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HANSARD

Monday, March 9, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2020 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

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Yukon Liberal Party

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

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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

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

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, March 9, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House that Motion No. 170, notice of which was given by the Member for Whitehorse Centre on March 5, 2020, was not placed on the Notice Paper, as it references a document that forms part of the in-camera documents that belong to a committee.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: I will remind members that Standing Order 50(1) states: "All documents which come into the possession of a Committee or which come into existence in the course of the conduct of the business and affairs of the Committee belong to the Committee before it reports to the Assembly and belong to the Assembly after the Committee reports to the Assembly, subject to any direction of the Speaker acting on an order of the Assembly."

Further, as I noted last fall in my ruling on October 28, 2019, the Annotated Standing Orders offer the following clarification of Standing Order 50(1): "A member appointed to a committee should note that all documents relating to the work of that committee belong to the committee. This limits the ways in which the member can share these documents and what can be done with the documents once the committee has concluded its business, or the member is no longer a member of the committee."

I would also draw members' attention to Standing Order 7(6), which states: "Unless otherwise directed by the Assembly, it is not a breach of privilege for a member of a Committee to discuss with the members of the Assembly, on a confidential basis, matters that are under consideration by the Committee."

It is important to note that, while Standing Order 7(6) provides for members of a committee to discuss with other MLAs, in confidence, matters that are under consideration by committees, it does not provide for confidential committee matters to be shared with Cabinet staff or caucus staff, departmental officials, the media, members of the public, or others.

The unauthorized disclosure of in-camera committee proceedings contravenes the Standing Orders and may be found to constitute a contempt of the Legislative Assembly or a breach of parliamentary privilege.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Member for Whitehorse Centre.

Ms. Hanson: I'm not sure if this is a point of order or a point — I am in no way disputing the ruling of the Speaker. I just simply wish to clarify that the motion that I tabled last Thursday in no way breaches the confidentiality of Public Accounts. It refers to a letter that was sent to the Chair, along with 20 other people in this territory. Many other people across the territory have seen this letter. My motion doesn't take any reference to the confidential discussions or decisions made by the Public Accounts Committee.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Thank you. I will review your assertion with the Clerks-at-the Table and return to you, or to the House, as may be required.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I would ask my colleagues to help welcome some special guests who are here today for the tribute on International Women's Day. I would first like to recognize the president of the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle, Adeline Webber — thank you so much for coming — Yukon Human Rights Commission staff members Madeleine Desroches and Lisa Stewart — thank you for being here. We have staff from the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre: Norma Germaine, Sarah Langlois, and Charlotte Kane — thank you so much for being here. I'm not sure if we have members from Queer Yukon. They were to also be here. I apologize if you're here and I'm not recognizing you — thank you for being here.

I want to recognize our wonderful Cabinet staff who are here today with us: Emily Farrell, Edwine Veniat, Michele Shaw, and Sylvia Anderson — thank you — and I just want to recognize all of the Cabinet staff, the incredible women who work in our office and who are listening right now. Thank you so much for all your hard work, and I thank everyone for being here today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will be giving a tribute today on the Buckwheat Classic, and there are lots of friends and organizers from the Buckwheat here today. If we could please welcome Jim Hawkings, Beth Hawkings, Tracey and Jason Bilsky, and Trevor, Lareina, Audrey, and Ryder Twardochleb. From the Whitehorse Cross Country Ski Club, we have Dermot Flynn and Jonathan Kerr. We have Sue Meikle, Karen Thompson, Lindy-Jo Aston, Tom Fairman, Sara and Lene Nielsen, Alain Masson, Tanya Astika, Coralie and Tom Ulyett, Megan Cromarty, and I know that Mr. Jeff Brady from Skagway was too sick to make it, but he's listening in, so a little shout-out there.

We also have Mr. Dominic Bradford and his Yukon Montessori School class. Here I go; I hope I get this right: We have Gwen, Minty, Josephine, Nyah, Asher, Fin, who is

wearing some of Team Yukon's gear, which is great — Baden, Coco, Mischa, Elliot, Ayla — I hope I get this right — Tyne — I hope I pronounced that correctly, thank you — and we also have Luka with a “k”, Luca with a “c”, and Lucas, also with a “c” — if we could welcome them please.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of International Women's Day

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I'm proud to rise today on behalf of our Liberal government in recognition of March 8, International Women's Day. Today is a day to recognize the many achievements of women and girls and to raise awareness of the work left to be done. This year's national theme is “#BecauseOfYou”. There is a beautiful social media campaign that's running right now and a website honouring the change-makers from across our country who have led the work on gender equality, which I encourage my colleagues to explore.

