward to any questions that pertain to the supplementary budget for the Department of Education. I appreciate the opportunity to review what is presented here.

Mr. Kent: I too would like to welcome Ms. Morgan and Ms. McBride-Dickson to the Legislature here today to provide support to the minister. With Ms. Morgan, that now brings the number to three of former F.H. Collins class of 1986 graduates who are here today joining me and the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. It was a fun year, and it was a good year for the graduating class from F.H. Collins.

I just have a few questions, and some of them may mirror what I asked officials. We do thank the officials for the briefing on the mains. Some of the stuff had some overlap from the 2018-19 fiscal year, so I just wanted to get some clarification from the minister here. As I said, I just have a handful of questions.

The first one is with respect to the \$1.075 million, or close to \$1.1 million, that the minister identified for the site works at F.H. Collins. That's the exact — or close to the same — number reflected in the budget highlights here for Education — \$1.1 million. I just wanted to clarify that it is the same — that there's not an additional \$1.1 million for F.H. Collins site works and that this is just essentially a lapse or a revote from last fiscal year into this fiscal year.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Yes, the member opposite is correct. That's the same figure for the purposes of completing that work at F.H. Collins.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that. Again, as we move into a multi-year project, there's \$19 million identified for the French first language secondary school this year. There was \$3 million in the 2018-19 budget that looks to have been fully expended.

Can the minister provide us here today, or by way of letter or legislative return, a breakdown of what that \$3 million was spent on?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: While I always want to answer the questions as well as possible on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, I also want to make sure that the detail requested by the member opposite is provided.

While this matter appears in the Education budget, the work is done primarily through Highways and Public Works, as the member opposite knows, so I want to make sure that we have accurate information. We will provide that in a legislative return or a letter.

I can indicate that primarily there has been work beginning on the project that involves the entire site, and there has been much design work as well. We want to make sure that we have that accurate, and I will provide that information with a breakdown.

Mr. Kent: A question that I raised earlier today in Question Period with respect to kindergarten registration, particularly French immersion — sometimes during Question Period, it is hard to get the full amount of information in the questions. So I want to confirm with the minister — with respect to French immersion — I know that in early February, kindergarten registration closed on the website, so has there been a lottery or is there one scheduled for students? I know the selection criteria of siblings first and that type of thing — but is there going to be lottery, for French immersion this year in Whitehorse-area schools?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate that this is not necessarily related to the supplementary budget, but I also have the information that is requested. It is not of concern for me to provide it today, as we are speaking about the Department of Education.

I can indicate that there are three kindergarten classes that are arranged or planned for Whitehorse Elementary for the fall of 2019. There are two kindergarten classes planned for Selkirk Elementary — these are all French immersion, of course. Last year, Selkirk Elementary had a single French immersion class. It will have two this year. Kindergarten pre-registration — for all kindergarten, including French immersion — opened at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, February 11,

2019. Parents in Whitehorse pre-registered either through that process online or by contacting the Department of Education.

The department will continue to monitor the number of students pre-registered for French immersion kindergarten, and we will do anything we can to accommodate those children. Students who could not be enrolled in French immersion kindergarten right away this year were placed in a lottery. That did take place. From that, the classes were filled and the wait-list of 11 families was made. We continue to work with those 11 families to enrol them in French immersion if spots become available between now and the beginning of the school year. I can also indicate that historically there has been space in grade 1 French immersion where students might enter French immersion for the first time as well as in grade 6, what is often known as late French immersion. Those families can do that.

The lottery took place, I believe, on February 18. Based on the increased demand for French immersion this year, a lottery was held with the assistance of Canadian Parents for French. That occurred on Monday, February 18, 2019, and the wait-list of 11 students was created as a result of that lottery.

As I said, the department continues to work with families. Often, there is movement between now and the beginning of the school year — either families choose not to take a spot in French immersion or some families move. There are a variety of reasons why those students may be accommodated between now and the beginning of the school year, and that has historically been the case.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for clarifying that. My understanding is there are 11 families who weren't able to get into French immersion.

The minister talked in the fall and again today about a national French immersion teacher shortage. I know the federal government has put some money into that, but my understanding is that we are okay in the Yukon as far as recruitment and retention of French immersion teachers. Can the minister just confirm that for us here this afternoon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I didn't exactly hear the question. I think there was some movement here. I'm sorry, I didn't hear the basis for the first part of that question.

Mr. Kent: The minister has mentioned on a couple of occasions in the Legislature about a national shortage of French immersion teachers. I did a little bit of research into that. Obviously, the federal government, I think, has supplied some funds to support training of French immersion teachers, but my understanding is that the problem is more prolific in southern jurisdictions, that here in the Yukon we're actually all right as far as recruitment and retention of qualified French immersion teachers. I just wanted the minister to confirm that for us here today.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Generally, I will agree with the member opposite in that the Yukon has many qualified teachers for French immersion and we, of course, continue to be a jurisdiction that is of interest to teachers who are starting their career or wanting to change locations. The Yukon provides an amazing lifestyle, so we have success in recruiting teachers and other professionals from outside, and we

certainly support French immersion and the concepts of French immersion in our education system. I will say "but" at the end of that. It is something that we're working diligently on to make sure that the shortage doesn't necessarily affect us. There have been some changes as a result of recruiting qualified French immersion teachers.

The department organized a working group with interested community members to develop French language proficiency procedures for French immersion teachers, which are currently in effect. The working group looked at what other jurisdictions are doing in this area as well as Yukon's own French Language Services Directorate and their practices for French language assessments of other Government of Yukon staff. These procedures ensure that French second language teachers speak French fluently and can provide a high quality French second language education program to Yukon students. Each year, we review and refine the procedures as needed with education partners, including school councils and the YTA.

In response to the question, however, I would like to add that the desired French — we did have meetings last year with the school council at Whitehorse Elementary, for instance, and they were having some difficulty with recruitment. The deputy, other department officials and I met with them and worked hard with them to make sure that we could help them and get the teachers that they desired for their French programming there.

The desired French language proficiency level, Mr. Chair, for French immersion teachers is generally considered to be what is called C1; that's a level grade. Starting in the 2019-20 school year, a B2 level, which is below a C1 level, will be accepted in accordance with the updated French language proficiency procedures for French immersion teachers. So that work needed to be done with school communities to make sure that those French language proficiency procedures were acceptable to everyone. I can indicate that the B2 level is in line with other Canadian jurisdictions — they had to adjust their proficiency procedures for French immersion teachers, because there are teachers who can speak at a B2 level but may not pass the qualifications for the C1 level, and that was having an effect on schools across Canada and here in the territory.

Mr. Kent: Can the minister confirm for us — and I know the maximum size of a kindergarten class is different from the maximum size of grade 1 and moving forward. Kindergarten, I believe, is 18 max; and grade 1 is 22 — is that the correct number?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Yes.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much. Just before we leave that topic, the federal funding that was identified — and I don't have the note in front of me — did the Yukon receive any of that federal funding as far as recruitment retention, or what exactly was that federal funding earmarked for with respect to addressing the national shortages of French immersion teachers?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As always, following the money can be a confusing question.

