



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 131

2nd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, March 26, 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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

Ted Adel	Copperbelt North
Paolo Gallina	Porter Creek Centre
Don Hutton	Mayo-Tatchun

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

Stacey Hassard	Leader of the Official Opposition Pelly-Nisutlin	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Floyd McCormick
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Harris Cox
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, March 26, 2019 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would ask the Legislative Assembly today to welcome our visitors here today for the tribute we will be doing in a couple of minutes. Elder Mary Caesar is here with us today and we will be speaking about an award that she just received.

We also have Samson Hartland, executive director of the Yukon Chamber of Mines; Daniel Little, an advisor to the Yukon Chamber of Mines; and Kathleen Napier, who is also here from the Yukon Chamber of Mines.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Mary Caesar

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government and the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Kaska Dena Elder Mary Caesar of the Liard First Nation.

Mary was awarded the Women in Mining Canada 2019 Indigenous Trailblazer Award at a ceremony in Toronto on March 5, 2019. This award recognizes the achievements of women who have made a significant contribution to the Canadian mining sector and the inclusion of women in the industry. Mary's contribution to the mineral industry has created a process for providing insight and information based on traditional knowledge of the area. This all came about from the recommendation that Mary made to Golden Predator for their 3 Aces exploration project to launch an elders-in-residence program for Kaska elders.

In May 2018, the program was launched, with 80 elders participating throughout the season last year. Through the program, elders had the opportunity to share their traditional knowledge and perspectives with the company, all while building community relationships within the mining sector.

Traditional knowledge is valuable to industry as it contributes to a better familiarity of the land, water, wildlife, environment and geography. There is no doubt that traditional knowledge is an important contribution to the mineral sector, providing insight and information for industry to use when designing their projects.

The elders-in-residence program is an innovative, first of its kind program. It is a valuable way for the elders to learn more about exploration activities, while accompanying staff into the field. The elders were also pleased to see members of their community working for the company.

During the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada convention earlier this month, Golden Predator, Mary and several other Kaska elders had the opportunity to present during the Aboriginal Forum. Their presentation was livestreamed, and to date has been viewed over 200,000 times.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the honourable members in this House to join me in acknowledging this significant contribution by Mary Caesar. There is no doubt that Mary's innovative, trailblazing spirit has made a significant contribution to mining in Yukon. Her suggestions have brought ingenuity into the process of creating inclusion, mutual respect and understanding between the mining community and the First Nations.

Mr. Speaker, it was a very touching ceremony; Mary was there and she also had her amazing boys there with her. I also was gifted today — I don't want to breach the rules of the House — by Mary. Mary also is an author and a poet, and this is a book called *My Healing Journey*. It's about survival in residential schools. I thank you for that, Mary, and I thank you for the work you're doing in the mining sector.

Applause

Ms. Hanson: On behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Party, I'm pleased to join in paying tribute to Mary Caesar, who today is being honoured of the winner of the 2019 Indigenous Trailblazer Award, presented this year in Toronto — as the minister has said — by Women in Mining, Canada.

When I heard that this national award had been presented to Mary, my first thoughts were: What a journey this woman, my friend, has travelled. Mary Caesar — now Elder Mary Caesar — boy, that seems a little difficult to go there — has done many things over the course of her life. From my first encounter with Mary close to 40 years ago when she was a young band social service worker with the Liard First Nation, it was clear that this was a woman with a clear sense of what was just and what was not; a woman who was willing to speak truth to power even if doing so invited the ire, not only of local elected officials, but you know, occasionally, also the MP of the day.

Over the years, Mary has been persistent in her efforts to retain and regain her deep connection with her Kaska roots — roots that were deeply injured by both the direct and indirect impacts of the Lower Post residential school.

Mary's journey has included demonstrating her bravery and her vulnerability by seeking to have her poems and stories about her early life and how that influenced her worldview published not just in Canada but in Europe.

In addition to writing, Mary set out to explore her artistic interests by attending Malaspina university. One of Mary's early mentors from her teen years was Yukon artistic icon Ted Harrison. When she and I visited him on one of his later visits to Whitehorse, he urged her to continue to paint from

her heart, to paint the familiar scenes of her world — the Kaska world.

Mr. Speaker, what a thrill it was a few years later to see Mary's work prominently displayed at the Whitehorse airport as one of Yukon's permanent collection. That painting I recall was the one depicting the Kaska stick gambling.

Over the years, Mary has been a vocal presence at many community meetings in Watson Lake as various proponents of the latest mining project have come through town. She never backed down from asking the hard questions.

I believe it is to the credit of Janet Lee-Sheriff from Golden Predator's 3 Aces project that rather than getting defensive or ignoring what was being really said — what has been said for so many years by Kaska — that is, do not leave us out of the conversation; engage with us — Janet heard and responded positively to Mary's suggestion to have elders present at the 3 Aces exploration camp in southeast Yukon over the summer.

It clearly was a successful exercise in mutual learning and respect with valuable insights gained by all involved — one that we hope will not only be repeated but emulated by other mining companies.

Mr. Speaker, it is truly an honour to salute the recognition of the Trailblazer Award winner this year — this Kaska author, artist and activist, Mary Caesar.

Applause

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: The Minister of Highways and Public Works, on a point of personal privilege.

Point of personal privilege

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of personal privilege to correct an error I made yesterday during the course of debate on the estimates for the Department of Highways and Public Works.

Carbon pricing will increase Government of Yukon expenditures in the fiscal year 2019-20 by approximately \$750,000. The number I provided yesterday — \$600,000 — was incorrect.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Silver: I have two documents for tabling today — legislative returns based on some responses from debate in Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?
Are there any petitions to be presented?
Are there any bills to be introduced?

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Prior to proceeding with notices of motions, the Chair will inform the House that Motion No. 438, notice

of which was given yesterday by the Member for Lake Laberge, was not in order and therefore not placed on today's Notice Paper. The Chair will now provide reasons for this ruling. The 6th edition of *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms* in annotation 565 at page 174 says, "A motion should neither be argumentative nor in the style of a speech..."

In Motion No. 438, the Member for Lake Laberge would have the House urge the Premier to provide an explanation of comments that the Premier made in a press release on March 21, 2019. In support of this proposition, the Member for Lake Laberge provides a set of facts different from those contained in the Premier's news release. In doing so, the Member for Lake Laberge is effectively providing an argument within the text of the motion itself. This is not in order. The member is free, of course, to employ his set of facts should a motion on this subject be called for debate. However, they do not belong in the text of the motion itself.

Motions that contain arguments are disorderly for two reasons. First, because during the rubric Notices of Motions, no member other than the member giving notice of the motion is permitted to speak to the notice of motion. Second, the motion is not properly before the House for debate, and so the member giving notice should not be making arguments, no matter how brief.

The House's current practice regarding notices of motions can be traced to the 2003 Fall Sitting. Members may wish to consult Hansard for November 27, 2003, wherein Speaker Staffen provides a detailed explanation of what is and what is not in order with regard to a notice of motion.

The Chair would also note that Motion No. 438 is a motion that urges a member to provide an explanation to the House. The Chair cannot categorically state that such motions are out of order. However, members who seek explanations may wish to consider whether the explanation that they seek may be better achieved through the use of an oral question, a written question or a motion for the production of papers rather than a notice of motion.

The Chair thanks members for their attention.

We will now proceed with notices of motions.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to table legislation to provide greater fiscal transparency and accountability by making provision for:

- (1) the publication of strategic and business plans;
- (2) the publication of annual reports by Yukon government departments/agencies detailing comparison of actual performance results to desired results/outcomes set out in each of the above business plans;
- (3) the publication of performance indicators for desired results/outcomes and concurrent result analyses for each; and
- (4) other matters that contribute to modern, effective fiscal planning and accountability.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to expand its pilot project funding for continuous glucose monitors to include Yukoners over the age of 26 with type 1 diabetes.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue to develop residential lots in rural Yukon communities.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?
Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

BreakOut West music festival

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I am pleased to advise the members of the House and all Yukoners that we will be hosting the BreakOut West music festival, conference and awards show in Whitehorse from October 2 to 6, 2019, to showcase the best of western Canadian music.

The Government of Yukon is contributing \$485,000 over two fiscal years toward the cost of this event. With this investment, the Government of Yukon is championing the territory's music industry as an essential contributor to a diverse and growing Yukon economy.

The music industry in Yukon is made up of individual musicians, Juno award-winning sound recording musicians, world-class studios, record labels and an active music festival scene. Their activities create a need for ancillary services and businesses.

BreakOut West can help to highlight our music industry on the world stage, opening up opportunities for growth and investment. Yukon musicians will be performing in front of top-tier music buyers. At past BreakOut West events, these buyers have come from world-renowned music festivals such as Glastonbury or South by Southwest. This exposure provides Yukon's music industry with new business opportunities.

Yukon has hosted BreakOut West before, and we know that there are broader economic benefits to doing so. When BreakOut West came to the territory in 2011, close to 340 delegates registered for the event, with 79 percent of those delegates visiting from outside the Yukon. Over 50 musicians performed 88 acts over the course of the event, and approximately 2,000 tickets were sold for those acts. The resulting economic impact for BreakOut West in 2011 was close to \$715,000 in direct spending in Yukon, with the creation of over 14 full-time equivalent jobs in the territory. Music Yukon, the territory's music industry association, will conduct a similar economic impact study for this year's event.

BreakOut West 2019 is an event that everyone will be able to benefit from — musicians, industry professionals, Yukoners, visitors and businesses. It provides a boost for Yukon's talented musicians. Beyond the opportunities to

perform, local musicians can meet industry professionals from Canada and worldwide whom they may not otherwise have the chance to meet.

As part of the investment in BreakOut West, the Government of Yukon is providing funds to Music Yukon for a mentorship program to help the territory's musicians maximize their opportunities presented by the event. The support available may include helping musicians to update their branding materials or coaching to ensure that they deliver the best performance possible in front of visiting VIPs, buyers and agents.

I want to thank the board and staff of Music Yukon — particularly Angela Drainville — for their work to date on this event. Local businesses will also benefit from an increase in visitors. Festival goers and conference delegates will fill our hotels, eat in our restaurants, use our conference space, perform at our local venues and spend travel dollars here. The plan is currently being developed for BreakOut West talent to tour some communities to ensure that a maximum number of Yukoners get to experience the music festival. There will be several events for music industry members, a classical showcase and a mini BreakOut West, which is an event geared toward younger audiences and industry members.

By promoting growth in targeted industries such as this one, we can support a diverse and prosperous Yukon economy.

Mr. Istchenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond today.

We're also excited about Yukon hosting this event. As the minister highlighted, this event was held in 2011 and had important economic spinoffs for the territory, I believe resulting in close to \$715,000 in direct spending in the Yukon. This is a good thing and we hope this year's event has similar benefits for the territory.

We also look forward to the excellent opportunities this event will provide for Yukon's world-class musicians.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, we only have 20 days left in this legislative Sitting. The Yukon Party had suggested that we extend it to 32 days so that we could spend more time going through the budget, so in the interest of allowing this House to spend more time examining the details of this \$1.5 billion of government spending, I will cut my remarks short.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon New Democratic Party is happy to hear that BreakOut West will be coming to the Yukon this fall. We're always supportive of opportunities to support the development of Yukon artists and initiatives that help them grow their brand and reach out. The return of BreakOut West is a testament to the hospitality and warmth that Yukon and Yukoners are famous for, and the economic spinoffs of this event are also welcome.

The NDP congratulates Music Yukon, and we look forward to joining other Yukoners by participating in this event.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to thank the opposition — both parties — for their comments. I think that everybody in the Assembly will look forward to such an event. I want to congratulate those who were involved in 2011. I think it definitely set a good bar, and we look forward to the activities that will happen in 2019. I think we all have shared values on that.

I will just correct the record. I believe, speaking with House Leaders, I know that process of how we decide which days are chosen is something that happens between all three parties. I know from our side, normally our House Leader comes and speaks with us concerning what our prerogative is, and our caucus gets to speak to that. I don't believe any of our colleagues had any issues with extending to 32 days. We were happy to do that, so I just want to correct the record. I think there might be a little miscommunication, but nobody is fearful of doing the hard work over here.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Mining legislation

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 7 of this year, the Premier delivered his budget speech and highlighted two mining projects, which he said — and I quote: “Are all moving through the permitting process.”

This morning on CBC, we found out that one of those companies has actually had significant issues with the speed of permitting and the regulatory process. As a result, they may be delaying their exploration program for this year.

Can the Premier tell us when he first became aware of the permitting issues that this company is experiencing?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think we're speaking about BMC. I just want to first of all touch on the point that in the work that we're doing with BMC here at the Yukon government, it has been very collaborative, as well as with Liard First Nation. Actually, when this story — as the opposition would say — “broke” today, it was nice to actually have good conversations reflecting on our collaborative work with BMC as well as with Liard First Nation later on today. Really, I don't think it was reflective of the collaboration that has been happening over the last while with all three groups.

Just to correct the record, I think some of the summer work — certainly I haven't been there to make the decisions that BMC would make about their summer program, but just to be clear, the work as I understand that they were contemplating this year is all permitted.

BMC has a class 3 mineral exploration authorization, and it doesn't expire until 2025. I think that actually the company is approved for 800 drill sites as well as geophysical and geotechnical sampling, geological mapping and soil sampling. I think it's just important to put that on the record.

Mr. Hassard: As we mentioned, the CBC has highlighted that at least one major company is experiencing issues with the length of the permitting and regulatory process. When Bill C-17 was passed by the federal government, the Premier convinced the mining industry to

endorse those changes. He convinced them by making a firm promise that he would develop a collaborative framework to address their concerns with timelines for projects. That promise to the industry was made in March 2017. Since that time, the Premier has made zero progress on that promise — so two years of no action from this Liberal government. As a result, more and more companies are running into issues with the timelines, permitting and consistency.

Can the Premier tell us one tangible policy change that he has made that addresses the issues around timelines for permits?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We've been over this before. Rome was not built in a day, and the reset oversight group in which we are working — with joint effort between Government of Canada, the Yukon government and Yukon First Nations — is there to collectively work to seek those efficiencies and to improve upon YESAA's process.

We've said in the Legislative Assembly before as well that we understand that the mining proponents would like to see more information from here, but again, when we are repairing a damaged relationship, these conversations take time. Thank goodness that the Yukon Forum is up and running again so that we can have these conversations with the First Nations and continue the conversations as well as bring these conversations to Ottawa.

We are working forward to make sure that the reset MOU oversight group continues their due diligence, but again, the trust wasn't there. The industry that I'm “influencing”, as the member opposite put it — they do understand. They understand that we as well are expecting tangible outcomes, and we will provide those tangible outcomes.

Mr. Hassard: I'm not asking the Premier to build Rome. I'm just asking him to uphold his promise to industry.

As we have highlighted, industry is running into issues around timelines and reassessments for their projects. The story this morning is just the latest news. We are hopeful that the government does help this proponent out, but it shouldn't get to the point where a company's project ends up in the media and the government has to be embarrassed into taking action. The government has developed a reputation of all talk and no action on this file, and simply having more meetings isn't going to cut it, Mr. Speaker. The industry would like to see the government take real and tangible actions today to address timelines for their projects.