This interactive map of Canada includes two notable Yukon women — Ione Christensen and Martha Black — who, between the two of them, have accomplished a number of firsts in our territory and our country. We all know that there are many more Yukoners whose stories could be told. There are, in fact, 25 really good examples of those on display right in our foyer.

I'm sure that we all have someone in mind who has been a change-maker in our life, someone who has fought long and hard for gender equality. I think about the elders and mentors in my life, the many women I work alongside today, but also the matriarchs who surrounded me when I was growing up. One of them is really Adeline Webber. She has been a change-maker for me.

Because of these women and many others, the needle on gender equality is still moving. It was because of grassroots movements and advocacy that a national inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls began in 2016 and finished in 2019. Now all levels of government and all Canadians have the opportunity to respond to the calls for justice outlined for us. Thank you to the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council, the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle, and the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society for working in partnership with us in building a Yukon-wide strategy on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls aimed at changing the story.

In addition to growing awareness on the barriers facing indigenous women, our country is still learning more about the truth of women in the LGBTQ2S+ community. Transgender and non-binary Canadians have faced discrimination and barriers for decades.

But this is changing, Mr. Speaker, and we are very proud of that. We are looking forward to working with Queer Yukon and all LGBTQ2S+ organizations in our territory to learn from their expertise so that we can make some real changes toward greater inclusion in our government and in our territory. We are proud to work closely with and support the many women's

organizations in Yukon. We know that organizations like the Yukon Women's Transition Home Society, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, Dawson Women's Shelter, and Help and Hope for Families in Watson Lake provide not only basic needs, but also offer advocacy, navigation, and community-building opportunities for all women and children.

Organizations like Women in Trades and Technology, Girls Rock Camp, and the Women's Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub encourage young women to see themselves in those spaces. Les EssentiElles, Yukon Status of Women's Council, and many more organizations are working every day to break down the barriers that still exist for women and gender-diverse Yukoners.

I encourage all of us to think of those people in our lives who showed us the importance of gender equality and to take some time to tell them, if you can, that it is because of you that changes are happening.

Ms. McLeod: I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to women across the Yukon and around the globe on International Women's Day, celebrated annually on March 8.

On this day, we celebrate the achievements of women and the incredible impacts that those achievements have made on our societies worldwide. Today, those accomplishments are celebrated, and awareness of the gender-based injustices that women have faced for centuries is being raised within our communities.

Historically, the accomplishments of women were not always recognized. Indeed, women themselves were not always recognized. The Yukon is home to a number of a trail-blazing women and men whose voices have amplified change and equality over the years. We have teachers and lawyers, medical professionals and engineers who are breaking barriers day after day. We have front-line workers who work and advocate on behalf of women and children and tradespeople doing all they can to ensure a safe, welcoming, and successful environment for all, regardless of gender.

Steps are being taken to address gender-based injustices daily. It's our job as Yukoners, here in the Legislature and across the Yukon, to recognize that there is more work to be done. Women continue to face sexism, gender-based violence, and discrimination every day. We must continue to work on breaking down the barriers that are preventing us, as a society, from achieving full gender equality. We must listen to the stories of women, of those who are most at risk of experiencing violence and discrimination, and from there, we can promote change where it's most needed.

International Women's Day was created following a campaign for change led by a group of women in 1908 who marched through the streets of New York City to demand better pay, shorter working hours, and voting rights. We have come a long way since 1908, and while many of these issues have been resolved, the day holds its importance, and gender-based injustices are still faced around the world, but we can celebrate the incredible distance that we have come. We can celebrate the

accomplishments of women across the country and across our nation's history.

The biggest action that we can take is to give our children a strong start in life. We can teach them that achieving equality is possible and that each of us holds the tools we need to succeed.