The response that I can provide today, in consultation with the officials here and with the Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate, is that a significant amount of funding went to the French Language Services Directorate for the provision of French language services across the government, but as of yet — I want to make sure I have this correct — none of the funding has flowed through to the teachers who we have been discussing here in French immersion as of yet, because the agreement between the territorial government and the federal government is still being negotiated with respect to some of those funds.

Mr. Kent: That brings to a conclusion the questions I have with respect to the supplementary. I will follow up with the minister during the mains on the Native Language Centre and the fact that there was zero — I guess it is just a process of following that money. I know it is \$686,000 for this year, and then there is a transfer to CYFN to operate, but I am just trying to figure out last year's expenditures because I think the transfer was made prior to last fiscal year.

I will have some questions for the minister in the mains about some specific capital projects as well which I have raised previously — the PA system at the Elijah Smith Elementary School as well as the non-PA system at the Teslin School. I know it has a new name, and I will work on figuring out how to pronounce that.

That brings to a conclusion the questions I had. Again, thank you to the officials for attending today and for providing us with the briefing last week.

Ms. White: Of course, I welcome the newest deputy minister to the Chamber and of course the official from Finance.

I just have one comment today before we move on. I am looking forward to a greater debate. By that, I mean a debate about more subjects during the actual mains, but I just really want to congratulate the minister and her department on the negotiation with the YTA and for what to me is pretty much a groundbreaking settlement with the teachers association and what it means for education in the territory, what it means — when educators have an opportunity to be in different places, there is a reason for them to choose us. We all know the reasons, but there is just one more with that settlement, so a big congratulations to that.

I am especially excited to see that substitute teachers will be included in that process now. I just wanted to offer my congratulations, and I look forward to having a larger debate on the mains.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I will just take this moment to acknowledge the comments by the member opposite. It is always important to work with our partners to make sure that the children and our students — young and old — are the beneficiaries of the Yukon education system. I agree and have the opportunity now to thank the officials who worked so very hard on the negotiations — the people on the YTA team, the people on the Department of Education team and the people on the Public Service Commission team who worked diligently to come to this conclusion. I think, as the member opposite said, it will make positive change for our students

here in the territory. I appreciate the comments and the opportunity to acknowledge them.

Mr. Hutton: Is there any further general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education?

Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line debate.

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried

Chair: Ms. White has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$500,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures underexpenditure in the amount of \$642,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures underexpenditure in the amount of \$142,000 agreed to

Department of Education agreed to

Chair: We will proceed to Vote 10, Public Service Commission.

Do members wish to take a 10-minute recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 10 minutes.

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission, in Bill No. 208, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2018-19*.

Public Service Commission

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I would like to take the opportunity this afternoon to welcome the officials Pam Muir, our deputy minister, and Kim Brant to the Legislature this afternoon. I've been told that this is Kim's second appearance here, and I believe it's Pam's first in this capacity, is it not? I think it is. We're here this afternoon, Mr. Chair, to speak about the Public Service Commission's budget for the 2019-20 supplementary budget for the 2019-20 fiscal year. I know you're all waiting with bated breath for this discussion this afternoon, and that is as it should be, because today we have saved the best for last.

The Public Service Commission is a central agency department of the Yukon government and is responsible for a range of human resource-related programs and services, which is to say that it's all true, but it doesn't do the relatively small crew at the Public Service Commission justice. The Public Service Commission are the pay and benefits folks. They are planners and communicators, managers and troubleshooters. They make sure that the money for your food, rent, transport, communication and other needs and wants are deposited to civil servants' bank accounts on time, and they make sure they are credited for the time worked and the time off. They ensure the workplace is respectful and that the civil service is well-trained.

They navigate the hardest human interactions you can have in the workplace. If you are injured, they work to find you a way to get back to work. If you have an addiction, that you get the proper help you need. They deal with mental health in the workplace. They make sure you are properly looked after when someone you love dies or falls ill and they recognize long-serving employees every year.

They provide advice on pensions and benefits, they recruit for new positions across the country and they have probably the busiest web portal in the Yukon — the job site.

They ensure the civil service represents our society and vice versa. They lead negotiations with the territory's labour unions and ensure settlements are fair to employees and the employer alike — balanced, fair and just, Mr. Chair.

They do this and more, and they do it well. Yukon is one of the nation's top 100 employers, and that doesn't happen by accident. The Public Service Commission's work is critical to that success. Of course, not to be crass, but money is critical to the department's work. That is what we are here to talk about this afternoon. There are two central tenets of this year's supplementary budget for the commission, and they are both strategic and broad government-wide services. I want to say that there are two themes to the PSC's budget: strategic and government-wide — because the majority of PSC's requests relate to programs and services delivered on behalf of all Yukon government.

I am going to end it there, Mr. Chair. I am going to let the opposition have their questions this afternoon, and I look forward to the discussion.

Mr. Hassard: I too would like to thank the officials for being here today.

I don't have a lot of questions here. There is not a whole lot in the supplementary budget. A couple of things — I'm wondering if the minister could provide a breakdown of the \$210,000 allocated under Finance and Administration. My understanding is that this is for staffing and operational equipment, so I was hoping to clarify the details around those costs.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: There is a \$210,000 one-time payment for operation and maintenance. That is for short-term staffing pressures — about \$90,000 of that figure. Computer workstation replacement pressures, including participation in ICT's bulk buy purchase, was \$120,000.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate that. Could the minister also provide a breakdown of the \$380,000 allocated to labour relations?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So of the \$380,000 the member opposite was talking about this afternoon, \$220,000 is due to personnel costs and operation support relating to the negotiations going forward.

There is also \$80,000 each for the Yukon Employees Union and Public Service Alliance of Canada for adjudication costs, grievances and appeals provided for under the Yukon *Public Service Labour Relations Act*. The same holds true for the Yukon Teachers' Association — \$80,000 operations and support costs for grievances and appeals provided for under the *Education Labour Relations Act*. That is a total of \$160,000 for those — both unions and administration relating to the negotiation.

Mr. Hassard: A decrease of \$874,000 for Employee Future Benefits — I am wondering if the minister could provide us with some insight on that too.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: There was a joint management committee that met and made recommendations to us about how to save some money, so that comes out of that joint management committee meeting, which has representatives of management and the union itself. They asked for ongoing cost-savings for retirement benefits, and so we implemented that. That saves \$774,000. There is also a \$100,000 reduction in the estimated cost of pension buyback expenses based on recent years' experience. Those are actuarial calculations, and they are done with full accounting principles brought to bear on potential savings going forward, through an actuary.

Mr. Hassard: The only other question I would have for the minister is the \$70,000 that was allocated to the Respectful Workplace office — if the minister could provide us with any details on that money as well.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: After the Respectful Workplace office had been in operation for five years, there was an evaluation at the end of that five-year period — \$70,000 represents the cost of the analysis on the Respectful Workplace office.