Will the Premier commit to having the collaborative framework address timelines and reassessments for mining projects completed by the end of this year?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There are a number of points there to address. I guess I would say quickly, Mr. Speaker, that the first thing that I would do is to urge the media here today to please reach out to BMC. I think we saw an article today that reflects on one particular story. I urge the media that are here to reach out to the company and see if they feel that the relationship is collaborative and is working well between the Yukon government and BMC and if they are feeling supported. I can tell you that we have been very active in

ensuring that BMC understands the priorities of the Kaska and vice versa.

I might not have a particular policy change, but I can tell you that the difference now is when you have to get people together at the table, all parties are at the table.

When you're in a legal battle with First Nation governments, probably the most important partner that has to be at that table when you are trying to go through a permitting process is not there. I think that has been a major difference in the work that we are embarking on.

I think I will just leave it at that. I think the industry and others know the changes that have been made. We're going to continue to work through the regulatory piece. Pushing through what was pushed through is going to take a long time to heal from.

Question re: Housing programs

Ms. Van Bibber: According to the Yukon Bureau of Statistics, the average price for a single detached home was \$506,200 at the end of 2018. This is an increase of \$85,900 compared to 2016. As a result, homeownership is now unaffordable or unattainable for many Yukoners.

The down payment assistance program provided by the Yukon Housing Corporation has been one way that the government supports Yukoners who want to become homeowners. The program allows Yukoners who are first-time homeowners and who are bank mortgage approved to borrow through a repayable loan to purchase a home. However, this year's budget cuts the funding for the program by 80 percent.

Can the minister explain why, if housing is becoming more unaffordable, the government is cutting the down payment assistance program?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am very proud of the efforts and the great work that Yukon Housing Corporation is doing with our partners in addressing the housing shortages in the Yukon. We have done significant work in bringing on new initiatives. There are some changes within the budget. I would be happy to have that debate during the mains and the discussion on the budget for Yukon Housing Corporation. I can say today that we are taking initiatives to increase affordable housing and support options for Yukoners at all stages in their lives.

Our housing initiative fund that was launched was a great success last year and again this year. We are looking and working with our seniors. We are continuing to work with new homeowners and providing many building opportunities across the Yukon.

Ms. Van Bibber: As we have highlighted, the average price of a home in Yukon has increased by \$85,900. When you compare the end of 2018 to the end of 2016, it is a huge difference. For many Yukoners, the dream of home ownership is no longer realistic.

Another program that the government offers to assist Yukoners is the first-time homeowners mortgage loan program. This again allows Yukon residents to borrow up to the average real estate price to purchase an existing home. In this year's budget, the government is cutting it from

\$4 million to \$2.5 million. Can the minister explain how cutting the first-time homeowner mortgage loan program will make home ownership more affordable for Yukoners?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The 10-year housing action plan for Yukon launched in 2015 looks at providing overarching guidance on housing priorities for the Yukon. We have taken into consideration the housing action plan and the Safe at Home plan to end and prevent homelessness, we have looked at rural land development and are working with our partners such as the Klondike Development Organization. We have worked with our partners in and across the Yukon to address the housing needs, and we will continue to do that, guided by the principles of the housing action plan.

With respect to specific budgetary items as defined in the budget, I would be happy to have that conversation during the debate on the mains in the Legislative Assembly.

Ms. Van Bibber: Many Yukoners are starting to look for other options to achieve their dream of home ownership rather than just purchasing. This includes building their own home. An important program to help Yukoners achieve home ownership through this method is the owner-build program. The owner-build program provides a repayable loan to Yukoners who want to become first-time homeowners by building a home. However, in this year's budget, the Liberals are cutting funding for this program by a half-million dollars.

Can the minister explain why she is cutting the budget for this important program?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am awfully proud of the housing investments that we have made over the course of our mandate. We will continue to work with our partners in addressing construction, and home ownership is significant. It is important. That is a small piece of the housing pressures that we have.

We are completing construction of the 16-unit housing residence in downtown Whitehorse. We have opened up lots in Whistle Bend. We will continue to work with the Challenge Disability Resource Group. We will continue to work through the municipal matching grant incentive program with our municipalities. I would say we have worked quite successfully with the non-profit organizations in our community to address housing challenges. I have given a significant list of accomplishments and highlights of what we have done over the course of the last two years. I am very proud of that. We have supported the implementation of the housing action plan. We have gone ahead and just announced another \$60 million in the Yukon, so there is a lot of really amazing work happening.

I look forward to the future. I look forward to this year. I look forward to addressing some of the incentives in the work that is happening with our partners in the Yukon. I'm very pleased with the great work and efforts of our Housing Corporation and our many partners.

Question re: Dempster Highway maintenance

Ms. Hanson: In response to questions asking why funding for the Dempster Highway has decreased from \$3.1 million last year to \$50,000 this year, the Minister of

Highways and Public Works said the decision was based on road usage and socio-economic factors. The \$50,000 budgeted for the Dempster Highway represents a 98-percent cut. The Minister of Highways and Public Works somehow anticipates that the combination of road uses and socio-economic benefit from the Dempster Highway will be 62 times lower this year than last. However, the Yukon tourism website encourages visits to the Dempster, Tombstone Park, Eagle Plains, the Arctic Circle and more.

Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Tourism and Culture believe that the socio-economic benefit from tourism on the Dempster Highway warrants meaningful investment in highway infrastructure?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to continue the discussion that we started yesterday on the Highways and Public Works budget. We did talk about the \$50,000 that was going into the remediation of a stretch of road on the Dempster Highway. That is, of course, not the full picture. I also spoke about the \$2 million that we are providing to fix the Klondike bridge at the very start of the Dempster Highway. That's another \$2.1 million that is going into the road this year. We also have our operation and maintenance budget, which includes \$4.5 million that we are spending on the Dempster next year as well. So the total expenditure on the Dempster will be almost \$7 million.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, the first thing that you see when you look at the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* infrastructure section is a portion describing safe, reliable roads and community infrastructure and its importance to Yukoners and tourists alike. A road as rugged as the Dempster Highway is no exception. When Yukon's goal is to double our tourism from \$260 million to \$525 million, it seems obvious that, at the very least, we should be maintaining our infrastructure funding for highways to encourage visitors to travel, yet this government is doing the opposite.

The Dempster is an essential artery not only for tourists visiting Tombstone Park and driving the Dempster, but for the many outfitters and adventure tour operators who guide visitors throughout the north Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, what case did the Minister of Tourism and Culture make to the Minister of Highways and Public Works with respect to the socio-economic benefit of tourism on the Dempster?

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Thank you to the member opposite for the questions. Our government recognizes for sure the value of tourism, and we are committed to supporting it through our mandate. Sustainable tourism presents an incredible opportunity to strengthen Yukon's economy and vibrant communities. That's why I was very pleased that our government has committed \$875,000 in this budget for the advancement of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*.

If the member has a chance to really look at the tourism strategy — I would be happy to go through it with the member opposite as well — there is an action item that refers to a one-government approach to tourism.

This action will be advanced through the department's existing budget and through the work of an interdepartmental

committee focused on strengthening the one-government approach. Creating a one-window approach will help the tourism industry and help us identify areas that we will focus on collectively as a government to address any pressures or issues that may arise. The Minister of Highways and Public Works has talked about the investment in the Dempster Highway.

Ms. Hanson: With this year's budget, Highways and Public Works will fund 1.5 percent of the work done on the Dempster Highway last year. This cut in funding does not reflect the long-term visitor trends in the area. Between 2012 and 2017, the Tombstone Territorial Park saw a nearly 50-percent increase in visitors, a number which doesn't factor in those visitors exploring the Dempster without stopping in at the visitor centre. It is because the Yukon NDP is supportive of tourism in Yukon that we fail to see how a 98-percent cut in funding for a road that Yukon government itself describes as "rugged and unforgiving" helps to increase visitor satisfaction and safety.

Mr. Speaker, what exactly is the Minister of Tourism and Culture doing to ensure that the whole-of-government approach reflects the need to increase investment in the Dempster Highway to reflect the socioeconomic benefits of tourism?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Our roads across the territory are conduits for tourism and they're also the links that bring us home, Mr. Speaker. They link our communities together; they're economic drivers. They are the conduits by which we get to work, get to the doctor, get to the hospital and get to tourism. We are investing heavily in our road infrastructure across the territory, Mr. Speaker. We have approached our federal government to make sure that we have infrastructure dollars to maintain those roads.

As I told the Leader of the Third Party just a few minutes ago, we are spending \$2 million replacing the bridge at the base of the Dempster. We are doing that because we know how important that road is for tourism.

We are also doing some remediation work for \$50,000 to remediate some flooding up there. We are also spending more than \$4 million on O&M to make sure the road is maintained throughout the winter and to make sure people can get up and down to Tombstone and beyond.

Question re: Yukon Hospital Corporation funding

Ms. McLeod: This year's budget contains \$1 million to begin the planning and design for a secure medical unit at Whitehorse hospital. On October 18 of last year, the Hospital Corporation, in response to questions about the open space at the hospital, told this House that — quote: "We have done some extensive planning through the development of that as an improved secure medical unit."

They went on to say that — quote: "At this point, we have done detailed functional planning. We have created schematic designs and options associated, as well as high-level costing."

Since the Hospital Corporation told us last year that extensive planning has already taken place — including

functional planning and even designs — we are wondering what \$1 million for planning this year is for?

Hon. Ms. Frost: We would like to just start by saying how we are working with the Hospital Corporation, through our budget cycle, to identify their key priorities, and I am very pleased with the progress there.

The Hospital Corporation, as noted by the member opposite, is planning for the development of an improved secure medical unit at Whitehorse General Hospital to replace the existing secure medical unit, which does not currently meet patient and safety standards.

We provided the hospital with \$1 million to set out detailed plans and design the size, scope, services and number of beds required for this new program. The planning and design work has begun, and we will continue to provide information as it becomes available and as we work with the Hospital Corporation. This is what we have received from the Hospital Corporation. I am very pleased to say that we are supporting the key priorities that they put forward to us through their budgetary asks.

Ms. McLeod: As we mentioned last year on October 18, the Hospital Corporation stated that options and high-level costing had been completed for the secure medical unit. On October 30, we asked the minister about these options and high-level costing. In response she said — and I quote: “That is going to cost in excess of \$7 million.”

Can the minister confirm if this is still the projected cost of the secure medical unit?

Hon. Ms. Frost: As we discussed in October of last year, we have had extensive discussions with the Hospital Corporation on some of the key priorities that they put before us and before me to consider — those are the secure medical unit, the expansion of the OR units and looking at providing further ophthalmology supports. There is quite a bit in the budget that they were asking for. At that time, the proposed cost — what they had on the table — was in excess of \$7 million. As we go through the schematic drafting that was put before us, we are working now on the detailed business model. That is what the Hospital Corporation will detail in this planning and design work, which I understand will look at the detailed plan around the beds, program staffing, projection of operation and maintenance costs and equipment costs.

Those are things that we clearly need to know in fine detail so that we can effectively budget for that in future years, unlike some of the other projects that we have seen before us where a building is built and a facility is built and we don't have any long-term planning around how much this is going to cost or how we are going to finance or staff it. We are taking that into consideration as we plan this project.

Ms. McLeod: On October 18, the Hospital Corporation told us that extensive planning had been completed, including designs and schematics. On October 30, the minister told us that the secure medical unit would cost in excess of \$7 million, which she cannot confirm today. According to the five-year capital concept, the project is scheduled to be completed in the 2021-22 fiscal year.

Can the minister confirm if she has estimates on what the increased cost to O&M for the hospital will be due to the creation of the secure medical unit?

Hon. Ms. Frost: That would be an awfully difficult question to answer — I mean, looking into the future. What we are doing is working and looking with the information that we are provided. We will look at improved space that will accommodate patients' needs. We will look at the secure medical unit to ensure that patients are safe, that we have the lounge space, that we have a medication room, that we have dining space and that we have consideration for providing that shelf space that they left blank when the members opposite had the vision to build the new emergency unit at the hospital. That was not accounted for, nor was it budgeted for.

We have taken every effort with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to work in collaboration on this issue, and we will continue to work with them. We will continue to work with the stakeholders on the final scope and cost of the redevelopment of the second floor of the space that we're speaking of today. Our vision is to have eight to 12 beds in that facility. As it becomes available, we will be happy to share the planning and the information. We will work with our partners as we come out with the detailed drafting, the detailed plans and the costs associated with that in the years to come. I would be happy to share that in the future.

Question re: Mining within municipal boundaries

Mr. Kent: The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is quoted in a CBC article from December 16, 2016, stating that he would meet with the Association of Yukon Communities and First Nations in the new year to develop an action plan with respect to mining within municipal boundaries. We asked the minister last fall if he could provide an update on this action plan, and at the time, he was unable to provide us with any specifics.

As it has been over two years since the minister made this original commitment, can the minister provide us with an update on this action plan here today?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, I think it's important that a couple of pieces be added just as a preamble. It's a good question. I just think some other things were at play. We had court proceedings that were underway concerning some areas within the boundaries of the City of Whitehorse that we were looking to see concluded — and which have concluded. We also were working through some of the legacy items around the Dome Road and working through conversations around the east bench as well. Even since then, there have been new legal proceedings that have taken place within municipalities.

This is important work. It is work that I committed to and am still focused on doing. Our department is putting a strategy together to do that work. I don't think we have had broad enough conversations at all with the Association of Yukon Communities, so that's something that we have to do. I think that our framework on that policy change has to be done first, so we will make sure that it's a meaningful conversation.

I think it's important just for the public to know that we had to see what was going to happen with the legal process —

we have seen some finality on that — and then we had to do the work with a proper framework to bring to the table.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important for Yukoners to know that over two years has passed since this original commitment that the minister made on December 16, 2016.

Since the minister made this original commitment, have there been any changes to policies, regulations or legislation surrounding mining within municipal boundaries?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think it's important to know — let's dig to the heart of the question. It's really built on a premise that there has been inactivity on our behalf for a policy change, but that's not the full story. I appreciate the political strategy behind the question, but I think it's important to note that — in order to have a full understanding of what we're discussing today — we have to talk about the fact that there was not just one, but multiple legal processes underway. You wouldn't want to go and make a policy change until you saw that process come to finality.

What we have done since December 2016 is ensure that we had a full understanding of the decisions that have been made in the court of law. We have continued to work through some of the legacy pieces — the Dome Road in Dawson City — and I have worked to make sure I have advice from my colleagues, such as the Minister of Justice, to understand these decisions.

We still have work to do to deal with this. This is another big one, but I don't believe that the preamble to the question is really doing justice to what the department has been doing or the Justice department or the work that is underway.

Mr. Kent: Actually the heart of the question is an action plan that the minister committed to on December 16, 2016, stating that he would meet with AYC and First Nations in the new year to develop this action plan with respect to mining within municipal boundaries.

Last fall when we asked the minister about the action plan for mining within municipal boundaries that he committed to, he said — and I quote: “There are work plans at Energy, Mines and Resources that identify this as key work. We continue to go through our internal processes on these important topics.”