Ms. White: Today, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to acknowledge all of those women who are sometimes forgotten on International Women's Day. Yesterday, today, and tomorrow, we celebrate resiliency and strength in all her forms. Yasmin Coley captured this beautifully in a post I saw yesterday. "Happy International Women's Day to the incarcerated women, the illiterate women, the women who said a silent prayer for their safety before going to sleep in an unsafe public space, for the street level sex workers, for the one's who have a disability, to the one's who have never picked up a feminist text, to the transwoman who is holding her pee because she is afraid to use a public restroom, to the woman with a drug dependency who is trying to be a good mom, to the women who had 'too many' abortions, to the women who can't seem to leave their abusive partners but made it through another day, to the women who stayed in the shower for two more minutes to buy herself some extra peace, to the woman who is depressed and couldn't make it out of bed, to the women in the factories making our clothes, to the women who are raped because of war, to the woman who is being trafficked right this moment, and to all the other women who are so marginalized we forget to celebrate them, but matter nonetheless."

Mr. Speaker, women are powerful, intelligent, able, and resilient, even if our power is reflected in different ways, because surviving and existing is a power all its own.

Today, we celebrate and acknowledge all of those women who came before us, those who surround us now, and those yet to come.

So, Mr. Speaker, Happy International Women's Day.

In remembrance of Robert "Buckwheat" Donahue

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise today on behalf of all members of the Legislature to pay tribute to Robert Carlin Donahue, better known by many Yukoners — and, I would hazard, all Skagwegians — as "Buckwheat". Buckwheat passed away this past fall in his home town of Oklahoma City, far from his real home of Skagway where he spent most of his life.

Whenever Buckwheat recalled how he adopted Skagway to be his home, he howled when he told the story, literally. Buckwheat did it all: bartending at the Red Onion, co-owner of Packer Expeditions and the Mountain Shop, gold-panning champion, performer at the Arctic Brotherhood Hall, and CBC community reporter. He loved hiking, paddling, and meeting people from everywhere and sharing the colourful history of the region.

Buckwheat embraced Skagway, and the town embraced him. He had a passionate love for the poems of Robert Service, and one summer he gave a recital to Martha Stewart as they

drove down the Alaska Highway in a motorhome while filming a travel program on the Yukon and the Klondike.

His enthusiasm and commitment to Skagway earned him the job of tourism director for Skagway — a job he loved for 16 years until he retired. He demonstrated this love of his community in a very real way. In 2005, Buckwheat took a year off from his job to walk from Miami, Florida to raise money for Skagway's local health clinic. In September of 2006, he walked into Skagway, ending a trip of 7,400 kilometres — sorry, Mr. Speaker, 4,600 miles — that included a paddle down the Yukon River to the Bering Sea. That jaunt raised \$75,000 for the clinic. He was a people person and a lover of sport. His jam was bringing the two together, especially Yukoners and Alaskans. He and lifelong friend Jeff Brady first started the Dyea-to-Dawson centennial race to the Klondike that eventually became the Yukon River Quest.

He was on Sport Yukon's organizing committee for the Klondike Road Relay for 20 years, and many Yukoners will remember him standing beside the train station whistle starting the race with a howl.

His biggest contribution though, for which he earned the heartfelt admiration of Yukon and Alaskan cross-country skiers, was his creation of the Buckwheat Classic ski loppet in 1987. It started 33 years ago with just 13 skiers and horrendous weather. Just this past weekend, this much-anticipated event drew several hundred cross-country skiers — from former Olympians to upcoming hopefuls to skiers dressed as a dog or a hot dog or a pink unicorn or Chewbacca. Buckwheat loved this race.

This past weekend also marked a really tough moment for the entire circumpolar sports community as the heartbreaking decision was taken to cancel the upcoming Arctic Winter Games due to the risk of COVID-19. I thought about Buckwheat and his larger-than-life involvement with sports. I pictured him as he volunteered for past Arctic Winter Games with his big chest covered in a collection of pins. I thought about his enthusiasm and spirit and felt he would be cheering on the athletes, volunteers, and supporters all the same, howling and helping us to believe in the games, to rally our athletes, and to praise our volunteers and supporters.

Robert Carlin "Buckwheat" Donahue, you are missed. You have left us with a rich legacy of sport and sportsmanship and camaraderie from over the Chilkoot all the way down the Yukon River. For that, we thank you.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 11: *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 11 agreed to

Bill No. 12: *Act to Amend the Wills Act (2020)* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that Bill No. 12, entitled *Act to Amend the Wills Act (2020)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 12, entitled *Act to Amend the Wills Act (2020)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 12 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Ms. White: I rise to give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to brief opposition parties in a timely manner on the financial impacts of the Arctic Winter Games cancellation and further financial impacts of the COVID-19 virus.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to include opposition parties in all briefings with the Yukon chief medical officer of health with regard to the COVID-19 virus.