Ms. Hanson: I just wanted to clarify with the minister — it is going to sound petty, but it is absolutely not intended to be. In welcoming the Public Service Commissioner and the other official here, it is my understanding — and I ask the minister to confirm that he shares the same understanding — that the Public Service Commissioner is not a deputy minister. Under the *Public Service Act*, the Public Service Commissioner is appointed for a period not exceeding 10 years and cannot be removed without cause. When that happens, there has to be an inquiry called, with the Chief Justice conducting that inquiry and then a tabling of a report to explain why.

So it's not a deputy minister. In fact, when we look at the objects of the *Public Service Act*, the Public Service Commissioner is charged with not being really a peer among deputies, but setting the tone for the whole of the public service. It's an incredibly important function as a central agency.

I will continue to reiterate this because it goes back to the questions I've asked the minister in the past with respect to the important role that the Public Service Commission does play. We saw that played out, for example, with PIDWA last year with a lack of clarity that was apparent for a very long time perhaps within the minister's own advisors and some of the other ministers with respect to what should be communicated to staff and how.

I was pleased to see last when the Public Service Commissioner — the ramping up of the initiatives around getting the correct information and setting out the expectations for deputies. Again, the Public Service Commissioner's role is setting expectations around ensuring that all public servants have access to the correct procedures to be followed with respect to the disclosure of wrongdoing in the workplace. I just wanted to make that point.

I want to come back to — the minister did speak to the specific issue of the \$210,000 with respect to short-term staffing, and that's in context of an organizational design review. I wanted to ask the minister if that organizational design review is now complete. The second part of that is that we noted that when the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel did its report, both the first phase and second phase, there were numerous references throughout that report to opportunities for the functions of human resources that are scattered throughout government departments to have some consolidation or perhaps a rationalization of some of those functions. So I asked the question regarding what aspects of what the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel noted in their report were incorporated into this organizational review, because as we're going through the budget reviews with departments and as we ask questions behind the cloak, we are being told that in fact there are partial FTEs or full FTEs being rolled into some initiative that the Public Service Commission is completing or doing.

What I would like to be able to hear from the minister from the perspective of the Public Service Commission is: What is that initiative? What is that review? Are there terms of reference and when will it be completed?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: First, I would really like to thank the Leader of the Third Party for that correction about the Public Service Commissioner. She is absolutely right. We have spoken about this before, and she caught me sloppy-talking. It is, of course, a Public Service Commissioner — not a deputy. It is a different role. She is absolutely correct, and I thank her for that correction. I apologize to my Public Service Commissioner for the slight — if it is a slight — for the incorrect information.

The second part of the question had to do with \$200,000 in the supplementary budget, and there was an awful lot to unpack in the question. There were separate things, so let me deal with them in order.

First of all, the supplementary budget item of \$200,000 is largely for a human resource business partners pilot. It is a sharing of human resource functions among four small departments. What we were finding is that in the smaller departments, when someone would go away on vacation or

whatever, there would be nobody to fill in behind, so we pulled them together within the Public Service Commission. That is what the \$200,000 supplementary is for — so that we can actually pilot a project where the four smaller departments actually share resources so that when people go away on vacation or they are away from their desks, they have some coverage for those smaller departments for HR functions.

Second, the organizational review — it's not yet completed. It is coming, and we will talk about that when it is, but that is in process and has not yet been completed.

The third thing is the HR shared services. This is where we have pulled a lot of HR functions from the departments into the Public Service Commission for transactional work, and that will be covered — not in the supplementary budget but in the mains. I'm sure we can have a more fulsome discussion about it there.

Ms. Hanson: Just to clarify, I had also asked him what aspects — one of them was the shared services. Were there other aspects of what the Financial Advisory Panel had referred to throughout the report with respect to opportunities for the Public Service Commission and human resources activities that are part of this review and part of either the business partners pilot or what sounds like a broader organizational review?

I had asked what other aspects were outlined in the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel's review wherein they made a number of references. We heard the reference to the HR shared services, but there were other aspects. I just wanted to know what, if any — maybe they were eventually deemed not relevant because there's a lot of sifting that needs to get done. Obviously, the government and the commission made the decision that having HR shared services was a priority. Are there others that were identified that would be less of a priority for the immediate action that was taken right now and are planned as part of this organizational review? I'm not sure how it is being rolled out or if it is. Maybe there is nothing else in the Financial Advisory Panel review that touches on the Public Service Commission that would be of sufficient importance.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The options presented in the Financial Advisory Panel report are wide-ranging. We are considering many options and suggestions and are taking action on a number of fronts. We have the new HR service centre division within PSC. It has been established. It's starting on April 1 and will offer centralized shared services for the delivery of high volume and administrative human resource services across YG. We're doing that to free up the departmental HR staff to deal with issues departmentally — the deeper HR departmental issues — and to take some of the administrative stuff into the department, clearing the departments to do more deeper and more strategic HR there.

We have an HR business partner branch that's being piloted with four departments. They are the Executive Council Office, Yukon Liquor Corporation, Lotteries Yukon and finance within the Public Service Commission. This branch will provide strategic human resource services for these

departments from one location, and it's continuing right through.

A number of YG departments, including the Public Service Commission, are undertaking a review of their organizational programs, services and/or structures toward ensuring that they and their staff are meeting the needs of their clients efficiently and effectively. There's also an ongoing effort to deliver high quality training to upgrade the skills of public servants across the organization.

That is training through the Organizational Development branch. That's ongoing.

There's more. As I said, the work being done to fulfill the — they weren't formal recommendations, but to address some of the points raised by the Financial Advisory Panel are underway, and I'll have more to say about that as they resolve. As I said, that work is still ongoing.

We will make public what we have decided to do and how we have done that once the review is fully complete.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister. In fact, the first two items he outlined are consistent with the internal audit bureau's review of 2013 of the Public Service Commission's staffing policies.

These are recurring themes. They didn't just happen because YFAP or somebody said, "You need to do this." It has been identified within the public service — within the audit bureau — going back six years now, so that is good to see.

I have just one other question, and I appreciate that there will be an opportunity — I'm looking forward to it — to delve into the Public Service Commission in depth when we get to the mains. My curiosity was twiggled by the — it is not an increase, but it is the decrease with respect to the capital vote. There is a note here that it is partly offset by a decrease in Health, Safety and Disability Management's corporate accommodation equipment project — a decrease of \$15,000.

My question is: Is this corporate accommodation equipment — is this project funding, or is this an ongoing program? I ask this because I do have a deep regard for the whole issue of duty to accommodate. I want to know from the minister whether this is project funding or an ongoing program.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Good news to report: It is an ongoing program. The reason why there is a decrease — a one-time decrease — to this capital project is that there wasn't a lot of uptake on the equipment, so we are just giving the money back in the supplementary, but that is a one-time decrease. The program continues.