Can the minister provide us with the work plans that he referenced and provide us more detail on these internal processes and when they will be completed?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Once again, I think that the topic that is being focused on today is the fact that there needs to be policy identified and put in place for mining municipalities, and it is very important work. It is work over the last number of decades that we didn't see come to light. It is work that I would have liked to have seen happen at a faster pace. In my role, I will wear the fact that I don't have a new policy here in the House, but part of it is that it is there was a legal proceeding happening on a couple of different cases. I also had a very weak process that happened around the Dome Road that we had to work through.

Part of it is that our department — as much as people may think otherwise, Energy, Mines and Resources is a huge

department. Our staff at Energy, Mines and Resources and the Land Planning branch have been extremely busy. We have had mines going through to being built. We have had a tremendous amount of exploration, and our total team is under pressure constantly because of the amount of activity.

I will come back to the Assembly with an update on this particular topic that I think is very important and then commit as we have a framework to working with the Association of Yukon Communities and as we look at policy development.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of opposition private members' business

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, March 27, 2019. It is Motion No. 429, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

Mr. Kent: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, March 27, 2019. They are Motion No. 435, standing in the name of the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, and Motion No. 437, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 30: *Act to Amend the Education Labour Relations Act* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 30, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that Bill No. 30, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Labour Relations Act*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Education that Bill No. 30, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Labour Relations Act*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It is my pleasure to introduce Bill No. 30, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Labour Relations Act*, for consideration by this Legislative Assembly. Yukoners and members will recall that our government committed that should a new collective agreement require amendments to legislation to give life to that agreement, we would bring those changes to this Legislative Assembly as soon as possible. Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 30 achieves our commitment to Yukoners.

The proposed amendments in this bill include allowing substitute personnel to become members of the Yukon Teachers' Association bargaining unit and revising or removing the sections that deal with probation, temporary employment and layoff of school-based staff so that these

matters can be addressed through the Yukon Teachers' Association collective agreement instead.

The Government of Yukon and the Yukon Teachers' Association recently concluded bargaining on a new three-year collective agreement. The agreement was ratified by the Yukon Teachers' Association membership on January 14, 2019. These legislative amendments will enable the Government of Yukon and the YTA to fully implement the provisions agreed upon in the new collective agreement. The proposed amendments will help to address long-standing labour relations issues faced by the government and the Yukon Teachers' Association over the years.

With respect to substitute personnel in the Yukon Teachers' Association, most notably, the proposed amendments will address the issue and enable substitute personnel to become bargaining unit members. Substitute teachers are an absolutely critical part of our school system here in the territory. They of course fill in when educators are away from work, and they ensure that student learning continues. They play a vital role in our schools. It is important that substitute personnel are supported in their roles and that their voices are heard.

The current *Education Labour Relations Act* does not permit substitute personnel to be represented by the Yukon Teachers' Association. Substitute personnel have asked for this to be changed so that they can be represented by the YTA. During the bargaining process, the YTA demonstrated that a majority of substitute personnel wanted to be represented by the Yukon Teachers' Association and came to an agreement about how that could happen during that process.

As a result, Mr. Speaker, we are bringing these amendments forward to enable substitute personnel to be represented by the Yukon Teachers' Association as part of their association's bargaining unit, as is the case in much of Canada.

With respect to the issues regarding temporary employment, probation and layoffs, there have been some long-standing challenges for the parties working with and interpreting provisions in the *Education Labour Relations Act* related to temporary employment, to probationary periods and to layoffs for educators. There is a lack of clarity on these issues in the current legislation. Over the years, the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Teachers' Association have had differing interpretations of how these provisions should be applied.

The parties were keen to reduce the number of related grievances, decisions and uncertainty, and it was clear that a change in approach in how we deal with these matters was warranted. The Government of Yukon and the Yukon Teachers' Association were able to agree upon a way forward to address these concerns during the recent round of collective bargaining. The new collective agreement includes specific criteria for managing issues related to temporary employment, probationary periods and layoffs. The agreement in principle reached with the YTA during the collective bargaining explicitly recognized that amendments to the *Education*

Labour Relations Act are required to bring these provisions into effect.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments set out in this bill are concise and designed to bring into effect the terms and conditions of employment that have been agreed to and are supported by the Yukon Teachers' Association.

I am pleased to take the opportunity to thank the negotiators, the Department of Education officials and the Justice officials for their work on these important improvements. I also thank the Yukon Teachers' Association for working with our government to identify a number of solutions to some long-standing issues.

Yukon educators are the most important factor in a student's success at school. These changes will ensure that we continue to support school staff by working with the Yukon Teachers' Association in an improved labour relations framework that will benefit educators, the YTA and most importantly, our students.

Thank you for the opportunity to outline the elements of this important bill that presents solutions to long-standing issues and meets our commitment to Yukoners. I look forward to hearing from our colleagues.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of personal privilege

Speaker: The Member for Copperbelt South, on a point of personal privilege.

Mr. Kent: On a point of personal privilege, Mr. Speaker, I misspoke when identifying the Official Opposition motions for tomorrow. It should be Motion No. 436, standing in the name of the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, not Motion No. 435, as I had originally stated.

Speaker: The record will reflect that the first motion that has been identified by the Official Opposition House Leader is Motion No. 436, standing in the name of the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin.

Mr. Kent: I am going to be brief in my remarks at second reading with respect to Bill No. 30, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Labour Relations Act*.

I would like to thank officials in the Department of Education for the brief briefing that they gave us on this piece of legislation. There certainly weren't very many questions from the Member for Takhini-Kopper King or me with respect to this piece of legislation.

I too would like to congratulate the Yukon Teachers' Association and the Yukon government for reaching a successful conclusion in the negotiations around the collective bargaining agreement. Obviously we are all pleased that there was no job action that had to be initiated and that a successful resolution was reached. We are also pleased that substitutes are now included.

I will have some questions for the minister and our officials during Committee of the Whole debate on this. Just to highlight what those questions will be surrounding — it will be about whether or not there will be adjusted qualifications for substitute teachers as a result of what is

coming in here. Retroactive pay — I know that, obviously, with the CBA expiring last year, there will be some retroactive pay for the members of the YTA. I'm not sure if there is any retroactive pay associated with substitutes as part of this or if it is just for members of the YTA going forward. We will also look to get a sense of what the budget implications are with respect to this initiative as far as the substitute teacher line item in the Department of Education. We will look to set some baselines around that as well as some baselines for the hours that the department is forecasting for substitute teachers being needed for the coming school year and what that will look like.

Again, congratulations to the YTA, and congratulations to the minister and her officials for bringing this piece of legislation forward. We look forward to a speedy passage of this bill.

Ms. White: Speaking to Bill No. 30, I would like to start off by congratulating the Department of Education and Yukon government as well as the Yukon Teachers' Association for the new three-year collective agreement. From my understanding, it is groundbreaking for a whole bunch of different reasons. It's an exciting thing for education in the territory.

Members may remember that this is something that I had been asking for — about being able to change the *Education Labour Relations Act* in order to allow substitute teachers to be classified and become bargaining members.

My colleague is correct in that it was a very brief briefing. It was the verbal high-fives and the congratulations and that we are excited to see the changes as well. I look forward to having this passed and become law.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you to my colleagues for this opportunity to speak in support of Bill No. 30.

The proposed amendments to the *Education Labour Relations Act* will support Yukon government employees who work as teachers, educational assistants, remedial tutors and aboriginal language teachers and will provide a vital service in our territory.

As the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission, I am responsible for the *Education Labour Relations Act*, as it is the labour relations legislation that governs the relationships between the government as an employer and our school-based employees.

It is my privilege to have had the Minister of Education table this bill, and I would like to thank her for providing a comprehensive outline of what it covers, based on her very thorough knowledge of our education system and her understanding of the changes that we wish to make to improve the processes. I have a strong interest in making changes that are going to improve the outcomes for our school-based employees and advance Yukon's education system.

In December 2018, the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Teachers' Association successfully negotiated a three-year collective agreement. Thanks to their hard work, we have

reached an agreement that provides strong support for our teaching staff and is also fiscally sustainable.

A memorandum of settlement under the new agreement recognized that changes to the *Education Labour Relations Act* would be required, and these changes will enable us to fully implement all of the matters negotiated. These amendments will provide more clarity and stability for teachers and for our human resource processes.

In the past, we know there have been challenges with the interpretation and provisions within the act that govern temporary teachers, probationary periods and layoffs. As the Minister of Education has clearly outlined, the bill before us will improve clarity for both the employer and the employee by moving these provisions to the collective agreement. Moving them to the collective agreement will make it easier for both parties to negotiate in the future to ensure that we continue to have the best possible arrangement for teachers, the employer and students.

This bill will also allow for substitute school staff to be defined as employees under the act, thereby including them in the YTA bargaining unit through voluntary recognition, by the Yukon government, of the YTA as the exclusive bargaining agent for these employees. Yukoners who make themselves available as substitute teachers and are ready to step in when a teacher, aboriginal language teacher or educational assistant or remedial tutor is sick or is otherwise unable to work provide an incredibly important service. They are often stepping in at the last minute and have to quickly and effectively manage a classroom and deliver a lesson or provide support services to students. Thank you to everyone who has performed this duty and continues to perform this duty to ensure that our education system runs smoothly. With these proposed amendments, we hope that we can create an environment that readily encourages people to continue to answer this important call.

The Yukon government employees who are responsible for the development and education of our young people play a critical role in this society. By having strong practices in place to help us successfully recruit and retain professional teaching staff, we are improving the foundation on which our education system is based, and that is the people who we trust to develop and educate our youth.

Through these changes we are creating greater security for the educators working in our territory, whether they are embarking on this path as a full-time career or they are making themselves available to work as substitute teachers.

I would like to thank the officials for the Yukon Teachers' Association and the staff of the Department of Education, Department of Justice and the Public Service Commission for their work on preparing this bill.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard on second reading of Bill No. 30?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I want to take the opportunity to thank our colleagues. We clearly all agree that this bill

contains important improvements to our education system, and it is a key goal, I'm sure, of all of us to make things better for our educators and our students. I appreciate their indicated support of this bill and the opportunity to speak to it.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Just briefly before we call the question, just a quick reminder to all members — although it must be said that it was more the government side this time — I know it's difficult logistically in this House sometimes, but please be careful to not walk between the Speaker and the member who is speaking. I am pretty good at paying attention, but I would imagine it might be a little bit disruptive for the member who is providing their valuable comments to the House.

All members will know that it's Standing Order 6(7). It can be a little bit disruptive. I think members are aware of that for the most part, and it doesn't occur with any particular frequency. I just noticed that it was getting a little bit busy between the Minister of Highways and Public Works and me as far as the traffic.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?
Motion for second reading of Bill No. 30 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): Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 210, entitled *First 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. 210: *First Appropriation Act 2019-20* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 210, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2019-20*.

Department of Environment

Hon. Ms. Frost: Today, I am accompanied by Deputy Minister John Bailey and our Environment Director of Finance and Client Services, Beth Fricke. Welcome today.

For many people around the world, Yukon's vast vista and unspoiled wilderness offers the trip of a lifetime, but for us here today and those we represent in our communities across the territory, this landscape is simply our home. The ecosystems and watersheds that make up this beautiful setting are also home to unique biodiversity and iconic species that exist nowhere else. As Yukoners, the privilege of living here comes with a responsibility for the territory's stewardship. The Department of Environment works together across government with First Nations, Inuvialuit and many other partners as stewards of this land, its air, its water, its fish and its wildlife.

We work to maintain the health, sustainability and prosperity of our environment. This collaborative work helps to ensure this place is shared with our visitors, children and grandchildren for many generations to come.

There are many aspects of the work of the Department of Environment. We spend approximately \$2 million each year to maintain and upgrade inventories of Yukon's fish and wildlife and to monitor air and water quality. These inventories help us gauge when and how to focus our management efforts.

Along with our biologists, technicians and wildlife managers, the territory's chief veterinary officer works at the Department of Environment. They lead the animal health unit which guides our response to disease risks for wildlife as well as cares for domestic animals across the territory. For example, this year, about \$185,000 will support work with Yukon communities to find unique and appropriate solutions for our rural domestic animal care. This includes money to support local farmers to access livestock veterinary services, support for the rural dog spay-neuter program and transfer payments for local humane societies to accept, care for and find homes for dogs and cats.

We also deliver programs and services that give Yukoners and visitors safe and memorable interaction with this fantastic environment around us. This could be through a number of outdoor activities like camping, hiking, paddling, hunting, fishing or viewing wildlife. When the health of this shared environment is at risk, department staff responds.

Environmental compliance and inspection officers act fast when there is a threat to the environment from garbage or spills, and our conservation officers are on the scene when wildlife conflicts occur.

We also support a growing economy by helping guide sustainable development. We do this by providing data for project assessments and we also issue and regulate permits. We educate, monitor and enforce the laws that protect human health and the health of our environment and water each year. We lead the assessment, monitoring and cleanup of the government's environmental liabilities. Because of the costs to do this work, the environmental liabilities and remediation program makes up our single biggest budget item each year.

Last but not least, we know the impacts of climate change and its effects on our communities, culture and way of life. Yukon's average temperature has increased by 2 degrees in the past 50 years, and our winter temperatures have increased by 4 degrees. This is twice the rate in southern Canada.

Environment's Climate Change Secretariat works to coordinate the territory's adaptation, mitigation, preparation and innovation for resilient Yukon communities. The work that Environment does is connected to every one of this government's priorities and it is integral to all aspects of Yukoners' lives. People cannot thrive and live healthy lives if the environment they live in is not healthy and thriving. Our communities and economy will not be sustainable if the ecosystems they depend on are not.

It is through our shared stewardship of this land that our reconciliation with First Nations is brought to life. With this in mind, I want to lay out some of the major initiatives outside of the regular activities and programming that the Department of Environment is planning for the 2019-20 fiscal year.

We are seeking a total of \$45.9 million in combined operation and maintenance and capital funding for the year ahead. This is a decrease of two percent, or \$1.6 million, from the last year. The reason for this decrease is due to the variation in projects progressing under our Site Assessment and Remediation unit. For the year ahead, a total of 10 sites will undergo continued assessment, including highway maintenance camps, grader stations, aviation fuelling facilities and other government-owned locations across the territory. A total of 15 sites will undergo continued remediation work. That includes locations like Old Crow nursing station, the Upper Liard landfill and the Whitehorse property at 5th Avenue and Rogers Street.

In addition, remediation work will continue at the Marwell tar pit site in Whitehorse. This is a project we share with Canada.

When deciding what work needs to be done to assess and remediate environmental liabilities, we use a risk-based approach that looks at risks to people and to the environment. Our knowledge of how to safely store hazardous materials was not as good in the past as it is now. Standards for construction and handling chemicals have improved.

We know more now about contaminants than we did years ago, but cleaning up past actions is always more costly and challenging than taking proactive steps to protect our shared environment for the future. Being proactive is almost always more fiscally and environmentally responsible. We work with our municipalities, First Nation governments and Canada to heal the scars left on our land from a time when we knew much less about contamination and hazardous substances. While technology and industry standards are improved, the costs of dealing with these liabilities are not going down. It is only by working together that we can make sure we leave this land in a better condition than how we found it.