Mr. Kent: I rise to give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to prioritize a meeting with the graduation committees from Vanier Catholic Secondary School, F.H. Collins Secondary School, and Porter Creek Secondary School to:

(1) address their concerns around the loss of revenue from the annual fundraising raffle that can no longer proceed, which supported substance-free graduation activities; and

(2) ensure that the current fee per student is covered so that no graduating student or their family has to pay for the cap-and-gown ceremony at their respective high school.

Mr. Istchenko: I rise in this House today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to not cut budgets to any of its highway camps.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to use its 2020-21 budget to build a school in Burwash Landing.

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

THAT this House supports increased efforts and collaboration with Yukon First Nations and municipalities to reduce the threat of wildfires in Yukon through the development of community wildfire protection plans.

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

MOTION OF URGENT AND PRESSING NECESSITY NO. 1

Establishment of a Select Committee on the Economic Effects of COVID-19

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I request unanimous consent of this House to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity, pursuant to Standing Order No. 28 of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly:

THAT a Select Committee on the Economic Effects of COVID-19 be established to examine and address adverse economic effects in Yukon from COVID-19;

THAT the Committee be comprised of one member of the government caucus, one member of the Official Opposition, and one member of the Third Party, to be determined by the leader of each party;

THAT the member identified by the government caucus serve as convener;

THAT the Chair of the Committee have a deliberative vote;

THAT the recommendations of the Committee contained in its reports to the Legislative Assembly require unanimous agreement by members of the Committee;

THAT the Committee receive the views and opinions of Yukon citizens, businesses, and interested groups on options for mitigating adverse effects on Yukon's economy from COVID-19;

THAT the Committee provide an interim report to the Legislative Assembly by the 15th sitting day of the 2020 Spring Sitting and a final report by the final sitting day of the 2020 Spring Sitting that includes the recommendations regarding what form of mitigation should be considered; and

THAT, during its review, the Committee be empowered to:

(1) invite officials from the Government of Yukon to appear as witnesses on technical matters;

(2) invite representatives from chambers of commerce, business associations, and tourism associations, and local event and convention hosts to appear as witnesses on technical matters; and

(3) engage a technical expert who is not a Member of the Legislative Assembly or an employee of the Government of Yukon to act as an advisor and that the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly be responsible for providing the necessary support services to the Committee.

Mr. Speaker, the motion is in follow-up to a letter that I wrote to the Premier yesterday in response to the global spread of the novel coronavirus, or COVID-19, and the impacts that this virus has had and will continue to have on our territory. We already know that COVID-19 is having an impact on the lives of Yukoners and it is expected that there will be more significant economic impacts to come.

We have seen the federal government indicate that the economic impacts of COVID-19 will be at least a \$550-million downturn in tourism from the Chinese market alone. We also saw this morning the chief public health officer of Canada recommend against cruise ship traffic and the British Columbia government say that it will be postponing the cruise season. Tourism is a major driver of our economy, but the impacts of COVID-19 risks go far beyond that.

We just saw a major decline in the world stock markets this morning, and Yukon needs to look at how we respond. This goes far beyond partisanship or political affiliation. I believe that all of us need to be working together to find solutions now. That is why I brought this forward. Let's get all the political parties working together and provide a unified voice. As such, I welcome input into the wording of the motion from the government caucus as well as members of the Third Party to ensure that everyone is given the opportunity to have a say.

I believe that this motion outlines clearly what I see as a constructive and collaborative path forward for determining what we need to do to protect our economy from any fallout associated with COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking for unanimous consent to urgently debate this because we need to start looking for solutions immediately.

Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition has asked for unanimous consent to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity. Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

It has been moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition:

THAT a Select Committee on the Economic Effects of COVID-19 be established to examine and address adverse economic effects in Yukon from COVID-19;

THAT the Committee be comprised of one member of the government caucus, one member of the Official Opposition, and one member of the Third Party, to be determined by the leader of each party;

THAT the member identified by the government caucus serve as convener;

THAT the Chair of the Committee have a deliberative vote;

THAT the recommendations of the Committee contained in its reports to the Legislative Assembly require unanimous agreement by members of the Committee;

THAT the Committee receive the views and opinions of Yukon citizens, businesses, and interested groups on options for mitigating adverse effects on Yukon's economy from COVID-19;

THAT the Committee provide an interim report to the Legislative Assembly by the 15th sitting day of the 2020 Spring Sitting and a final report by the final sitting day of the 2020 Spring Sitting that includes the recommendations regarding what form of mitigation should be considered; and