Ms. Hanson: I had one last question. The \$210,000 was an additional amount for the organizational design review. I apologize if I missed it, but what was the total cost of the organizational design review?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: \$90,000 was the figure for the review and then \$120,000 was computer bulk-buy, and department furniture and whatnot.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on the Public Service Commission?

Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line debate.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, cleared and carried

Chair: Mr. Streicker has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, cleared or carried, as required.

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures underexpenditure in the amount of \$214,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$120,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures underexpenditure in the amount of \$94,000 agreed to

Public Service Commission agreed to

Chair: We will now continue with clause-by-clause debate on Bill No. 208, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2018-19*.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$2,808,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$20,120,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$22,928,000 agreed to

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Schedule A

Schedule A agreed to

On Schedule B

Schedule B agreed to

On Schedule C

Schedule C agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 208, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2018-19*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. McPhee that the Chair report Bill No. 208, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2018-19*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. McPhee 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

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 209, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2019-20*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 208, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2018-19*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 210: *First Appropriation Act 2019-20* — Second Reading — *adjourned debate*

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 210, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver — adjourned debate, Hon. Mr. Mostyn.

Speaker: Minister of Highways and Public Works, I am advised that you have 19 minutes and 32 seconds remaining.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: A wealth of time, Mr. Speaker — thank you very much.

This afternoon, I would like to provide a little recap for those who are just joining us for the first time. When last we met, we were talking about the real progress that our government is making on real issues that Yukoners have wanted addressed for a really long time.

Progress is real, Mr. Speaker — the territory's population is growing faster than any other in the country. Our economy is growing; the real GDP grew by 2.6 percent in 2018 and is projected to grow by 3.3 percent this year. We have the country's lowest unemployment rate.

The territory has gained a reputation as a good place to invest because of the change in approach of the Yukon government to one of inclusion and cooperation and away from secrecy, intransigence and lawsuits. As a result, the outlook for the resource development industries is positive. As a result, Mr. Speaker, the outlook for mining is positive. Exploration funding has increased to more than \$186 million.

We are seeing growth in the tourism sector. The industry grew 6.1 percent in 2018, pushing revenues to almost \$325 million. The number of overnight visitors in the territory grew 4.6 percent to 355,000 in 2018. This important private

sector industry growth will continue to be supported by this government to further growth in the coming years.

We are also putting roofs over people's heads. We are building houses. Last year, more than \$72 million in residential building permits were pulled, up more than 50 percent from the previous year. An investment in houses amounted to \$188 million, up roughly 30 percent from 2017. So we are spending prudently and strategically.

We are also working to change the spending culture in the territory. This is very important. Since 1999, the average growth in our operation and maintenance spending was a whopping 6.3 percent. That's the average over 10 years — the average.

In 2003-04 the government's operation and maintenance spending increased by 12 percent. In 2009-10, it was 11 percent. In 2013-14, it hit a high of almost 14 percent. This growth in government spending is not sustainable. It was not sustainable then; it is not sustainable today. So we have worked very hard to curb spending while protecting the public services that Yukoners have grown accustomed to.

Mr. Speaker, too often we mistakenly believe budgets are about money and about figures on a page. They aren't. They are about people; they are about priorities; they are about our future as a society.

Today, because of the real progress that our government is making on real issues that people know are important, the future is looking brighter, warmer and more efficient. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because this government is working hard to make buildings in the territory more energy efficient. This year, we will spend up to \$14.2 million to fund retrofits to Yukon buildings.

Our budget is also about modernization, cutting red tape and improving e-services. This work is important because Yukon government is an institution in serious need of modernization.

Take redundancy. We are making real progress on building a trans-northern fibre optic line from Dawson City to Inuvik. This is important because, when a line is severed, we can lose 911 service, our businesses lose business and we lose an important connection to our loved ones in the south. These days, this is unacceptable.

Businesses said that a redundant fibre line is critical to building our information technology sector in the Yukon. My colleague the Minister of Economic Development and I have worked with Ottawa and Northwestel, and we're proceeding with redundant fibre starting almost immediately. Yukoners have been waiting a long time for this fibre redundancy. Former governments have talked a lot about this project, but the work wasn't done. There was no follow-through. We did the work. We followed through. We delivered on our promise, and we are delivering redundant fibre. We secured a funding agreement with the Government of Canada for nearly \$60 million. We negotiated an agreement with Northwestel to operate and maintain the line at no cost to government, and we are seeing the project to completion. That's real change that will make a real difference for the territory. It is something that Yukoners wanted really badly.

Yukon citizens deserve that. Yukon citizens deserve a modern data-driven government that delivers convenient online services, so we're making it easier for the public and businesses to access government services by making more services available online. This year across government, we will spend more than \$12 million on information technology projects, including more than \$3 million on a health information system that will allow Yukoners to manage their own health information.

We are launching the open-data repository — a portal we promised in our election platform. We are improving the contract registry, making e-procurement a reality. We are improving Yukon 511 road condition reports. We are launching personal property lien searches online. We are also putting business entity searches and a camping permit application online service live as well. These are tangible improvements to make lives easier — to make Yukoners' lives easier.

We are also improving our roads, bridges and waterways. This isn't easy. The Yukon maintains 4,800 kilometres of road, including 337 kilometres of asphalt pavement, 2,000 of bituminous surface treatment and 2,400 kilometres of gravel road. We also have seven kilometres of bridge and ferry crossings. We do this all on a Highways and Public Works capital budget that is really quite meagre — about \$63 million.

To put that into perspective, the MacMillan bypass in Victoria, British Columbia, is budgeted for more than \$80 million. One bypass surpasses the entire capital budget of the territory, which stretches across 4,800 kilometres of rugged terrain.

With that in mind, we are beginning significant improvements to the Alaska Highway in Whitehorse, starting with the region sandwiched between Valleyview and Range Road and then stretching into the highway abutting Hillcrest. This is a project that, this year, will cost about \$4 million. We are also going to finish the Nares River bridge project, which will greatly improve the Yukon's capacity to handle large loads up the south Klondike Highway. That project will cost the government \$7.2 million this year.

We are continuing the necessary engineering work planning for the paving of the Robert Campbell Highway between Faro and Ross River. With the possibility of industrial traffic from the Kudz Ze Kayah mine, we are planning for improvements to the BMC access road.

We are also looking to do more brush clearing in the territory, and I will have more to say about that really interesting project in the coming weeks. It is terrific.

This brings us to the interesting world of airports. We are paving the Dawson City runway, as you all heard in my recent ministerial statement. That work is expected to cost about \$12 million this year. We are also spending more than \$300,000 on the Mayo aerodrome O&M and about \$5 million in improving that aerodrome, and we are spending \$9.5 million on the Whitehorse airport, including security upgrades, maintenance facility upgrades and runway and taxiway improvements.

I want to talk for a moment about Old Fireball. The tale is important because it highlights the importance of investments we are making in our facilities, even the smaller ones. Old Fireball is no more. About two months ago, the dilapidated, 40-year-old runway sweeper broke down for the very last time. It earned its name for the spray of sparks that flew behind it as it cleared snow from the runway at Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport.