Environment's total operation and maintenance budget for 2019-20 is approximately \$44.4 million. There are three specific areas — notable projects from our operation and

maintenance budget — that I would like to highlight today. First is our work under the Government of Canada's climate change preparedness in the north program. This is the third year of this four-year agreement that will see \$416,000 spent to support 15 adaptation projects. This is 100-percent recoverable from Canada.

These projects include: evaluating the vulnerability of Yukon government buildings constructed atop permafrost; developing action plans to mitigate and adapt to permafrost thaw; assessing the connection between climate-related changes and the availability of traditionally harvested foods in the Yukon, locally grown foods and food security overall; establishing a baseline of winter distribution in Yukon and creating a proactive management model for our valued ungulate populations; mapping changes in land cover and assessing implications for wildlife habitat; monitoring groundwater quality in the Kluane watershed to help develop our understanding of chum salmon spawning preference in the area; developing permafrost mapping and tools for the Dempster Highway and the greater Whitehorse area; improving emergency planning for extreme weather events and prediction of wildfires as well as developing tools for long-term health impacts; conducting Yukon-wide assessments and prioritizing action plans; and supporting our climate adaptation experts inside and external to Yukon government to come together, work together and to develop a Yukon-wide strategy for climate change, energy and green economy.

The second significant project new to our program area is implementation of an animal health control order. It is common for domestic sheep and goats to carry pneumonia-causing bacteria without showing symptoms. However, if contracted by a wild population, this disease could cause devastating impacts. This control order strikes a balance between supporting our growing local agricultural industry while ensuring protection of our valuable and iconic wild thorn sheep species. There is \$217,000 in the 2019-20 budget supporting our work with local farmers to ensure that they meet requirements, like adequate fencing and testing, before the control order comes into effect in 2020.

The third significant increase to our regular programs and services is an additional \$213,000 for our support of the implementation of the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*. The Department of Environment is responsible for the continued realization of the Inuvialuit land claims in the northernmost part of our territory known as the Yukon North Slope. Here we work with the Inuvialuit on environmental monitoring and stewardship programs, conservation and education programs, and ongoing collaborative management of the Herschel Island Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park.

To do all the work we do, especially in remote areas like the North Slope, requires that we always set aside a certain amount of capital funding each year to maintain and replace aging equipment. This year, that amount is \$272,000, plus a specific \$15,000 for equipment used through the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*.

This year, we have also identified three more significant projects for capital funding. A total of \$833,000 will go toward improvements at parks and campgrounds. Our newest network of parks and campgrounds provides some of the most accessed and valued spaces in the territory. These places bring generations of culture to life and provide opportunities for Yukoners and visitors to come to our amazing landscape in a safe, clean and memorable way. About \$300,000 will support the ongoing multi-year program to upgrade and repair infrastructure like boat docks, water systems, outhouse tanks, accessible hiking trails, signage and fuel storage. About \$98,000 will go toward increasing camp space at existing campgrounds. Approximately \$135,000 will plan for the replacement of the bridges at Wolf Creek and Marsh Lake campgrounds. Finally, about \$300,000 will be specifically dedicated to replace and install new safe playground equipment at campgrounds and recreation sites all over the Yukon.

Another significant capital project is using \$256,000 in our ongoing work to maintain, replace and improve efficiencies of our water quality, meteorological and hydrometric monitoring networks across the territory. Installing groundwater wells, core equipment, system replacements and targeting stations in key areas for things like flood forecasting cannot be undervalued.

Understanding the territory's water systems, whether on the surface — such as lakes, rain, snow and groundwater — is like placing a stethoscope to the overall health of our environment. It is essential to everything we do. This work supports sustainable industry, helps communities plan and prepare for floods and ensures good quality drinking water, water filtration and aquatic species for us all.

The biggest portion of this work is a multi-year joint project with the Water Survey of Canada to decommission and reconstruct 55 old monitoring sites. This will improve the efficiency and quality of data gathered at each one of these individual sites.

Our third significant capital investment is about \$119,000 toward our ongoing investment into reliable computer networks and e-services that we provide to the public. The majority of the department's regular work includes monitoring and assessment of land, water, air and species that make up our vast and healthy environment. All of this work, however, produces important and valuable data. This is why it remains our ongoing priority and a necessity to ensure that there is adequate investment in the computer networks that maintain the data, making it manageable and useful for our various environmental experts and partners. We know that computers are best suited to do the job of managing these complex databases, which is why we continue our work in transitioning to a completely electronic system. This also means that we continue to develop and refine the public-facing e-services while hunters, anglers and campers connect directly with these important online systems.

We do not do this work alone. We work with members of the public through our e-services public engagement interpretive programming and on-the-land services. We

partner with Yukon First Nations, the Inuvialuit, the Government of Canada, Alaska, municipalities and other departments. We support and engage renewable resources councils, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and other boards and councils established through our Yukon First Nation final agreements. We connect with community on topic-driven grassroots and stakeholder organizations in the Yukon. It is through collaboration and joint efforts that we share the role of leading the stewardship of our shared environment.

For 2019-20, we are budgeting a total of more than \$2.95 million to provide a significant contribution to support some of these valuable partners. We maintain an annual operating agreement for the Yukon Wildlife Preserve. This year, that agreement will see an increase of \$14,000, bringing it to a total of \$718,000. The preserve is an esteemed partner in wildlife conservation and in ensuring that connection and education to Yukoners, youth and visitors alike.

The Wildlife Management Advisory Council on the North Slope is an integral partner to realizing our responsibility and privileges through the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*. They will receive \$460,000 this year.

We maintain an annual partnership with Yukon College, particularly for climate change research projects, and will ensure \$75,000 continues to support that work.

Environmental interest groups receive core funding from us, including: the Yukon Fish and Game Association receives \$80,000 each year; the Yukon Trappers Association receives \$35,000 annually; and the Yukon Conservation Society will receive \$75,000. Each year we provide \$25,000 for an organization working to reduce human-wildlife conflict. This year, WildWise Yukon will receive that funding.

Some of our partner funding is for specific projects, including \$50,000 this year for the final year of the joint moose-monitoring project with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. Another \$50,000 will go to the Vuntut Gwitchin government to support their ongoing efforts to protect the Porcupine caribou herd.

I would also like to note that we have a \$30,000 annual environmental awareness fund. Money is awarded from this fund based on applications from registered societies in Yukon to support projects and initiatives that engage, inspire and educate environmental stewardship across the territory.

As the Department of Environment, we understand the importance of basing our decisions on evidence, ensuring the input of Yukoners and working with our management partners to chart our path forward together. This includes the scientists, biologists, officers and others who make the Department of Environment work to inspire and engage all residents and visitors to the territory.

Our economy will grow, diversify and prosper if we consider and address the environmental impacts that we all create. Our communities will thrive if the environment and ecosystems that we all exist in are healthy.

I look forward to discussing the 2019-20 estimates for the Department of Environment as well as the positive projects and forward-looking initiatives that we all support.

Mr. Istchenko: I do want to welcome the staff here today and the staff who are listening. When we go into budget debate, I know there are staff who are listening and providing support.

It was a good briefing, and I want to thank them for the briefing. I know they had heard in the briefing that, when we get into debate in the House, a lot of the questions that we ask are political in nature. It does not reflect on the employees in the department. It is about the decisions that are made by the government of the day, by the minister and/or Cabinet, and through their caucus support. I do have questions today, and I just wanted to get that on the record.

Yukoners are wholeheartedly concerned about opportunities. They value and respect the opportunity to hunt in the Yukon. There has been a lot of conversation about the permit hunt system, so I do have a few questions about the permit hunt status and the plans for the upcoming season. Regarding the permit hunt, I know that there is a plan for changes, an ongoing review and an audit. I would like it if the minister could please provide an update on how the process has changed since last year.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to also acknowledge the great work of the staff of the Department of Environment. I know that, over the course of the last two years, we have made significant advancements in the department. I am really proud of that work, and I wanted to respond specifically to the permit hunt lottery process.

As we looked at the process over the transition to an electronic e-system and in working with the Yukon Bureau of Statistics, we have attempted to really look at eliminating human error and trying to address a fair and transparent process as we evolve. Over the course of the winter, the Department of Environment conducted a review of the permit hunt authorization lottery process. The three-pronged approach included a technical review of lottery data and systems, a public and stakeholder survey of the policies and a review of the operation for administering the lotteries.

On the basis of the review and lessons learned, we are pleased to implement a number of changes for 2019 that will look at improvements to the permit hunt lotteries.

The improvements this year include an early application period beginning on April 15 and the ability for applicants to view and verify client history and weighting online. That has never happened before, Mr. Chair. Everything was done through a manual system, which was very hard to track and monitor. This gives the applicants an opportunity to review their own data.

Permit returns accepted before August 1 will result in the applicant's weighting to remain the same, rather than increasing by one as it was in the previous year.

Mr. Istchenko: The minister will remember that the Yukon Party had asked and suggested that maybe it should go to an independent body to be managed, and instead, the Department of Environment partnered with the Bureau of Statistics, I believe. I guess the minister highlighted the lessons learned by some of the changes that she talked about today.

Earlier this year, the government was phoning around to permit holders, including me, to verify their history and to get other information from them.

Can the minister provide the reasons behind this? Why was this being done?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I want to again say that it is important to validate information. I received the call, my husband received the call and other staff members received the call from the Department of Environment. I welcomed that call because it gave me comfort knowing that they were validating the information, cross-referencing, and if the information was wrong, going back in to validate that. I think that was a very good approach.

The department was reaching out to all hunters who purchased licences between 2017 and 2019 to support the transition from paper to electronic harvest reporting. This is a quality control measure. The information gathered during these phone calls confirmed the accuracy and completeness of the permit and harvest data that we have. This will help to ensure that the system is functioning as it is intended.

So far, most hunters have verified that their information was accurately captured. A few have confirmed that some of their harvest information was not captured. This direct contact gives us a quick and easy way to validate this information and inform our next steps with the online reporting tool.

We are looking at ensuring, of course, that we have a clear indication of harvest data. We want to ensure that the records we have are accurate, that the hunters are heard and that the reporting is accurate. We will take the lessons that we have learned and build that into our future management.

The review of the system was done by an outside group called Make IT. I have to say that the Environment staff, in their effort to look at best practices to neutralize the approach, how we engage and how we monitor manual permits — that has happened in the past. We are now working very hard and I would say successfully with the Bureau of Statistics under the management of the good staff at Environment.

Mr. Istchenko: The minister said it was to verify accuracy and that some of it was not accurate. Can the minister explain if some of the information was either lost or misplaced? If this is a reason that they were phoning to clarify — is that the reason?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With respect to verifying and validating the accuracy of information, we have had individuals with two names. I would venture to say that someone like myself, with a name that's Frost-Hanberg — historically my name was Frost in the system, and therefore I would have had two registries. It was an opportunity to eliminate one of those. It was also an opportunity to look at ensuring that we didn't have that happening in other instances.

We also have permits that are issued outside of the department. We wanted to ensure that the permits issued from other vendors were monitored and inserted correctly into our datasets.

When I speak about validating, it is really just to ensure that we are cross-referencing everything. We were really giving an opportunity for those permit holders to provide us

some feedback on what their concerns were or if there were any issues that might arise. Some of the hunters had trouble administering their reports online. It was a really great opportunity for us to walk with them through that process and help them to just navigate.

We also, as I just indicated, tried to eliminate duplicate names on the record for the same individual. That was what the objective was there.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for the little bit of clarification.

My last comment and my last question on the permit hunt system is that I had — I guess he would be a senior citizen if he has been hunting for 60 years in the Yukon and going through different systems that we've had over the years. He said something to me the other day. He phoned me to ask my history. I said that — I'm clarifying or something — I will have to ask in the House like I have just asked in there.

But he made a statement to me that I want to put on the floor of the House today. He said that if they don't have this information correct, how can the department — and he said, "You need to ask the minister: If you can't manage and you have to clarify what permits I had in the last three years, how is the department going to be able to keep and manage the permit hunt system? Ask the minister if she can guarantee that this permit hunt system — these changes and everything — will work." So that's what I'm asking.

Hon. Ms. Frost: The various steps that were taken with the independent review to make it — it was an opportunity to just verify and go back and check that the information was accurate through the Bureau of Statistics, and then this was the recent information call that we went out with. We have a new system, and I can say with certainty that we are comfortable with the information that we have in the system now compared to historically when we were handwriting things and there were over a 100 boxes of materials in the offices, so there was no system and no way of validating whether that information was accurate.

This verifies that we did the checks and balances and it validates and verifies that the information that we had was correct. I cannot give it 100-percent certainty, but I can say with great certainty that we are taking every step and every measure to address any variances that come at us. I want to just assure Yukoners who are coming forward that we are working with them and we are trying to provide a system so that we don't ever have anomalies in our system that might create tension or conflicts within their environment.

We know that there are processes, as member the opposite notes, that are done electronically, and we have senior citizens and elders in our communities that don't know how to use the computer and how to report. We want to be able to provide support to them. We're doing that through this process. We are working with our regional offices and our conservation officers, and we're reaching out to ensure that they have the support that they require and, of course, providing them more clarity and more comfort as we go forward into this hunting season.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for her comments; I sure hope she is right.

I'm going to switch gears a little bit and switch to campgrounds — some of the work and some campground-related issues. My first question is: There have been some issues with the boat ramp at Lake Laberge, so I just want to know if work is going to be done at that actual ramp this year.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I thank the member opposite for the question. What I can say is that we are looking at doing the analysis with that particular boat dock. We're doing an analysis across the Yukon, in fact, within the parks that we're responsible for.

There are other docks that fall under the purview of the Minister of Community Services. So we are certainly looking at those that require immediate supports and are trying to adapt accordingly. We know that this is one that is a priority as well. So we will do the analysis and determine where it fits in, in the future and in the budgeting cycle.

Mr. Istchenko: I believe the issue with Lake Laberge is that it's an early season with the ramps — when the ice first goes off the lake, it's a little bit lower until the water level comes up and then the cement barriers for backing in are high and dry.

So my next question, I guess, is: What are the government's plans for the creation of a new campground in the Yukon Territory? Do they have any plans for a new campground?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I want to maybe just highlight that we have had, in the last couple of years, two new campgrounds, and we are working of course with our parks strategy and looking at specific areas that might require campgrounds in the future. We also are implementing land use plans in the Yukon. Of course, we have the Peel plan that we are working with. That may very well identify a new park. We are engaging with our stakeholders as well. We know that we are exploring options and always looking at going out, through our strategy, with further engagement and hopefully identifying potential areas of interest.

Of course, there are quite a number of campgrounds already in the Yukon, and we're putting significant resources into enhancing and upgrading those campgrounds. We know that the campgrounds are aging. We have equipment and facilities that are aging, and we want to ensure that we put the resources into modernizing those facilities for the comfort and enjoyment of the visitors who come to the Yukon and of course for our Yukoners as well, which means that we need to continue on with conversations with Yukoners. We will do that with our strategies.

Mr. Istchenko: Does the government have any plans for the expansion of any of our existing territorial campgrounds?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I can't say right now that we have any intentions of adding new campgrounds. What we do have is a demand for clean, safe, quiet camping spaces in the Yukon. We are working at putting our investments into ensuring that our campgrounds and our parks that we do maintain are done in a way that provides a safe environment for the users. The

investment in upgrading and maintaining the campgrounds to ensure that we have the resources set aside — I have indicated that we invested \$405,000 for more campsites — so without saying specifically “campgrounds”, but we have more campsites. We have a total of 20 additional campsites at the Tombstone Mountain, Conrad and Congdon campgrounds.