THAT, during its review, the Committee be empowered to:

(1) invite officials from the Government of Yukon to appear as witnesses on technical matters;

(2) invite representatives from chambers of commerce, business associations, and tourism associations, and local event and convention hosts to appear as witnesses on technical matters; and

(3) engage a technical expert who is not a Member of the Legislative Assembly or an employee of the Government of Yukon to act as an advisor and that the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly be responsible for providing the necessary support services to the Committee.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly for granting me unanimous consent on this important motion. Just to begin, I obviously want to express my disappointment that the 2020 Arctic Winter Games had to be cancelled, while understanding that this was done based on the best medical advice. My heart certainly goes out to all of the athletes who had been looking forward to this event.

However, I believe that we now need to look forward and prepare for other issues that may arise as a result of the spread of COVID-19. I believe that it is in the best interests of Yukoners that all parties in the Legislature work together to identify these issues and possible solutions. As I mentioned to the Premier in my letter, a time like this provides us with a unique opportunity to rise above partisanship and work together to provide the public with a unified voice on both health and economic fronts.

I want to recognize and thank the chief medical officer of health for her ongoing work in coordinating preparedness for COVID-19 on the health front, but we can't rely solely on the work of her office to mitigate the potential impacts of this virus. The area that we believe needs some significant attention is on the economic front. We have been shown that external events outside of our control can have a significant impact on our economy.

This is not just in reference to the decision to cancel the Arctic Winter Games, but also to the significant impact that COVID-19 has had and continues to have across the country. For starters, we know that business activity in some regions — particularly those hit hardest by the virus — has fallen sharply and global supply chains have been disrupted. This has lowered commodity prices and has already dragged down the Canadian dollar. Anyone paying attention to the global markets can tell you how ugly this morning was as they watched stocks, bonds, and oil prices plummet to unprecedented lows. Global investors are preparing for a recession or, at the very least, a substantial slowdown in spending, particularly in consumer goods, travel, and tourism.

As the *Washington Post* put it this morning — and I quote: “The coronavirus is a serious health crisis that's morphing into

an economic crisis as people stay home, cancel trips and stop spending on about everything except hand sanitizer and toilet paper.”

On the one hand, we are already seeing initial action from financial authorities. Last week, the Bank of Canada lowered its overnight rate by 50 basis points to 1.25 percent, citing the impacts of the virus and their desire to help to mitigate these impacts. The G7 finance ministers have met and discussed the development of a unified response. The federal Finance minister has announced that the upcoming federal budget will have measures to protect the economy from any fallout as a result of COVID-19.

On the flip side, however, the Government of Yukon tabled its 2020-21 budget last week. It made no mention of COVID-19, nor does it have any spending earmarked to address the growing crisis. This, of course, is why we brought forward this motion today. We believe that there is a way that we can all work together to find solutions for a potential economic downturn.

As I mentioned, one sector that the effects will be most visible in is tourism. The federal government has already forecasted a drop of at least \$550 million in tourism revenues from the Chinese market alone by June. This morning, Canada’s chief public health officer recommended that all Canadians completely avoid cruise ship travel due to significant risks on board associated with the transmission of the virus.

We also saw the Government of British Columbia say that they are postponing the cruise ship season. Knowing our ties with Holland America, this will almost certainly have an impact on the territory. The tourism industry is a heavy contributor to our economy and it is very likely that many more operators will take a hit this summer, but this year’s budget forecast for tourism does not provide any analysis or consideration of the impacts the virus may have on our tourism sector. Again, I think that this is something that we can tackle in the select committee that I mentioned in the motion. I believe that Yukoners expect us to come together with a unified approach to examine what the potential economic impacts on our territory will be. Further, we can come up with recommendations on actions the government can take to mitigate these economic impacts as soon as possible.

As I mentioned previously, the wording in the motion is based on the select committee on the *Smoke-free Places Act*, which was widely regarded as a successful move for the MLAs at the time to address a pressing issue in a non-partisan way. I want to ensure that everyone had enough advance notice on this, so we were working on the weekend to get this to all parties late yesterday afternoon. That said, the wording of the motion does not have to be final. This morning, the Third Party requested changes to the motion, which were incorporated. We have also made changes based on input from the Clerk’s office. We hope to hear back from the government caucus during the course of this motion debate and see if there are any changes recommended from their side.