According to maintenance staff, repairs to the aged machine were almost a weekly necessity. The equipment was crucial to the safe operation of the airport. The work keeping it going was difficult and stressful. Parts were often unavailable and had to be fashioned from scratch by machinists. Those responsible for clearing the airport for incoming aircraft in the dead of winter knew how important that job was. They also knew those planes' arrivals in Whitehorse was dependent on a beater held together with faith and binder twine. Staff were always nervous the old-timer would conk out at an inopportune time, so they worked hard to nourish Old Fireball along. In the face of snow, they prayed it would work and fixed it as best they could when it didn't, which was often.

This month, a lot of that fuss, bother and angst vanished from that crew's job. Brand new runway maintenance equipment arrived at the airport a couple of weeks ago. Cradle broom sweepers and other modern maintenance vehicles have arrived in the Yukon as part of the Yukon government's investment in our airport. The new cradle broom sweeper is 17 metres long, compared to Old Fireball's 4.5-metre sweeper.

Airport maintenance crews are now capable of clearing the international airport's tarmac three times in the time it took Old Fireball to do one pass. All the new equipment's instrumentation is identical, which also simplifies training. New staff can drive every piece of equipment after a week of training compared to the other machines, which were all different and required unique lessons.

When this government discusses efficiencies — clearing the runway in one-third of the time, simplifying and standardizing staff training and removing the need for weekly repairs of dilapidated, untrustworthy equipment, giving staff the proper tools — what I'm talking about is giving staff the proper tools they need to do their job. That is what we're referring to. I was up at the airport recently, and the crews were proud that they managed to make it through with this old equipment, never having closed the airport. But they said it was close and they were nervous about it a lot. So I applaud the staff who has been struggling to keep the airport clean and Yukoners safe with cantankerous gear like Old Fireball.

Mr. Speaker, runway sweepers aren't flashy, but the role they play keeping the airport operational and safe is absolutely critical. Despite this obvious need, funding for replacement gear wasn't included in territorial budgets until last year. I'm happy to have had a hand in securing modern machinery for airport staff to get their vital work done faster, easier and better.

Old Fireball is one of three antique sweepers the airport once depended on, and it bit the dust when a fan that had been welded together immeasurable times broke again. It couldn't be repaired on-site and would have required being sent south to a shop for a full rebuild. It probably would have taken months, said staff.

The staff also talked about how they rotated things. They would get one working until it broke, then they would bring the second one in, hoping to work on the third while the second one was out doing a thing; then that would break and they would bring the first one back again — keeping these things rotating just to get the job done. In the nick of time, the modern cradling broom sweeper I was talking about earlier arrived at the airport the very next day after Old Fireball bit the dust. The antique Old Fireball was dragged off the runway and decommissioned. It's a museum piece, and I hope it lands where it belongs — where it belonged a very long time ago.

Mr. Speaker, that investment in the airport's new equipment is something tangible that I'm proud to have had a small hand in bringing about. It is victories like this that we as a society should celebrate — progress and improvements that quietly make lives better, safer and more efficient.

Too often, we mistakenly believe budgets are about money, figures on a page. They're not. They're about people, they're about priorities, they're about our future as a society and they're about real progress on real issues that Yukoners believe are really important.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the constituents of Whitehorse West for their generous sharing of their time and their thoughtful ideas, which always reminds me of the budget and how the budget is about people and priorities. It is my honour to represent their views here in this Legislative Assembly.

I also want to thank the Department of Highways and Public Works for the tremendous work its staff does on a daily basis. Also, a big thanks to my colleagues for their attention here this afternoon. That concludes my thoughts on this 2019 budget.

Ms. White: I thank my colleagues for the opportunity today to talk about the 2019-20 budget. I couldn't agree with the Minister of Highways and Public Works more, because budgets are about people, they're about priorities and they are about the future. With that in mind, I have questions.

There's a line in the budget speech that says that people are staying in our territory or returning home after their studies because of our strong economy and progressive lifestyle. I couldn't agree more, but then the question of affordability comes to mind. We know that, right now — according to the Bureau of Statistics — the average house price is \$506,000, which for anyone trying to figure out what their mortgage payment would be, it would be a fairly substantial amount.

We have people who are coming home, who are choosing to be here and who live here, who even work within Yukon government right now, who are unable to afford the housing prices. For the last number of weeks, we thought it was 30 percent of the population who was only earning \$30,000 in the

territory, but we stand corrected — it's 33.5 percent, so it's even higher. It's worse than we thought.

The reason I bring that up is that when we talk about housing affordability — we had our yearly tribute today to Nutrition Month, and there were really good numbers brought forward by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun that talked about 160,000 meals or snacks served in the school year. What that highlights is a need. For a full year, I volunteered at Elijah Smith school in their breakfast program. What I learned was that the kids who attended the breakfast program — there were very few who had just forgotten to eat breakfast — it was those who actually needed it. So if you think about that 160,000, you think of 160,000 individual servings and what that means. That gives pause.

The government has talked about the lowest unemployment rate to date. I don't think that's a bad thing, but then again, 33.5 percent of Yukoners earn less than \$30,000 a year. Then we also know that if we were looking at 30 percent of our earnings, according to the CMHC affordable housing, it would mean you would have to be able to find a place for under \$750 a month. I would say that the way a lot of people are tackling that right now is co-housing. So you have multiple people who live in a house, and they will pool their resources to be able to be there. That's something to think about.

We didn't hear anything about the Vimy Heritage Housing Society, which is interesting because it has been referenced the last number of years. Their AGM is on March 20, and I look forward to hearing about what their next steps are, but you know it is an organization that was trying to tackle the housing issue in a creative way, understanding there's the need for support and there's the need for accessibility, and for some people, they won't need any of those things.

I look forward to hearing what's going to happen at that March 20 meeting.

Something that also recently happened was the midwifery AGM. It's really interesting, because the Minister of Health and Social Services talked about the importance of building trust. She talked about how important it was to build trust — so trust between doctors and midwives, and midwives and folks who would access those services — about building trust. But then when we look at this budget, there's no money for midwives in this budget. So it means that we're going to develop the regulations and then move forward with that, but we don't have midwives on staff right now. So how can we build that trust if they're not there to access?

That was brought forward to me by the midwives. They said, "How can we build trust if we're not able to be within that system right now? We can't access this system. We can't access doctors. We can't go and have these conversations. The way for us to have these conversations would be to be brought into the department. If we were made staff, then we could have those conversations."

You know, we talk about priorities and we talk about the future, but we haven't heard hide nor hair of the electoral reform commission. If electoral reform was a priority — and

there has been talk about this commission — there is no money that I can find in this budget for this commission. So when does that start? When does that happen?

We've heard a lot recently about the NGO review — the non-governmental organization review — which is fascinating, because when I have conversations with NGOs and I ask what is going on with the review, they pretty much say, "Well, we don't know. We don't know what's happening."