We have done a number of other retrofits and replacements of facilities like the removal of hazardous trees, docks and road upgrades, bear-proofing storage bins, replacing kitchen shelters and so on. We have an expansion on some of the facilities, as I have noted. We maintain 42 roadside campgrounds across the Yukon with a total of 1,000 campsites. This year, we are planning to invest \$833,000 to expand and improve the infrastructure, as I just indicated. To undertake this work, we are relying on the services of contractors from across the Yukon, ensuring that we complete the expansion of the Tombstone Mountain — and the other one that I didn't note, which is the Five Mile campground — as well as the addition of seven sites at the Little Salmon campground and five sites at the Twin Lakes campground.

Mr. Istchenko: The minister had mentioned in her previous answer — she noted the improvements that were happening in all the different campgrounds. Maybe if the department could just later — I understand she is not going to have it all here — get a breakdown of which campgrounds are getting what. The two campgrounds that I want to ask about — the minister had sent a letter to the MLA for Watson Lake about Frances Lake and Simpson campgrounds, that there would be some work done in them last year. Can the minister confirm whether that work was done in those two campgrounds?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I don't have that information. I will endeavour to get that back to the member opposite.

Mr. Istchenko: The Department of Environment is purchasing an excavator to do work at campgrounds, and this government has long made the claim — I've heard it from different ministers — that they are getting out of the business of doing business. There are a lot of local contractors in town who would love the opportunity to get a government contract to do excavator work. It would seem that by purchasing an excavator, the Department of Environment is actually going to take contract work away from local business. Can the Minister of Environment please explain how having her department compete against local contractors can be perceived as getting out of the business of doing business?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Chair, I believe we had this discussion previously in the Legislative Assembly around what we purchase and what we rent and access to the equipment that is required for the work of the department. Last year, we had a really great discussion about the purchasing of new snowmobiles, added supports for conservation officers in the field and the replacing of older equipment.

Equipment in Yukon is in short supply during the summer months, so equipment that we would generally rent is not readily available. We are looking at an alternative, and that is to look at providing and purchasing the equipment that we

need within the Department of Environment and ensuring that our staff are fully trained to provide the supports and services that are needed. That means the purchase of equipment like an excavator, a snowmobile, a four-wheeler or a boat and motor, for that matter.

We use many procurement tools for equipment, depending on the requirement of the job, and we try to provide the best value for the taxpayers' dollar. In this case, I would say that the department has done its due diligence to ensure that it has taken the measures necessary as it looks at the procurement process for equipment it needs within its departmental requirements.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Chair, I think there is a big difference between a snowmobile or a boat and a boat motor when it's a requirement of, say, your conservation officers to go out and make sure people are following the *Wildlife Act*. That is something that they need. We totally understand that, but an excavator — and for the minister to say that you can't get one in the summer. Well, when you need one, you phone the third-party rental. The government has a third-party rental list. It was a little bit late in getting organized this year, which I think was a big disappointment to a lot of industry players out there. But there is a system in place where you call and find yourself an excavator.

Companies in the Yukon that do excavation work — dig ditches — have excavators. I don't really remember the Department of Environment in road construction, excavating and doing ditches, so if they need it, they can use the third-party rental. It's not fair to the contractors out there to just lump an excavator in, so now every CO is going to need an excavator too. Yes, they need snowmobiles, boats and boat motors, but when it comes to excavators, that is something that the private sector does and the private sector should be able to do. I'm going to fundamentally disagree with the minister on that, and I sure hope she will change her mind.

On the Wolf Creek campground playground equipment, can the minister confirm whether they're still planning to go ahead with these upgrades this year? During the briefing — I know that there's a multi-year plan to do the campground equipment. I wanted to ask about Wolf Creek campground this year.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to thank the member opposite for his advice. I will take it under advisement.

With respect to whether or not we go out into looking at purchasing equipment or not, I think that, due to the short construction season, renting appropriate excavators for use in remote locations has proven to be difficult. I rely on the department to give me that advice and make that determination in the best interests of Yukoners and in the best interests of taxpayers. The Department of Environment is procuring an excavator to ensure they then have the means in which to ensure that the procurement and tender process is done in a fair and transparent fashion.

With regard to the last question on the Wolf Creek campground, we have substantial infrastructure replacement in Wolf Creek for this year — 2019.

Mr. Istchenko: There was a question today in the Legislative Assembly about highway maintenance on the Dempster Highway and basically the budget being pretty much not there. The Department of Highways and Public Works usually goes in and makes sure the campground roads are good at the beginning of the season. Tombstone is a huge, busy park. I remember talking with the department about increasing the number of stalls back in my day when I was the minister.

I guess my question would be: Does the Minister of Environment have concerns with the cut in the budgets, such as, for example, our campground up the north highway? The minister has made statements about how we'll be going back to gravel and that they just have to get used to the bumps in the gravel. Well, the tourists love our campgrounds. Yukoners love our campgrounds. Has the minister been lobbying the Minister of Highways and Public Works and pushing the Minister of Tourism to say that we need to maintain, so we need to have budgets for these roads so that everything is up to a safe travelling standard?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I'm not sure about that question. I think it was a bit of a shot across the bow for Highways and Public Works. Really, with respect to Highways and Public Works, I'm not sure that has anything to do with me as the Minister of Environment and campgrounds, but we are making every effort to ensure that our campgrounds are safe. We have replaced the playground equipment; we provide mobility access for campgrounds and campsites. We've provided as many supports as we can for the campgrounds within the budget that we have allocated.

I will do my best to endeavour to ensure that we have campgrounds that are safe and that access to the campgrounds is safe and that the users who come to the Yukon — the campers and the many individuals who use our campgrounds — are enjoying their time while they're here in a safe fashion.

Mr. Istchenko: As has been highlighted by just about every single Yukoner, I think spring has sprung. I think there might even be an opportunity to probably get our campgrounds opened earlier than they have ever been before, so I'll ask the minister if there are any plans for any of the campgrounds to be opened earlier this season.

With the lakes, the ice goes out and people are ready to go with their boats, and the campground is locked up and you can't get to the boat access, so will the minister entertain that opportunity to open the campgrounds earlier?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Great question from the member opposite with respect to opening the campgrounds earlier and potentially keeping them open longer at the end of the season. We are having that discussion as we are looking at our long-term strategy and our outlook on our territorial parks and campgrounds in the Yukon. We know that the expectation of Yukoners is that they want to be able to access it earlier, given the beautiful weather that we are having — and of course at the end of the season, a bit longer as well. We will tie that into the engagement that we are having because that obviously will have some impacts on the budget, the staff and getting the campgrounds ready in time.

We are now in the process of engaging, and we will have that ready to roll out in the next few weeks. We hope to have the results of that by the end of this fiscal year. The unserviced campgrounds, as I understand it, are open now. Those that require servicing will open on May 10 — sorry; my apologies — let me correct that. They will open on May 10, but will not be provided with services, so there are some campgrounds that will open on that date. I understand that is sort of the historical date that they have been opened, but we will look at options in the future.

Mr. Istchenko: Sticking with the early spring, a lot of the campground roads are a little bit of a distance from the main artery, whether it is the Alaska Highway or the Klondike Highway. The access is early too. An example would be the Aishihik road, and that is a campground that I would like to — it is 42 kilometres up the Aishihik road. That road, right now, still has some bison hunters on it, and the road is going to be in need of some love in the springtime before the campground opens up. I am just wondering if the minister — if there is enough of a budget there to get these roads bladed up, whether it is the campground in Watson Lake or Congdon Creek. There are roads going into them, and if they are travelled on earlier, when you get an early spring, they are going to need some work.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I will go back to my previous comment with regard to road upgrades. I am not sure about the Aishihik road or how that is managed. That is done by Highways and Public Works. I would be happy to speak about the campgrounds and provide specific responses to the questions that the member opposite has on the campgrounds. I will just stop there.

Mr. Istchenko: The Aishihik Lake campground is 42 kilometres up the Aishihik road. There is also the canyon — Otter Falls day use area, which is maintained by the Department of Environment throughout the summer. So that is a campground, but it is a ways up the road, and the road is very rough and rutted. That is the question I was asking. I know it is the Department of Highways and Public Works. I used to blade that road first thing in the spring when I worked for the Department of Highways and Public Works.

I am just wondering if that work is going to be done, because the first thing that will happen when the campground opens is that they will be phoning the Department of Environment, which manages campgrounds. That is why I was asking that question. Maybe the minister has a comment.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would say that we do work with Highways and Public Works, but at the end of the day, it is really their responsibility. I will look at ensuring that we have the resources available to provide supports to the campgrounds that I am responsible for. I would be happy to follow up with the member opposite and raise with my colleague the question that was raised by the member opposite.

Mr. Istchenko: I want to switch gears again here. I want to talk about Mandanna Lake fishing regulation changes. The Yukon government has made the decision to impose fishing regulations on Mandanna Lake, which, according to

the lake trout and whitefish population assessment, has healthy population numbers. This decision was made without consultation with the fly-fishing lodge owner along the lake and will result in negative impacts to his business.

The Liberal government was questioned as to who the government had contacted regarding these proposed changes. They stated that discussions only took place with Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. The lodge owner was only made aware of the decision after the fact. The Yukon government should be making every effort to consult with all affected Yukoners.

Can the minister explain why she did not speak with this business prior to making this decision? Will she commit to work with this business owner to try to rectify the situation?

Hon. Ms. Frost: We are working to change the catch and possession limits for anglers on Mandanna Lake. This lake is subject to a special management regime identified under the *Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation Final Agreement* and is very important to that First Nation. Mandanna Lake is one of two lakes in the Yukon with a special designation under the final agreement that protects harvesting rights and food needs of a First Nation as priority over other users. The other lake is Tatlmoin Lake, located within the Selkirk First Nation traditional territory.

The changes will reopen Mandanna Lake for the retention of lake trout, with licensed anglers being able to retain one trout per day, with a catch limit of five in total. The changes were discussed with Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, Carmacks Renewable Resources Council and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, and we also engaged with the public through an online survey. The regulation will come into effect as we work through the federal system, given that this is a special management area under the *Umbrella Final Agreement*.

Mr. Istchenko: Was the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board in support of this regulation change?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Because this is identified under the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and the self-government agreement of Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, it is very clearly defined that the food needs of a First Nation are the priority over other users. The Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, through their engagement, has raised some specific concerns with us and has indicated their support of the regulation change, so that's where we would then venture.

I would say that the Fish and Wildlife Management Board had an opportunity to do the public engagement; they elected to pull this particular engagement off of the wildlife discussion. As a minister, it's under my purview — as the member opposite may know as a former minister — to have that engagement, and the requirement under the agreement defines that I do that, so I did that very respectfully with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation.

Mr. Istchenko: I had asked if the minister could explain why she did not speak with the business prior to making this decision. Why did she not feel that she should speak with this business or consult with Yukoners at all? Will

she commit to work with this business owner to rectify the situation? There are big concerns.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I can verify that the department has had a lot of interactions with the individual, as I have as well. As I have indicated, the special management area, as underlined in the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation process, defines the process forward for us, and that is the direction we have taken.

Mr. Istchenko: Is the government considering regulation changes for any other lakes? Have full consultations either been planned or completed with respect to other lakes, including with residents, business owners or users?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am just getting some clarification on whether or not there were other lakes in the Yukon that fall under this special management process.

My understanding is that Tatlmoin Lake and Mandanna Lake are the two that are identified, and if there are others, it would run through the Fish and Wildlife Management Board process.

What I can say is that we, at this moment in time, are not aware of other lakes. We do invest a lot of time in wildlife management. We know, through the public engagement process, that Yukoners are concerned. They are concerned about long-term management and sustainability of the wildlife and the resources, as are the First Nations. We do want to ensure that we provide opportunities for individuals to be heard, and we can, of course, do that by submitting their concerns on specific areas of interest that might come up through the Fish and Wildlife Management Board process. We will then trigger more consultation on specific areas of concern.

Mr. Istchenko: Just one more thing here — in the minister's response letter to the business owner on Mandanna Lake, she stated — and I quote: "I understand you may disagree with the proposed change, but we cannot defend the status quo regulation on the lake as a best practice in fisheries management."

Can the minister provide evidence showing that the status quo regulation on the lake is detrimental in any way to the fish population? As I understand it, it had been determined that the fish populations on that lake are actually up.

Hon. Ms. Frost: The changes with respect to Mandanna Lake resulted in extensive discussions with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. The concerns through a local traditional knowledge practice and process of the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation obviously needed to be taken into consideration — with their unique relationship with this particular lake and the integration of traditional knowledge with science in terms of fish resources, fish management and the regulations. Their biggest concern was that the catch-and-release fishery resulted, in their view, in mortality, and the First Nation was not comfortable with the level of mortality. This is a unique case.

The *Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation Final Agreement* really defines our relationship with respect to protecting harvesting rights and food needs of a First Nation,

their priority, and of course, traditional practices as we defined this unique circumstance.

Mr. Istchenko: I want to talk a little bit about the Finlayson caribou proposed changes. Regarding the Finlayson caribou herd, the proper process for a closure of hunting there would be to go through the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board. The minister just spoke about that.

As we have previously discussed, the minister skipped that process. Can she provide a rationale for why she skipped the process? What tangible work has been done since the emergency closure of the Finlayson herd was initiated by the minister?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Maybe I'll just start with saying that we have an obligation — when we speak about co-management and co-management of a specific resource that is in decline — and concerns come to our attention. The reaction to that is really to ensure that we protect a species that might be at risk. In this case, we have the Finlayson caribou herd in potential decline, and we have harvest trend data that specifies that. We also have concerns that came to our attention with our discussions with the Ross River Dena Council and the hunting conflict.

The 2017 survey results showed the herd continues to decline, and we want to engage with the Ross River Dena Council to discuss their harvest levels. We know that the population level is currently at 2,700. We know that the species at risk process through Canada has identified boreal caribou as endangered and perhaps that we need to come away with some plans and measures to protect the resources that we currently have. It's really imperative for us to start looking at a management measure that will see the herd grow. The herd was down, which we saw historically at 3,100 — it's down to 2,700, so we're seeing the herd decline.

We know that we can sustain the extraction, as we know historically the population declines once you take a certain number out of the herd. We, of course, target only bulls. The sustainable harvest at this moment in time, given the number, is 27 animals. Taking 27 animals out every year will maintain the same level, and we'll see predation and other things happen and we'll see decline, so we're just looking at permit hunting — then that becomes a concern.

We are working with the Ross River Dena Council on wildlife matters and reconciliation in a way that they're engaged with us, because we really want to achieve positive outcomes for Yukoners. It wasn't about shutting down a hunting opportunity. It was about preserving what we have and trying to grow that herd so that Yukoners will continue to enjoy that in the future. We invited the Ross River Dena Council to participate with us last year in a check station and also to work with them on a true collaborative co-management arrangement.

The current regulations — and we used that measure last year — give the minister the power to set a range of the Finlayson caribou permit hunt numbers, including zero, as the member opposite would know as a former minister very diligently looking and monitoring closely herds of this size and magnitude. We have another herd — and that is the

Rancheria herd — that has very low numbers, and we have to really watch those things closely.

There was no need for us at that time to go to the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, because the regulation gives the minister the authority to make certain changes when there are concerns around conservation. That is what we did last year, and I'm suspecting that we will take some similar measures this year, because we clearly need to look at the sustainability of that herd long-term, and we need to start looking at our relationship with the Ross River Dena Council and trying to get a true management plan in place for that particular herd.

Right now, these are the tools we have available to us, and we are using those tools.

Mr. Istchenko: So I had asked the minister what tangible work had been done since the minister's emergency closure of the Finlayson herd was initiated. The minister initiated this and closed the Finlayson caribou.

What direction has the minister given to the Department of Environment to deal with the Finlayson caribou herd?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I gave a lot of information. We will continue to work with the department and ensure that we protect the herd for many, many years to come, and we will continue to grow the herd. We will take the measures necessary. There is some amazing staff at the Department of Environment who are working and monitoring and who know this herd better than anyone, know the species that are at risk and the tools that are available to us to continue to build and grow the declining herd.

I'm waiting to have that further discussion, and we will work through it with the department.

Mr. Istchenko: I guess all I can say is I look forward to seeing this plan.

I want to talk about the off-road vehicle survey and plans. Regarding the survey for off-road vehicle use and the government's plans — as we have heard from Yukoners, the survey process is flawed and it is biased. My question would be: What are the government's plans for the result of this survey?

Hon. Ms. Frost: We are committed to addressing the environmental impacts of off-road vehicles by developing an effective land-based regulatory regime.

The Department of Environment is working very closely with EMR to address the off-road vehicles — the pressures — and that means that we need to look at our shared responsibility, looking at stakeholders in the Yukon and looking at our consultation processes with First Nations and engagement with stakeholders through a public process.

We are continuing to do that work, and that process will start on April 8. We have gone out quite publicly and made that notice, so you will see it in the papers; you will see it in social media. I am really looking forward to that, and we will have continued open houses throughout the Yukon. I look forward to the engagement on regulatory processes for off-road vehicles.

Mr. Istchenko: We've also heard from Yukoners who have attended the open houses regarding the ORV survey, and at the open houses, they asked about the purpose of this

review and the survey, but depending on who they spoke to — which department they spoke with — they got conflicting information from those different departments. I guess my question would be: Can the minister clarify what the motivation for initiating this survey is?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would venture to say that this is a long-outstanding issue for Yukoners. The member noted earlier we have climate change, we have impacts and effects around and across the Yukon, and off-road vehicles are used on the landscape. These are long-term effects and we're really — the purpose of the review and the purpose of the survey is to get input, because we have Yukoners who use ORVs for businesses, like outfitters, for an example, or traditional users.

We're really trying to protect the environment as we know it. We're seeing ORVs in some very far, remote areas that are tearing up the land. That is a concern for our communities. That is a concern that we're hearing. The proposed regulatory framework for the off-road vehicles will set that tone with the engagement, and it will set the tone with the open houses. Everyone will have a different view, and that really is what the engagement is about. It gives Yukoners a place, a voice and an opportunity to be heard on what they would like to see during the survey process.

We look forward to receiving feedback on the regulatory proposals and the efforts or the initiatives that are out there right now, because we certainly don't want it to be detrimental or impactful on Yukon businesses, but we want it to be controlled in such a way that it doesn't affect the environment.

Mr. Istchenko: The minister spoke a little bit about the motivation for initiating the survey, so is there a vision or desired outcome that the government is looking for?

Hon. Ms. Frost: To have regulation on ORVs.

Mr. Istchenko: I just want to switch back to the permit hunt. Does the minister know or are there any plans for any other species of animal in the Yukon to go on permit hunt this year, whether it be through a regulation change proposal or otherwise?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would say that no, we're not planning on doing any other adjustments, but we will continue to have our engagement with Yukoners, the Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the renewable resources councils and look at the long-term harvest trend report that was released last year — the 30-year trend report — and look at specific moose populations.

As well, we have the Boreal caribou that will find its way into the Peel land use plan process under protected species in the Yukon. We will have to take some measures as we look into the future, but for 2019-20, there are no changes.

Mr. Istchenko: I want to talk a little bit about and ask a question about the surcharge on single-use plastic bags. Regarding the surcharge on single-use plastic bags, the survey did not give the option for people to say that they didn't agree with this idea. It seems actually to be a theme across Liberal government surveys. You can't say no; you just tick a box and make a comment.

What is the government's plan going forward on single-use plastic bags?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I can say that I have attended quite a few public engagement sessions, and Yukoners are passionate. They are passionate about the environment, and they are passionate about ensuring that we don't dispose of plastics of any sort in the environment. We are committed to continual improvement in recycling and environmental stewardship, and we look at working with our partners to do so.

The Minister of Community Services and I are working with community stakeholders to look at providing solid recommendations on single-use plastics and the recommendations to ensure that we have a process for surcharges and the *Designated Materials Regulation* process. Single-use products, such as shopping bags, are a major concern in our environment. We all passed a motion to work toward the elimination of single-use plastics in the Yukon, and we will work and endeavour to do that.

Mr. Istchenko: When the minister said "public consultation", was that with the business community — the local chambers of commerce?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I will endeavour to provide the member opposite with the members who participated in the community engagement session. I will of course have to consult with my colleague the Minister of Community Services to get specific details. I look forward to having future engagement and discussions with Yukoners.

If there are members of our community who have not been engaged or who want to be engaged, I would really encourage them to come forward and participate in that process. My understanding is that we have had quite an extensive array of participants from our business community and of course from our local chambers. As we go out more broadly into our community and into the Yukon communities, we will try to capture the voices of Yukoners and, in particular, look at the respective communities and stakeholders in those communities as well.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for the answer. Does this surcharge include paper bags?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Not to my knowledge. I will have to get back to the member, but the discussion right now that we are having is on single-use plastics.

Mr. Istchenko: Another question: Can the minister provide an update on the government's wetlands policy? Have they held consultations? When will there be a final decision?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The broad Yukon wetlands policy — we started the process of having some internal discussions and now having broader discussions. The objective is to work with Yukon First Nations, transboundary aboriginal groups, federal and municipal governments and industry and organizations to develop a broad Yukon wetlands policy. The Yukon-wide policy is not aimed at resolving current challenges in specific wetland areas like the Indian River, for example, but we will ensure that we have a guided process that looks at permitting into the future. We have worked collaboratively with specific First Nations on specific wetlands and identifying them — like the Nisutlin wildlife sanctuary, for example, or the Whitefish wetlands.

Really, we want to build a strong and consistent united management project that responds to the values and concerns of Yukoners. That will take some time, as the member opposite knows. We have different processes that we have to follow, and that means that a Yukon-wide policy will be built on a policy foundation that recognizes wetlands as a very important ecosystem, and components of that, in terms of planning, will find its way into specific land use planning processes.

The wetlands policy roundtable session with the stakeholders — I believe the fourth session to take place with stakeholders, industry and First Nations — will start tomorrow. As that continues, we will continue to draft a policy that will recognize the ecosystems around us, establish specific legislation and operational guidelines, address policies and ensure that we have that in place for the future.

Mr. Istchenko: I want to go back to campgrounds again and the Kusawa campground. I want to specifically talk about the boat launch and the dock there. Are there any plans to do work when it comes to the dock or the boat launch in the future at Kusawa?

Hon. Ms. Frost: We are assessing that specific campground as well, but this year, we don't have the resources in the budget to repair the boat launch in that area.

Mr. Istchenko: So regarding the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board — I have a few questions. What is happening with the board's positions, and are they all currently full?

Hon. Ms. Frost: We are working collaboratively with Yukon First Nations through the Yukon Forum. Together, we have identified priorities and established a working group on fish and wildlife management for the Yukon.

We know that the Fish and Wildlife Management Board — through the appointment process, CYFN has a number of appointments that it makes, and we also have a number of appointments that we make through Government of Yukon. So we are working collaboratively in looking at the recommendations on the nominations for appointments.

I understand that right now we have a couple of vacancies at CYFN and those are forthcoming. We also have some members — with all our members, as I understand, the seats are still full and expire at the end of April. So I believe that's what I have right now.

Mr. Istchenko: When the YG positions expire in April, will they be filled?

Hon. Ms. Frost: We are working with the working group that was identified through the Yukon Forum. They will come forward with some recommendations, looking at the fundamental role — and of course we will review that when it comes back to me. The results of this review may include recommendations on how the board nominations and appointments are made. So I will wait for the conclusion of the review before identifying the Government of Yukon nominees going forward.

At this point, I can say that we will not proceed with the April 25 appointments until we have received the results of the recommendations from the committee that has been

established under the Yukon Forum to provide specific recommendations.

Mr. Istchenko: So regarding the review of the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board — a company out of Ontario was sole-sourced to review the board. Why was this approach to the review chosen, and how was the company chosen?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Through the Yukon Forum, the Yukon First Nation chiefs made a specific recommendation on reviewing the Fish and Wildlife Management Board in the confines of chapter 16, wanting to ensure that we look at practices going forward and, in particular, that the chapter serves the public interest in the evolving world around us — and looking at reconciliation and land and resource management.

The results of the review will include recommendations on the nomination process. The independent task force, which was established by the Yukon Forum, contracted with CYFN — although I understand that the work is often reviewing a process like this and other processes in terms of co-management and management measures. The company is Stratos, and they are working independently and are providing recommendations to this working group. This will then find its way back to the respective parties.

Mr. Istchenko: I'm not sure if I got an answer on how the company was chosen.

Hon. Ms. Frost: The working group that was established decided on the company, and the company, as I understand it, had specific experience in this particular field of work. That was why they were chosen — because of their expertise.

Mr. Istchenko: Sticking with the review process — why is the federal government not part of this review process?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would say that the respective parties here in the Yukon implementing the self-government agreement, — which are the respective First Nations, of which there are 11 in collaboration with the Government of Yukon through the Yukon Forum — identified a review process. They selected a number of individuals who work on this oversight committee to oversee the process, and they hired this particular company because of its expertise.

As noted, if there are any specific changes to our recommendations to the self-government agreement or processes, then the federal government would be made aware of them, and we would then go through the process, but I would think that the federal government would leave it up to the jurisdiction to do its due diligence and then provide them with the results of their review and proposed changes.

Mr. Istchenko: I want to clarify what the minister said earlier. The CYFN appointments will be reappointed, but in April, when the government members who are due for appointment — there will be no reappointments until the review is done. So when will the review be done?

Hon. Ms. Frost: What I can say is that the board, as it exists, will still have quorum. The *Umbrella Final Agreement* requires CYFN to come forward with its recommendations if it so chooses. If it decides that it wants to go through the

results of the recommendations, then it's their prerogative. The *Umbrella Final Agreement* defines that process, and we are obligated then to follow through on their particular request.

Mr. Istchenko: When will the review be done?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The review will be completed at the end of the 2019 year.

Chair: 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.

The matter before the Committee is general debate, Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 210, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2019-20*.

Mr. Istchenko: Welcome back from break, everyone.

My next question is to the minister. As I understand it, there was an incident involving the Department of Environment that resulted in the discharge of a firearm in a helicopter, which caused damage to the helicopter. Can the minister confirm this and tell the House what happened and what action the government is taking to prevent accidents of this type in the future?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I can verify that the incident did happen. I want to just acknowledge that no one was hurt, thankfully. Of course, all safety precautions are taken and incidents like this do happen from time to time. We are doing the incident report and investigation and looking at addressing that. If there are changes to be made, we will consider that, but the investigation is ongoing.

Mr. Istchenko: The Alsek Renewable Resources Council was working on a proposal to see the review of the Department of Environment and their working relationship with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the renewable resources councils. Can the minister confirm when this work is to be done?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Can I maybe ask the member opposite to restate his question? I didn't quite understand what he was asking.

Mr. Istchenko: The Alsek Renewable Resources Council was working on a proposal to see a review of the Department of Environment and their working relationship with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the renewable resources councils.

Can the minister confirm if this happening and when it is going to be done?

Hon. Ms. Frost: We work with the committee from the Yukon Forum. The objective is to engage with all RRCs across the Yukon.

Mr. Istchenko: Can the minister clarify then that, through the Yukon Forum, they are looking at the Department of Environment and the Department of Environment's

working relationship with the board and councils? Is that what she is confirming that they are doing?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would say it is a comprehensive review.

Mr. Istchenko: Sheep and goat control order — a question I have is: Who has the government consulted on the fencing requirements around sheep and goat control?

Hon. Ms. Frost: In October, letters were sent to all Yukon First Nations as well as key stakeholders to solicit input on implications to the control order. A number of wildlife agencies and groups have been advocating for this for several years, and the Department of Environment is working with the Agriculture branch — and that's with Minister Pillai.

The specifics on who was consulted — I would endeavour to give the member opposite the specific list, but I know for certain that we went out and did the engagement and reached out to our stakeholder groups, and these were the recommendations that resulted from that.

Mr. Istchenko: Just to clarify for the minister — the sheep and goat control order — there is a fencing requirement, and I'm asking for where this fencing requirement came from. Who did they consult with to find out what is needed for this? I look forward to the answer when the minister gets back.

Another question is: How many staff are currently employed within the animal health unit and what are their responsibilities?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I want to just talk a little bit about the consultation process. The Yukon First Nations and RRCs, the Fish and Wildlife Management Board and Yukon Agricultural Association, Growers of Organic Food Yukon, Yukon Wild Sheep Foundation, Yukon Fish and Game Association and Yukon Outfitters Association were all involved. I said I would get back, but thank God for electronics — we were able to get that at our fingertips. The number of staff — I believe we have five staff currently, but I will verify that for certain.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for that, but what I was asking for is — I understand and I know who was consulted while they were developing this, but after they developed it, now there is an actual fencing requirement. I know the minister doesn't have the answer. I just want to know where the department got the fencing requirement. Who did they consult with to say, "What should this fencing requirement for domestic sheep look like?" That is what I am asking.

Maybe the minister does have the answer, so I will sit down.

Hon. Ms. Frost: The control order was issued under the *Animal Health Act* and will come into force January 1, 2020. The engagement and how we came to the recommendation was that the chief veterinary officer and the program vet administrates the processes — I guess the control order — through the environmental lab coordinator and animal protection officer as well as looking at a cross-jurisdictional scan. We have also looked at engagement with the agricultural industry. The objective here is to prevent nose-to-nose contact and eliminate contact between wild and domestic sheep. It is an outcome-based measure, so no

specific — I would say that it allows us some flexibility with specific circumstances.

We will be working with the farmers on a one-on-one basis, and we will also be working with EMR. It sets the parameters for us, and it was done through good faith discussions, consultation and of course best practices.

Mr. Istchenko: Another question: Has there been a reduction in the baseline data capture in the Water Resources branch?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am not able to respond to that specific question. I don't believe there is, but I will endeavour to get the information for the member opposite. I will speak further with the department.

The water monitoring and data program is a long-term monitoring network with respect to baseline data monitoring programs to study the trends. The research projects and work that we're doing on the various well sites and water monitoring systems throughout Yukon means that, of course, we need to make some adjustments.