So we've asked about the methodology. We've asked about how we're reviewing these NGOs — because it's going to be important that there be an ability to rate all NGOs, especially the health NGOs, to the same standards so that we can compare them. Are they doing what they need to within the department? But we have asked for that reference. We have asked for that methodology. We've asked for those questions. So far, we haven't gotten them. But we have had conversations, so we know that some are getting three-year funding and some are getting one-year funding. We know that the cost-of-living increase is attached to the first year but not to future years. We know, in some cases, despite negotiations that have happened previously, the numbers have been lowered.

I was happy to hear the Minister of Highways and Public Works talk about the Faro to Ross River highway and then maybe a little bit disappointed to hear the second reference about mining access. I say this only in terms of — I talked about the first time in recent years that I had driven to Ross River, actually to ride bikes with kids. I was shocked by the state of the road after the Faro turnoff — absolutely appalled. To be fair, I talked about it previously. So it's not just in the 34th that the concern was raised. It was also raised in the 33rd multiple times. The community of Ross River deserves the ability to drive between their community and Faro without having to worry about damaging their vehicles. That's something that should happen. You should be able to safely do it. There was a good reminder last summer — there was a vehicle upside-down off the side of the road, and it stayed there for a good portion of the summer — a good reminder to drive to the speed of the road. It seems like a pretty steep reminder, though, as opposed to fixing the road, so I'm happy to see that in.

You know, there are things within the Department of Health and Social Services that I think, when we talk about how budgets are about people and we talk about how priorities in the future — there's so many things we could talk about. So the health and social services review — this review is just like a game of snakes and ladders, where you think you get the answer and then you fall back down, and then you climb back forward, and you go right, you go left, and you're still not quite sure what the final outcome is going to be.

We asked questions last year again about what was going to be involved, what the terms of reference were, what was the methodology and how was this going to work. We asked questions about the roles of the tiger team, the roles of the different departments and how it was going to work. To the

best that we can figure out right now, there hasn't been a lot of movement on the Health and Social Services review.

There was an article after the hunger report came out this year, and the executive director of the Whitehorse Food Bank was doing media interviews. One of the things he talked about was he said that there was an anomaly when the food bank numbers went down, and he said that unfortunately they're on their way back up. He said the one thing he can say now is there is more access happening with people who are working. He said at what point in time — and he didn't know because he wasn't an expert and he wasn't an economist — but when were we going to review social assistance rates? That's a question we've asked. How can we be sure that the system works? We know often, it doesn't.

I have a friend with a disability, so she collects social assistance and she works. Anytime she goes close to this number, there is a clawback that happens, but that affects the future. There is no planning for that, and she's lucky because she has her family to fall back on. I can also tell you that she is a happier human when she has work to look forward to. That is of critical importance to her. We have questions about what the review will look like for social assistance.

Social services — how is that going to work? Are we going to move toward the discussion of having a basic income? Are we going to talk about doing away with the system as it exists right now? That was a recommendation actually in the hunger report. It was one of the three recommendations that they made, that the country look toward a — I believe the term is a "basic living allowance". That's important.

There was a loss last fall of this bright young woman who was involved with the type 1 diabetes group. I hadn't realized that she was in their commercial until I was at the movie theatre a couple of weeks ago and I was watching the commercial about type 1 diabetes in the territory, and that young woman is in that commercial. She passed away because of complications related to her diabetes.

I think, well, if we're talking about people, we're talking about priorities and we're talking about the future, then why aren't we talking about funding constant glucose monitoring systems for people who aren't young? Why aren't we looking at the best way to deal with type 1 diabetes — or even type 2 diabetes — but let's talk about type 1 for now. Why aren't we looking at the full cost and effect of what happens when a person is going through the ups and downs of diabetes? Why aren't we addressing that?

Why haven't we had the conversation about PrEP, which is pre-exposure prophylaxis? It's a combination of drugs that are used as a prevention for HIV. I've just been doing some research about what they're doing in British Columbia. It seems to me, you go back to that ounce of prevention, the cost of the cure — however the expression goes.

If you want to talk about trying to help and support the health care system, why aren't we looking at prevention? Why are we only looking at the end game — so when we have to pay for that? Having a limb amputated because of diabetes is a

huge cost, and depending on the age of the person it happens to, whether or not you can recover is something else.

We talk about the importance of health care, and we talk about the importance of home care, so I was happy to hear in the briefing that we're talking about seven days a week now and about expanded hours. I think that's fantastic. The last thing a person wants to do is be in the hospital when they don't need to be.

Those are important things.

I would like to congratulate the Department of Health and Social Services for addressing the issue of cataracts and cataract surgery. There was a great article in the newspaper where the deputy minister of Health and Social Services said it was unacceptable to have such high numbers, and we couldn't agree more. That was positive. I was happy to see that.

One point that I wanted to make and had in my notes when we initially started this is that I was really happy to see the change of tone that was happening from the government side. Instead of talking about past things, it was talking about the future and about the things that we are doing and the things that we hope to do. I was happy to see the change of tone because that changes everything.

I was also happy to see in the media that the Department of Environment is creating species-at-risk legislation. It was news to me. I have asked questions, including who has been consulted and the timelines of that, so I look forward to that.

It's interesting to know that we're looking at doing different things with waste management, so going from the NGO and not-for-profit model and moving toward a business model. It will be interesting to see if that's more effective. It will be interesting to see if it's not just more cost-effective, but whether or not it's a better model for the territory — just to see what happens. I was lucky to go with the Member for Lake Laberge and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources on our agricultural tour, and I talked a bit about it last fall. I'm looking forward to seeing some of the changes that we discussed, because it doesn't make sense that farm buildings are judged to a stricter code than they need to be for what they are. I'm looking forward to seeing those.

Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree more with the Minister of Highways and Public Works when he says that budgets are about people, they're about priorities and they're about the future. We had the Premier give his Budget Address, and then we have had a lot of ministers and the Official Opposition respond, but I have concerns. I want to know why we're not having the conversation with diabetics about CGMs if that's what's best for them. I want to know why we're not talking about PrEP; I want to know why we're not having some of those hard conversations.

I read an article the other day that I think is really important. It talks about the overall, and it was about economic dignity. The reason I think "economic dignity" is a term that I would like to start to use and understand better is because it talked about the requirements for a human to be able to have that dignity, to know that the work they do is enough to be able to allow them to live a full and rich life. It

even talked about what that full and rich life would look like, but it talked about participation in society, it talked about the ability to support and be involved with your family, and it talked about some other things.

Although the government has talked about the record low unemployment numbers and other things, we know that minimum wage isn't just for young people or people with disabilities; we know that. As a matter of fact, I was at the Woodcutter's Blanket, and the bar staff invited the minister to come down and talk about minimum wage, because they are paid minimum wage.