There is no increase in the data groundwater monitoring program. We currently have 35 wells, but we also know that we operate 95 hydrometric stations, 57 snow survey stations, eight meteorological stations, 46 groundwater stations and 13 water quality stations. Our biggest work is the hydrometric work and really just to look at water levels and discharge amounts. It's really imperative as we look at precipitation and snow pack levels, enabling us to provide really safer communities and predictions in the future, so data is a significant component of what we do in Environment through the Water Resources unit.

I know that they're doing really great work. Of course, with climate change and impacts, we know that the effects are quite evident, so we are working with department staff and adapting accordingly. I know we may have to make changes in the future, but at the moment, we are looking — as noted in the budget under Water Resources, the project involves the purchase and installation of equipment for expansion of the hydrometric and water quality monitoring networks and meteorological stations. These, combined together, provide the key information that we require for management. So the \$45,000 increase to groundwater monitoring wells to improve data collection and \$10,000 for equipment for water strategy implementation and meteorological stations is also another key forecaster for us. So that's what we have with respect to the specific budget item that's under discussion.

Mr. Istchenko: Last fall, the Yukon Fish and Game Association raised the issue that the Premier had refused to meet with them regarding the Finlayson herd. The media asked the Premier why he was refusing to meet with them. He said that he would. Can the minister confirm if the Premier has met with the Yukon Fish and Game Association to discuss this issue?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would venture to say that the responsibility of fish and wildlife management rests with the minister responsible and not with the Premier, so we have

followed through on our due diligence in working with the stakeholder groups and with the Fish and Game Association.

Mr. Istchenko: Since then, has the minister met with the Yukon Fish and Game Association?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I have not recently, but that's not to say that I won't. I'm always open to discussions. If I were to receive an invitation, I would be happy to speak with the Fish and Game Association on any specific matter that they would like to have a conversation with me about.

Mr. Istchenko: Just to confirm then — the Premier has not met with the Yukon Fish and Game Association?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I will say that the Premier has given me a specific mandate to work as Minister of Environment with the stakeholder groups, and I will endeavour to do that. My understanding is that they are quite pleased with the process. We have a good working relationship, and we look forward to future engagement with them.

Mr. Istchenko: I will take that as he has not.

Next question: How many FTE positions in the Department of Environment are vacant?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I don't have that specific information, but I can say that as the positions open which are vacant, we work to fill the vacancies. Some of the vacancies we have are, of course, specialized — recognizing that it is a bit challenging filling the vacancies. We know that we have had a number of retirements. I want to just acknowledge the staff members who have spent their career working with the Department of Environment.

The personnel budget in the current budget, under O&M expenditures, equates to the overall budget — \$23,410,000 — so 57 percent of the budget. That represents 218.6 FTEs, and we have now included, in this main estimate, two new FTEs, and those are for the class 1 notification of our assessor and sheep control veterinarian. That is what we have right now and we — as do all departments — have vacancies from time to time. We will work diligently to ensure that we fill all of the positions.

One of the things that we have taken to ensuring is that we fully implement the obligations of chapter 22 when we look at a representative public service. That means that the Department of Environment has an obligation — and we are working with our communities as well — on some co-management arrangements and working with capacity development within the communities.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Chair, I am being told that the vacancy rate could be as high as 40 percent in the Department of Environment. Can the minister comment on maybe what the reason for this would be?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I believe I just did. There are retirees — we have a number of senior positions that employees have retired from, and we are working to replace those positions. We do have a number of vacancies and that is given in any department. As a department of 218, we have a number of vacancies. Currently we have a very active employee stream, and a number come on in the summer and a number leave because of the seasonal arrangements as well. I'm not able to

specifically give any numbers, but knowing that we have quite a large employee pool, it fluctuates.

Mr. Istchenko: When an employee retires, changes profession — these vacancies — does the department do an exit survey on the employee?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I believe that the department works quite closely with the Public Service Commission on employee engagement — engagement strategies to ensure that we have a respectful workplace and that we learn from experiences. Of course, with employees who have been there for 20 years, you clearly want to look at what they have to offer as they leave their jobs. They have lots of experience, for sure, and lots of wisdom. So we always want to ensure that we provide that opportunity in a way that allows them to leave and provide us the valuable information that they have.

It says in the binder that the number is 218, but I didn't read it all, so I'm just going to correct myself. We actually have 218 FTEs, and we have 288 active employees.

Mr. Istchenko: This is near and dear to the riding of Kluane and to all Yukoners. My last question is about salmon.

From the briefing, I know that there is work being done with the federal government that is 100-percent recoverable. I know all about that. I have sat in on the lectures at Kluane Lake and many of the other ones because they are so important.

I'm just wondering what the minister has done to support the Yukon River salmon, and of course, our Alsek drainage salmon. Is there any other work being done in the department besides these initiatives with the federal government?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would say that the management process for salmon rests with the federal government. The Yukon government has an obligation to manage the waters — the habitat — and we do that respectfully with our partners.

What have I done personally? I don't know if that was the question, but I have met with the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee, I continue to engage with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and I'm doing an opening with the Yukon River Panel.

I spent the majority of my time as the chair of the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee and on the international committee as well — on the Yukon River Panel — so I do have quite a lot of experience in terms of recommendations brought to the federal government.

We continue to support the individual First Nations as they develop and design their respective salmon management plans and ensure that they have the supports that they require. It really means that they have taken measures into their own hands, which I want to commend them for because that is really a big step. It means that they have limited their access to the food source that they have relied on for generations and are now restricting that to ensure that they have the salmon returning to the salmon spawning grounds.

That is what we are doing. We will continue to work with them and support the monitoring programs that we have in place in the Yukon.

Mr. Istchenko: That concludes the questions that I have. I am going to turn it over to the Third Party. I want to

thank the staff who are here and the staff who are sitting in those offices providing information to the minister. Keep up the good work.

Ms. White: I thank my colleague and welcome the officials here in their capacity. It is lovely to have you. I have a series of questions, as you might imagine.

I spend a lot of time on the website, because websites are where you go to look for information. I have to say that between the previous website, the new website and the interchanging of the two websites together — to say that it causes frustration is probably a bit of an understatement. With the Department of Environment website in the old format, it was quite easy to find things, including that it had the classifications — camping and parks, hunting, fishing, trapping and it goes all the way across. The new website — sometimes you just take a stab in the dark to do a search word that will hopefully take you to what you are looking for. I have had some struggles that way.

Many of the questions that I have right now are around the establishment of territorial parks. Under territorial parks, we have Agay Mene, Asi Keyi, Coal River Springs, Herschel Island, Kusawa, Fishing Branch, Tombstone and one other one that I can't pronounce. The questions that I have are for the ones that say "park in progress". For example, if I follow the link — to start with, let's say Agay Mene. We will follow the link, the "park in progress". It says that the park management is currently on hold. I guess the first question I have is: How long has it been on hold, how long will it be on hold, and what are the next steps to making Agay Mene the territorial park it is supposed to be?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I don't have specific information on the Agay Mene park and the process there. I understand it is located on Atlin Lake. It currently is on hold, and we are working with the First Nations to finalize the process, and that is respecting their processes as well.

Ms. White: That is a nice segue into the Southern Lakes woodland caribou. The Carcross/Tagish First Nation has respected the caribou population in the decline that it was in and they chose not to hunt — so not even — no hunting. However, the Southern Lakes woodland caribou cross over into British Columbia where there are outfitters who still hunt the woodland caribou. And then, of course, you would have people coming in from the Atlin area with caribou in the back of their truck and gassing up at places like Montana Services, and you can imagine the frustration. I asked this of the previous minister as well, and my question remains: What kind of conversations are happening jurisdictionally between Yukon and British Columbia in regard to the Southern Lakes woodland caribou?

Hon. Ms. Frost: My understanding is that we have the relationship with the Carcross/Tagish Renewable Resources Council, and the management of the Southern Lakes caribou is one that is of the utmost importance to this government — to Southern Lakes and to all of Yukon, because they've done really a tremendous job in protecting that caribou herd. We have repeatedly asked BC to confirm to Yukon what and if

they are harvesting. We are continuing to have that engagement.

We are approaching this in a way that is a bit progressive in pushing BC to get us the information and also to look at including that in the harvest management plan with all parties. We have control over what we do on the Yukon side, and sometimes it's a little difficult when we look at cross-border discussions. We will continue to have that fulsome discussion.

I know that caribou and species at risk and barren-ground and boreal caribou are on the decline. We really want to ensure that we have an effective management plan. We currently have an inventory program with BC in collaring the caribou so we know when the caribou go across the borders. We will continue to have that dialogue. Hopefully we can get more answers and get a better management plan in place.

I know that we've done really great work up to this point. The member opposite makes some really great points, and I want to just acknowledge that and acknowledge that we will continue to work with our colleagues in BC.

Ms. White: I've been making those really good points about the Southern Lakes woodland caribou for eight years now. The issue has continued on.

Moving on to the next part, we have Asi Keyi Territorial Park. It talks about the management planning that began in April 2015. The last consultations were in April 2016. The website says that we're currently at stage four of six — identifying management issues and options. What I wanted to know is what the expected finishing date was.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thanks for the question. My understanding is that the same process that we would go to on the other files — that we are working with the First Nations and working through their process to resolve the management plans in their respective traditional areas.

Ms. White: I guess part of the frustration from this side is that it is kind of like land use planning in that this was agreed upon during the settlement of land claims — just to know that this has been identified as a high-priority area for First Nations. It is not a criticism of this government. It is probably just a criticism of governments in general.

If we move on to Kusawa Territorial Park, it also talks about how it is in progress. What I should say is that the links for the Asi Keyi Natural Environment Park that you can tap within the website take you to this beautiful website. When I go into the Kusawa park site and tap on any of the links that they have — including the Kusawa management — I get server error 503 — “information not found”. I was trying to learn more, and I can tap multiple links within the Kusawa park, but they all take me to “server not found”.

I am just highlighting that for the Internet whizzes within the Department of Environment. The links within documents just don't go anywhere right now.

My question is: Where are we in the Kusawa plan? It says — and I quote: “A Steering Committee recommended a park management plan to respective governments in January 2016. This plan was jointly reviewed by the Government of Yukon and the Carcross/Tagish, Champagne and Aishihik, and Kwanlin Dün First Nations and is in final stages of approval.

Visit the Kusawa Park Steering Committee website for more information about the park management planning process.”

Could the minister tell me more about where we are in that process, as far as getting that park protected?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would say that the Kusawa park plan has gone through its process, and we are now in the final stages of making —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Ms. Frost: Would you like me to respond? I would be happy to.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Chair: Ms. Frost has the floor.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I thought the Member for Whitehorse Centre had a specific question that she wanted to ask. I was just clarifying — I apologize, Mr. Chair.

I understand that the Kusawa park has gone through its final stages. Two weeks ago, I met with the chiefs of the three respective First Nations, and we are waiting for that process to finalize.

Ms. White: That's exciting news. Do we have kind of a timeline for when that might be finalized?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The process rests with the respective chiefs at this point. We have met with them. We have had a great discussion on when we could essentially implement the plan, so we are continuing to have that dialogue.

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

After two years of being in the Third Party, I still am not used to the time frame. Typically, when I would start the budget debate, I would start with compliments for the department, but I got right into my departments and the websites I couldn't find. So the compliments that I would like to offer to the Department of Environment to start — I apologize, because typically they were first. I would like to congratulate the department on the Wolf Creek campground accessible trail. I have a couple of friends who use wheelchairs, and that trail is accessible by wheelchair and it is fantastic. It is a beautiful thing to have. It takes you to the river; it has a beautiful outlook point. I think it's going to be one where people who are travelling through the territory and who are looking for accessibility are going to start looking for similar things. That's lovely.

My question is: Are we planning on building any other accessible trails for the campgrounds that are now very clearly marked on the map as being accessible?

Hon. Ms. Frost: As part of the broader strategy for parks, we want to ensure mobility access for all of the parks. Accessibility really needs to extend beyond the trails. We want to make sure we do that, ensuring that we have specific campsites that are accessible and readily available. I think that's our key priority.

Ms. White: Are there any other campgrounds where the government is looking at building accessible trails?

Hon. Ms. Frost: At the moment, I can't answer the question specifically, but I can say that we will tie back into the park strategy and the discussions that we're having through the season. We are open to suggestions and recommendations as we look at specific areas. We will take

that under advisement and open up dialogue and discussions around accessible trails.

I really think we want to ensure that we don't have restrictions but that we have opportunities for all Yukoners, no matter what their condition is, and we want to work on ensuring that we provide that opportunity.

Ms. White: I look forward to those announcements.

It may stun members of this Chamber to know that the views of the Yukon NDP veer quite drastically from those of the Yukon Party members, so I was happy with the ORV consultation.

I had a great time talking with both the staff from the Department of Environment and those from Energy, Mines and Resources. I do appreciate the survey. Again, this is something that I have been talking about for eight years, along with other things. I am looking forward to seeing that, so kudos and congratulations to those members from the Department of Environment who were at those consultations because I know, based on some of the comments I saw on the wall that they weren't always going to be easy. They did a fantastic job of having those conversations with people and letting them say what they needed to say. That is a compliment.

I also have looked at the survey and filled out the survey for single-use plastics, and I have one criticism for that survey which is: Nowhere on that survey does it allow you to choose banning the plastic bag, which is a conversation that the Minister of Community Services and I have had. I would like that to have been an option, but I do appreciate the work that is being done there by the Department of Environment. I thank you for that.

Now moving back to my questions, during the 33rd Legislative Assembly, I had questions — the minister just talked about how salmon are the responsibility of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans; so the Yukon government is responsible for the navigable waters where the habitat is, but DFO is responsible for the salmon themselves.

There is a biologist in British Columbia — her name is Alexandra Morton — and she had been talking about her concerns about fish farming along the Fraser River and the contact between farmed salmon and wild salmon for a really long time. I'm really happy to say that the connection has finally been made between wild salmon and farmed salmon in that they were passing along things like Piscine orthoreovirus.

The issue is that there would have to be a request from the Department of Environment. We talk all the time about how our salmon stocks have crashed. The minister is going to have a very real memory of what the salmon run was like in her community — whereas, having grown up in Whitehorse, I can talk about the fish ladder by the dam, but I can't talk about how it affected my family.

The reason why I bring this up is that in the 33rd when we debated this, I had a motion on the floor asking for the Minister of Environment to ask the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to test for Piscine orthoreovirus. The reason why I asked for that is because, with the paths that salmon would cross in oceans, the Yukon River stock would cross with the

Fraser River stock when they went out to ocean before they came back to lay their eggs.

The question I have for the minister is: Has she considered, or would she consider, asking the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to look at testing for Piscine orthoreovirus to see if one of the answers to our decimated stocks has to do with the fact that they have crossed with the Fraser River salmon in the ocean?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you — great suggestion, and the deputy minister will raise that at his FPT meetings in — I believe it's the middle of April in Saskatchewan. He will raise that to the table, and I believe it is a topic of discussion as well.

Ms. White: That is incredibly exciting because when I first tabled that motion I actually had called Dr. Morton herself to have a conversation, and she was shocked that I had been doing the reading that I had been in trying to understand if that could be a part of our salmon woes.