There is an importance of talking about affordability, economic dignity and the ability of choice. It's great that the economy in the Yukon is doing so well, but it's leaving people behind. For a year before the minister called on a review of minimum wage, the reason I was asking for it is because the gap between the low-income earners and the high-income earners just continues to get bigger. Asking for that review — at the beginning, I was very careful to make sure that I didn't colour it the way I thought it should go.

I did get to do a presentation to the Employment Standards Board. I have to say that when I read the report, I was absolutely fascinated that it had a lot of my examples, including some of the newspaper articles that I had linked. Part of that was that it was important to talk about all of the fear that was put in there beforehand. What it actually showed about increasing minimum wage is how it was a benefit for both of those economies — both Ontario and Alberta.

To know that the decision is being made right now that we're going to stop with the first increase and then look at future years — I will remain hopeful that the decision then will be to go forward, to know that you're not punishing other earners by saying that we have to keep the lowest to the low and that, by bringing everybody up, we do better.

Mr. Speaker, I agree that budgets are about people, and so there are things within this budget that I didn't see and that I would like to see. I look forward to having those conversations, especially with the Minister of Health and Social Services and with the Minister of Community Services. I'm sure they're super excited that I get to talk to them all the time about issues that matter to me, but I look forward to having the justification for decisions. I have said before that the government is able to make the decisions they want; they can make choices and they can decide where they're going, but I want to be able to understand how they get to that decision, and so sometimes I'm left wondering. I don't understand — if we are talking about building relationships with midwives, how we can do that without including midwives within the system right now? I don't know how that works. We can talk about the importance of electoral reform, but we haven't moved forward on the electoral reform commission. So what exactly does that mean?

I thank my colleagues for the opportunity to speak today. I want to congratulate the government on changing the tone of their responses to this budget speech; I appreciated that very much. I think that if they look back between what was said

this year and prior to that, they will understand what I mean and that I'm hopeful that the change continues.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the opportunity to speak about the 2019-20 mains budget and more particularly about the departments with which I have the honour of working and the opportunity to speak to it at this stage of this process, which is of course the second reading on the budget speech. I think this is an incredibly important opportunity for all members of the House to speak to what is important to them. I thank those who have gone before me with respect to their concerns being brought forward — in particular, the last speaker and the one before that, who spoke about the importance of budgets and the effect of them on real Yukoners' lives.

I can assure the members of this House and all Yukoners that this is foremost in our minds when the work is being done — the months and months of work that comes to bringing a budget to fruition and the importance of that when we are sitting around a table, sleeves rolled up, and saying, "What are the priorities of Yukoners, and how can we meet them in a financial way with respect to what they have expressed to us, what they have said to us during engagements, what they have done when they've taken the time to respond or reach out to any of us in this Legislative Assembly" — by that, I mean all Members of the Legislative Assembly — "to express their concerns?" — and how we are going to respond to those.

I would like to take a moment to thank the people of Riverdale South. The honour is mine to have been sent here by them to represent them, to bring forward their concerns and to help resolve issues that are of interest to them and of interest to all Yukoners. I appreciate that we all come here with our own ridings in mind. Those are the individual Yukoners who have taken the time to express their votes and to participate in our democratic process for the purposes of having a representative here in the Legislative Assembly. I also appreciate that we come here perhaps with a party stripe, but in fact representing all of the individuals in our neighbourhoods, in our ridings and in our communities — those who cast their vote for us, and maybe more importantly, those who didn't cast their vote for us — because it is the opportunity to come here and do your job on behalf of all Yukoners. That makes this such an incredible opportunity and honour.

Mr. Speaker, Riverdale South — and I have said this before — is an amazing and rather unique place to call home. It is an established yet diverse neighbourhood. The people who live here are like Yukoners from any other community here in the territory. There are lots of children. There are parents. There are single parents. There are multi-generational families.

There are small families and big families. There are elders. There are new Canadians. There are old-time Yukoners and there are newcomers to our communities.

Every one of them will be touched by something that is in this budget, and part of my job during this budgeting process

was to represent their interests — as I've said — and their concerns, and to give them a voice in determining how government needs to work for them.

I am very proud of the work that this government has done in coming to this place, perhaps somewhat naively, with an interest in doing things differently. I am also very proud of the fact that I think we are, to a great extent, achieving such change. I hear from Yukoners — I know my colleagues hear from Yukoners — that our attempts to be cooperative, to listen to all Yukoners, to address issues in a practical, expedient way but also in a careful way with respect to the financial responsibilities placed on us in making those decisions, is something that resonates with Yukoners. It is something that Yukoners appreciate and I think we will see in future — at least I am hopeful that we will see in future — all governments needing to respond in this way in order to make decisions in the best interests of the constituents that they represent without concern or thought to partisan politics, if you will.

Of course, parties have platforms. They have plans. They have promises made. They have intentions, and all governments should have those things and values with which to judge their work, to explain their work and their plans and to present it to the public to seek the mandate they need to have that done. But by the same token, they also must be open. They must be accountable. They must be interested in hearing from Yukoners, in our case, about ideas that come from every corner of the territory. Again, we've said this before — the Premier has said it; others have said it — good ideas come from all places.

I appreciate that perhaps there is some scepticism on occasion about who is getting the ear of the government, but — I come here plainly with the opportunity to speak today — I know that I have had conversations like this with my colleagues about the fact that we speak and we work for all Yukoners and that their interests must be taken into account. Good ideas are only good ideas as long as they address the real issues that are being brought on behalf of communities.

I have promised and been sent here to work hard on behalf of everyone in my riding and everyone in the Yukon, and I am very proud of that commitment. I will take the opportunity today to thank my family, for without them and their support I could not be here at all.

As my colleague the Minister of Tourism and Culture and the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate said in response to this particular budget and to this particular matter on the floor of the House — she said so eloquently, as she always does — that it's our families and our friends and our elders who help us every step of the way, despite the fact that it is our time with them that is often the first thing that is sacrificed. We ask very much from them.

Members of the Legislative Assembly who have been here longer than I have sacrificed their time and energy even longer. It is important to take the opportunity to publicly thank those members of our community and the opportunity to thank the members of our family in particular who notice when we're not there and who are the first ones who suffer the lack

of attention we can give to things that used to take time in our lives.

In addition, key players in meeting our goals are the team of amazing women and men who work extremely hard every day to keep everything moving in our offices. I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to note that I cherish the daily support from Michelle, Kathleen, Sabrina, and I cannot really thank them enough.

Lastly in the category of "thank you", I want to express my sincere gratitude to all the staff of the two departments with which I work — the Department of Education and the Department of Justice here in the territory.

The quality of their work on behalf of Yukoners is really second to none. They have always embraced the one-government approach and brought forward innovative ideas, initiated practical solutions and demonstrated a work ethic that goes above and beyond all the time. I am incredibly proud of the work that they do and of the accomplishments that their hard work has allowed us to achieve on behalf of Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, this budget illustrates fiscal responsibility; it illustrates innovation and responsibility and it shows how we are meeting our commitments to make Yukoners' lives better. We have been clear in stating our enduring priorities and our guiding principles. It brings me back to a plan, a way of expressing the work that this government is planning to do with Yukoners — on their behalf, of course, but with them.