She said that the only way it could happen was if it was a government-to-government conversation. I thank the deputy minister for that and I wish him well in these conversations. I would love nothing more than to know that was not an issue, but if it was an issue, then I would like to know so that we can address it.

Camping is a really big deal in the Yukon, and today we talked a bit about the Tombstone Territorial Park — if the minister can tell me what the visitor numbers are for the Tombstone Territorial Park information centre, to start.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I don't have that number in front of me, but I will certainly endeavour to get that for the member opposite.

Ms. White: I guess one of the reasons why I am asking is that there is obviously an increased amount of traffic in that area. I say this in terms of having driven the Dempster Highway for the first time as an older teenager, then driving it in my mid-20s, then driving it in my 30s and then driving it now. The park is completely different. It looks quite fancy now, like you could almost be in Banff by mistake because of the lovely buildings and the build-up — which I think is fantastic. But you know, along with that comes the additional pressure of the numbers. At one point in time, there was talk about adding a second trail into the park to reduce traffic on the current single trail that goes in. One of the reasons why there was that conversation is that obviously, as an example, the Chilkoot Trail now is on a permit basis. That is because when it wasn't being regulated, there was just too much traffic for what the trail could handle.

There was talk about adding a second trail. Is that still an ongoing conversation within the department?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I don't have a specific answer on the question that the member opposite had asked about — whether there would be a second trail. It will tie its way into the engagement discussion, and I will certainly raise that back with the staff — or I won't; the DM will — and we will get that information.

With the previous question, the member opposite had inquired about the Tombstone Territorial Park and the number

of visitors there — we had 27,222, which is a 19-percent increase, and we are looking at upgrading the trail plan as part of the ongoing discussions because of the pressures there — or the added visitors, rather. That will be done in association with our First Nation partners. That will take a little bit of time in terms of the engagement, but it is certainly something that we need to take into consideration.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer. That number is mind-boggling. Not that long ago, that was the population of Whitehorse as the capital, so to have 27,000 visitors actually checking in to be recorded there is just an astronomical number. One of the things to consider with the trail and all of the rest of it is that a professional trail takes into account landscape, it takes into account durability and all of the rest of it. We can see it in the mountain bike trails that have been built around the City of Whitehorse and on Montana Mountain, especially. When a trail is purposely put in, as opposed to just letting people off into the woods, you have a lot better ability to protect the space. I hope to see that happen in Tombstone, as opposed to just letting people wander off the one trail.

One of the questions I also have is about the year-to-year increases in campground visits — not just Tombstone, but throughout Yukon. Is there somewhere online or in print where we can look at the visits per campground? The reason I ask is it's nice to see, but it would also be good for my camping purposes as to where I would like to go on the May 10 weekend. If it's not online or in print, is that something the department could provide?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I don't have that information at my fingertips, but I will get the member opposite the numbers that she's looking for.

Ms. White: I look forward to getting that information back.

One of the conversations that we've had at times — part of it was opening up campgrounds earlier in the year. We saw, for example, for tourism purposes, the bathroom building in Carcross at the train station open sooner so that people could access it. I think one of the things we're seeing with campgrounds is the pressure.

Obviously, as Whitehorse grows — we know that the camping fees that we collect are higher than some mining royalties — so the pressures continue to grow. There had been conversations or discussions at one point in time about — I know, for example, that we've limited the amount of time that a camp spot can be saved, so if the minister wants to talk a bit about that change — but has there been any conversation or discussion internally to see about having — not a monitoring program, because that's not what I mean, but for example, if we talk about the campgrounds nearest to, let's say, Whitehorse as the biggest municipality, if there is something that someone could check so that before they drove out to Kusawa, for example, to arrive without spots, that they could look online and it could say that it's full or it has five spots, expected to be full.

The reason why I ask this is that we have campground monitors who check it — that's an entirely different

conversation — but has that been a conversation internally about trying to let people know what's available near the City of Whitehorse?

Hon. Ms. Frost: We don't have any real-time or in-time updates on campsites, but it's certainly a good recommendation for us to consider in the future. As the member opposite noted, it's important, as Yukoners want to go out and camp and we want to ensure that they have access to real-time information. We will work on that as we upgrade and modernize our IT systems.

Ms. White: I would venture as far as saying it doesn't need to be real-time, but closer time. I mean, imagine driving to Kusawa and it is full, and you have two tired kids in the back of the car, so you hit your next campground, and before you know it, you're practically on the way into Haines, Alaska, and you still don't have a spot because it has been busy all the way. It gives people a little bit of an indication. So I thank the minister for saying that maybe IT will look to that in the future.

Just like everyone else in this Chamber, occasionally we have people come in, and they have questions or they have comments or they have observations. One of my recent questions from someone who came in — they wanted to know: What does Environment do to control dust levels in Yukon's campgrounds? Some jurisdictions will use water. Others will use calcium chloride to keep areas damp and the dust down. So what does Environment do to monitor dust or maintain or lower the dust levels in campgrounds?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would say that we don't have any specific strategy for dust reduction in the campgrounds or on the roads in the vicinity of the campgrounds.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I think we probably all knew the answer, but I do appreciate it. It wasn't really my question, so I asked it and I can answer it now.

How many campground monitoring positions are there? From my understanding, a campground monitor, for example, could cover quite a large area. They will drive quite a distance between their shifts to drive through campgrounds. I wanted to know how many campground monitoring positions there were in the territory and what areas they cover.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Currently we have 7.88 park attendants, two park rangers and 2.64 park interpreters, and they travel throughout the Yukon. I can give very specific information on where they maintain supports — I don't have it in front of me, but I would be happy to provide that.

Ms. White: In that information, when it comes back, one of my concerns is that — and the minister responsible for WCB can talk about it — the longer you put someone in a vehicle driving between point A and point B, the more you increase the risk of incidents. One of the reasons I ask is that it is my understanding that some of those positions go very far, so for example, out toward Conrad and then up the Atlin Lake road and afar. I just wanted to know what the coverage is in kilometres. I can wait for that response at a later date.

I have questions about the Beaver River land use plan. What role did the Department of Environment, if any, play in

the development of the resource roads regulations, and if they did play a part, what were their main concerns?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I will consult with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to get specific details, and I would be happy to see what I can do to get that information for the member opposite.

Ms. White: I look forward to getting that information back.

I went to the Beaver River land use planning meeting and there were concerns. Actually, there were a lot of concerns raised about the moose population in that area and questions as to, if a road goes into that area, what baseline data the government or the Department of Environment currently has on moose numbers in the area. That will be the first question.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I will maybe talk more broadly about moose management and not talk specifically about the Beaver River land use planning process.

Last year, we released a harvest trend report that stretches out some 30 years. Every year, we put out a report in the hunters guidebook that just reflects the previous years. A compilation of all of that really just looked at some of the key pressure areas that we have before us with moose and overharvesting in specific areas. We have worked with our First Nation partners and the renewable resources councils on specific areas of concern. We will continue to do that as we look at the total harvest and at specific species in specific areas with the overall objective of the long-term sustainability levels in the Yukon.

We have a lot of work to do, certainly, but we do need to take action and have responsible management on specific areas that we are seeing decline with respect to overall harvest, whether it be indigenous aboriginal harvesting or permit hunt harvesting.

We will feed into the Beaver River planning process before it's completed in 2020, but broadly speaking, across the Yukon, we need to consider all moose management and moose sustainability. As we are hearing from some of our colleagues in some of our communities, if we shut one area down, we get diverted pressures. We are trying to look at it very succinctly across the Yukon to ensure that we provide a Yukon-wide approach to adaptively managing moose harvests across the territory.

The tools that are available to us are defined under the framework that was recommended to the board in 2002. We want to try to upgrade that because we see some trends happening now, and that was highlighted just in last year's harvest trend report. So the data is sort of indicating to us that we're seeing pressures in certain areas.

We are getting more population data in 2019, and we are going to include that in the plans as we work through them with our partners.

Ms. White: I actually think that the conversation around the Beaver River Basin is important when we talk about moose, because there were members from the Na Cho Nyäk Dun and from the community at that meeting who talked about the concerns that they see. Moose have been put

on permit hunts near Whitehorse, it has pushed hunters out, and there has been a visible reduction of moose in that area.

One of the reasons I was asking about this is that I wanted to know in what concentrations moose were being scrutinized in that area as far as numbers and collection and the rest of it. If you add a road into an area, we are going to see access differences.

Another concern that has been raised is that the Beaver River land use plan area is not wide enough in scope, meaning that the impact could be felt on species, especially migratory species, that fell outside of the land use plan area. I wanted to know if the Department of Environment had any thoughts on that. Have they been looking at the migratory patterns, for example, of caribou? We have talked about caribou in the area. Does the Department of Environment have concern about the migratory species that use the Beaver River watershed?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The question around the migratory patterns of caribou will form part of the planning process. Certainly we want to look at gathering specific information on specific species that occupy and use that area. That is being done through the partners. In this particular instance on the Beaver River land use planning process, it involves Na Cho Nyäk Dun, Energy, Mines and Resources and the Department of Environment.

Great questions — I am always open to feedback from our partners and always take into consideration submissions that we receive in the process.

Ms. White: In the ATAC road agreement between Na Cho Nyäk Dun and the Yukon government, section 1(h) states — and I am quoting: “The Minister of Environment shall initiate a process in collaboration with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board towards the timely identification of an adaptive, proactive fish and wildlife harvest regime that will address actual or anticipated increased harvest associated with the Tote Road. This may require the application of restrictions on harvesting all or part of Game Management Sub-zones adjacent to the Tote Road. To support timely and adaptive wildlife management, NND will endeavour to collect data on big game harvest activities of NND citizens in these same areas, including species and sex, and provide annual reports to YG.”

The land use plan is due to be finished one year from now. Can the minister provide us an update on her work and her department's work to date on the identification of an adaptive, proactive fish and wildlife harvest regime for the Beaver River area?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Certainly I want to commit that we will continue to work with our partners. We will look at initiating a proactive approach to the management of fish and wildlife on the ATAC road, and we will do that in collaboration with our partners. We are actively working to address the concerns associated with the ATAC road in collaboration with Na Cho Nyäk Dun.

The portion of the watershed — as we look at development of road access, clearly a co-management arrangement needs to take effect, and we will certainly follow

through on that. We are committed to working and exercising elements of the self-government agreement and ensuring that we have sustainable development as the project advances on the traditional territory of the Na Cho Nyäk Dun, promoting responsible resource development balanced with environmental management, which obviously needs to be demonstrated and be there for Yukoners for future years — and strong government-to-government relationships around fostering reconciliation.

We will continue to work with it as we go ahead and finalize that plan — have that conversation around the initiatives with co-management and potential restrictions if there are restrictions or recommendations in collaboration with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board and our stakeholder partners.

Ms. White: I appreciate the notes that minister just read, but what section 1(h) is talking about is that the Minister of Environment will initiate a process. What I want to know is: Has that process been initiated? What does that process look like?

In that, we are talking about the timely identification of an adaptive, proactive fish and wildlife harvest regime. Is it talking about the actual or anticipated increased harvest associated with it? So I just wanted to know if that has been initiated and what that looks like right now, because this report is due in a year from now.

Hon. Ms. Frost: We will look at initiating that process. We will work with our partners and, of course, monitoring the harvesting data. Monitoring data is really an essential part of the management. We will certainly consider following up on monitoring harvests further. As noted by the member opposite, I am fully aware of the ATAC road and the agreement, and we are actively having conversations with the board.

Ms. White: Earlier this month, the minister said — and I quote: "... the Yukon government is currently working to develop a Yukon Species at Risk Act." She also said: "This work includes preliminary research and discussions with partners, stakeholders and the public to work toward implementing legislation..."

Can the minister give us an update on the work that has been done to date and update us regarding the timeline associated with this new legislation?

Hon. Ms. Frost: We have begun the preliminary research and discussions with our partners on potential Yukon species at risk legislation. Currently the Government of Yukon works collaboratively with several partners to monitor Yukon species. We track the status, of course, of the conservation concerns in Yukon, and we manage and monitor the wildlife accordingly. We assess those listed under the federal species at risk legislation. They are afforded legal protection and undergo mandatory recovery planning processes similar to the boreal caribou in the Peel, as an example. We anticipate that, in future years — but we are currently in the preliminary research and discussions with our partners on the Yukon species at risk legislation.

Ms. White: I believe that the minister just said "years" — plural. Can she give me a ballpark? Are we talking about 2021 or 2022, or are we talking about 10 years past that? What kind of ballpark figure are we talking about for species at risk legislation in Yukon?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I don't have a specific timeline for the member opposite, but we will continue to work on the legislation and, as noted, work collaboratively with our partners to monitor specific species at risk and put in the necessary tools that we have available to us to protect the wildlife at risk.

Meanwhile, we will look at conducting our research and look at working with our partners and designing species at risk legislation specific to the Yukon sometime in the future — but it is on the priority list.

Ms. White: It's my understanding that there have been at least two draft legislations brought to previous ministers — the last one, I think, in 2009. Has the minister, deputy minister or department had a chance to look at what was previously suggested as we head into the creation of species at risk legislation?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would venture to say that, in the past, there has been considerable work done exploring benefit and risk legislation. There has been a lot of work — and I want to just acknowledge that — and that will certainly provide guidance for us and for the department as we look at designing and developing legislation in the future.

Ms. White: I look forward to the day in Environment debate that I don't have to bring up species at risk legislation. The Member for Kluane is familiar, because he was often scrutinized with that similar question. I look forward to the day.

Researchers are developing maps and models of current and future chances of fire risks across the Yukon. This feels particularly relevant with our early spring, when we're seeing our snowpack disappear so quickly. Where are we at in this project? Is the data that we are gathering relevant for this fire year? If it is, how will Environment work with Community Services to share this information?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The member opposite speaks about the plan for forest fires, but I think, broadly speaking, we're talking about climate change and adaptation and some of these significant risks associated with climate change. We know that we currently have 40 percent less snow than we've had historically, which means we have earlier melt-offs, which means we have less water, and the prediction is for a dryer season. I acknowledge that. We're looking at our climate change and adaptation strategy. We will work with the Minister of Community Services and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and Economic Development on a strategy that works for Yukon, ensuring that we protect the forest, but we also need to have a strategic plan available to us. So we are working on that, and I would be happy to share that when it's available.

Ms. White: Just before we end today, I would like to again thank the officials for being here. It's always a pleasure. I will take the opportunity to thank the staff of the Department

of Environment, because the work that they do is really important.

Mr. Chair, for the last eight years, every spring briefing, I get to say that I look forward to the day when the budget for Environment has grown substantially — and I do mean that.

I look forward to having the officials back for the next part of the debate.

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

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. White that the Chair report progress.

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. 210, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2019-20*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

The following legislative returns were tabled March 26, 2019:

34-2-194

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Cathers related to general debate on Vote 12, Department of Finance, in Bill No. 210, *First Appropriation Act 2019-20* — carbon tax exemptions for farmers (Silver)

34-2-195

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Hanson related to general debate on Vote 12, Department of Finance, in Bill No. 210, *First Appropriation Act 2019-20* — revenue as a percentage of GDP (Silver)