One of the elements of that work that, again, I'm very proud of is the enduring priorities that we have listed in the beginning of our mandate so that not only would Yukoners know the plan going forward, but have a benchmark measuring stick upon which to measure the work we do for them.

Our guiding principles — as a reminder, our government is working with all Yukoners to make their lives better. We are focused on creating jobs, strengthening and diversifying the economy and protecting the environment — all elements which you will see in this budget.

We are working collaboratively — government-to-government — to ensure that all communities in the Yukon grow and thrive. Again, there are elements of this in this budget. I am going to take just a moment to talk about how important that is to me and to this team and to this government, because government-to-government relations have not always been as smooth or as strong as we would like to have seen them here in the territory. We have self-governing First Nations. We have strong municipalities. We have strong communities and community councils, First Nation governments, chiefs and councils and all of those organizations — all of those governments, if you will — represent the individuals who send them to do their jobs. They all represent people of the Yukon of different ideas, with different focuses, with different interests — and the Yukon government absolutely has the requirement to work collaboratively with those governments. Otherwise, I think generally you are just opening yourself up to criticism.

I'm sure the members opposite have no shortage of ideas of how they could or would do things better, but my goal —

my interest — is that, when we speak to — of course leadership requires decisions — it absolutely does — but in order to make those decisions, to come to the places where those decisions can be made, collaboratively working with governments across the territory, with organizations, with community organizations, with groups that have interest in those topics, whether they be — in my case Justice or Education — or in the one-government approach — any of those things — is absolutely critical, not only to achieve what Yukoners want and need, because we need to know about what that is and understand that from different perspectives, but also in order to have support for your ideas and for your decisions as they go forward. So working collaboratively, government-to-government, to ensure that all communities in the Yukon continue to grow and thrive is absolutely critical.

Just one small example of that is the reinvigoration of the Yukon Forum, for instance, where we meet up to four times a year — but four times a year has been the case in each of the years that we have been here — with leadership with respect to First Nation governments and the importance of being in that room. The respect shown by our government for First Nation governments and vice versa is incredibly important to resolving matters going forward. If you build a culture where individuals know they will be heard — of course we are not always going to agree. We're not always going to agree on what decisions should be made and how we should go forward, but building the foundation, as I call it — the cement — the foundation of a relationship is absolutely critical if we are going to go forward and have meaningful, respectful conversations and decision-making going forward that will be supported, regardless of whether or not you support the actual decision.

In my experience — I had a previous job where I dealt with complaints about government. It was an opportunity to speak to people and to help resolve issues. The truth of the matter is that they were not always resolved in favour of the individual who brought the complaint in the first place, but the critical piece was them being heard, being understood and knowing that someone had listened to them and understood their concern and attempted — or not, depending on the circumstances — to resolve it for them. Absolutely critical was the opportunity for them to participate in that process.

One of our additional guiding principles, of course, is that as we move forward, we will make responsible investments in programs and services that lead to healthy, productive and happy lives for all Yukoners. Again, evidence of that is here in this budget. I would go so far as to say that this is the purpose of all budgets — but certainly the one we are speaking about today — in order to have responsible investments, programs and services. This is critical for Yukoners. We know they have divergent interests. We have also heard much about the variety of societies, for instance, registered here in the territory.

Yukoners are energetic people. They are people with solid voices and with great ideas, and they like to organize and try to achieve their goals together with friends and neighbours. As a result of that, funds are required for that work, in some

cases, and we need to make responsible investment decisions so that services and programs — not all of which can be or should be provided by government — can move forward.

I'll turn for a few minutes to the Department of Justice and our priorities for justice initiatives, which are very important to me. I have worked on them for my entire career here in the territory — my entire life here in the Yukon Territory. It is to put forward elements through the Department of Justice programming and through the Department of Justice that truly work to try to achieve those enduring priorities — to help Yukoners lead healthy, productive and happy lives. Of course, justice initiatives aren't the things that you always think of immediately to help Yukoners have healthy, happy lives, but the truth is that we are learning so much in the world about how we can do things differently and do things better. While yes, there are responsibilities through the Department of Justice to run courts and to run a corrections system, it means to me that those systems must be run humanely, and there must be interest in making sure that, as best as possible, individuals are not harmed by that process but are in fact improved and thrive as a result of their interaction with that process. It is not always possible.

I appreciate that I could be criticized for that being somewhat Pollyanna-ish, but the truth is that I have spent many years in that process, and we all, at ground level, have experiences throughout the departments of government and throughout organizations in communities, et cetera, where we have great ideas at the ground level and say: "Hey, if I ever had a chance, if I was ever in charge and if I ever had the chance to lead change in this area to work with people who could be the decision-makers there, this is what I would do."

We are taking the opportunity both in the Department of Justice and in the Department of Education to ask the front-line workers this: "If you could do anything, what is your pie in the sky? If you could determine how this program should work or how we would interact with folks in this way — whatever that may be — give us your best ideas." Frankly, those are the people with the experience. Those are the people who probably can first tell you how and why something doesn't work, and on behalf of Yukoners, it is our responsibility to work with them.

Some of the priorities for the Department of Justice initiatives include working with the Minister of Health and Social Services, the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate and our community partners to continue our work improving policies and practices and legislation to ensure non-discrimination for the LGBTQ2S+ community. We will continue to do this work.

I think it's a significant change, frankly, in the way government has worked in the past. I have, not only on this front but on several fronts, been told by colleagues outside the territory that Yukon is a leader in this area. We need to make sure that we recognize that and we recognize that when we're here, the work of our departments and the work of our communities are advanced, and it should be heralded as such. We now have the political will here in the territory to make

sure that the matters that have come before this Legislative Assembly to change laws, to improve the situation, to recognize the rights of such individuals and members of our community is not only done to date, but will continue. It must continue as a result of the fair and just society in which Yukoners choose to live and want to live.

We will continue investments in such elements in Justice as the Community Wellness Court, which has been extremely effective. We will continue to work on our priorities and the priorities given to us by Yukoners in the department's programming. Domestic Violence Treatment Option Court — again, Yukon Territory is a leader in that area.

The land titles modernization project — sometimes Yukon plays catch-up, and in other experiences and initiatives we are in fact the leaders, and that should be recognized. I think sometimes when we are up here in the top left-hand corner of Canada, we forget how innovative Yukoners are and how amazing their ideas can be, not only in the opportunity to come up with these ideas, but to bring them to fruition and to reap the results for their communities.

Speaker: Order, please.

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

Debate on second reading of Bill No. 210 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

**The following legislative returns were tabled
March 18, 2019:**

34-2-184
Response to Written Question No. 32 re: land withdrawals and staking ban (Pillai)

34-2-185
Response to Motion for the Production of Papers No. 9 (Pillai)

34-2-186
Response to oral question from Ms. White re: energy supply and demand (Pillai)