With that, I welcome some discussion on the topic and I hope that we all support this motion going forward.

Ms. White: I do appreciate the comments from my colleague. Of course, we did receive this note last night in letter form saying that this would be coming today.

The Yukon NDP will be supporting this motion.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I first want to begin by reiterating on behalf of our entire team our deepest sadness around the cancellation of the Whitehorse 2020 Arctic Winter Games. Our government supports the host society in following the recommendations from the chief medical officer of health. We offer our support with overwhelmingly heavy hearts for all of the northern athletes, coaches, support staff, volunteers, families, and fans of the games. We know how much effort has gone into preparing for these games and we thank all those who have helped to organize and prepare for them. One of the saddest days that I have experienced as Premier so far was looking out into what you expect to be a lot of media folks in a room for the announcement — with His Worship, the mayor, me, George Arcand, the whole team from the Arctic Winter Games Host Society, all the ministers, and others — to look out to see a sea of blue coats. Of course, Mr. Speaker, you know that the blue coats are for the volunteers who have worked actually for about two years now in preparation. To see the disappointment on the faces of the adults in that room and the athletes in that room — it was a tough day.

We believe that the cancellation — we support it. It is the most responsible course of action in light of the concerns around the spread of COVID-19. This was a precautionary measure that is in the best interests of our athletes, support staff, families, and communities across the circumpolar north. To the athletes specifically, I want to acknowledge your efforts in preparing for this event. We are also very proud and impressed with your dedication. Please know that this was not an easy decision and it wasn’t made lightly. We do so with your safety in mind.

Mr. Speaker, as the coronavirus situation continues to develop, the health and safety of Yukoners is absolutely our top priority. I want to be clear with all Yukoners. The risk of COVID-19 remains low in Yukon. There are currently no cases of COVID-19 in the territory. Nevertheless, we are approaching this situation with an abundance of caution. Our government is working closely with our partners inside and outside the territory to ensure that we are prepared to deal with any suspected case or cases of the coronavirus here in Yukon.

I want to thank again Dr. Catherine Elliott, the acting chief medical officer of health, and her team for all of their work. Her response to the situation has been, in a word, remarkable. Yukon’s medical system has been and remains well-prepared to manage the suspected cases of COVID-19 that may arise in Yukon.

We also echo what is being expressed by medical experts: People should remain calm, be vigilant with handwashing, and stay at home if you’re not well. I agree with the members opposite that this is important and that we are working with the most up-to-date and accurate information as possible. We have reached out to the office of the chief medical officer of health to ensure that all Members of the Legislative Assembly are

briefed as the situation unfolds. As elected officials, we need to demonstrate leadership at this time. Now is not the time for knee-jerk decisions and reactions. As I said, the risk of COVID-19 remains low in Yukon and there are currently no cases of COVID-19 in the territory.

Yukon's medical system has been and remains well-prepared to manage cases specific to COVID-19 as they may arise in Yukon. Again, a heartfelt thank you to the office of the chief medical officer and their team for all of that work.

When it comes to the economy, Mr. Speaker, we recognize the economic impact the coronavirus is having globally and we are actively monitoring the issue. Our government is working closely with our partners inside and outside the territory, as I mentioned, to mitigate potential economic concerns as well as medical concerns. We continue to gather information as the situation develops. My ministers and I met with the chamber of commerce this morning and local businesses as well to hear their concerns. It was a packed house. I want to thank the Minister of Economic Development, the Deputy Premier, for his diligence in getting that team together on such short notice.

We will continue to work together to monitor and address the economic concerns of the territory. Now is definitely the time to work together in the interest of our territory and to not engage in partisanship. I completely agree with the members opposite with that perspective.

Just a little bit of a note, Mr. Speaker: The members opposite were speaking about the global markets and other jurisdictions. I met with the Finance ministers on a conference call last week — with the Minister of Finance federally — to have a conversation. As we know, on March 4, the Bank of Canada lowered its target overnight rate by 50 basis points. The current rate of 1.25 is the lowest since August — I believe, of 2008 — but it has been a long time. But the 50 basis points reduction by the bank matched the previous day's unscheduled reductions in the federal funds rate by the federal reserve. Again, that was the first emergency cut since 2008 as well — one of the largest cuts since that time — bringing that rate down between one percent and 1.25 percent.

So again, the bank noted: "While the Canadian economy has been operating close to the potential with inflation on target, the COVID-19 virus is a material negative shock to..." the global market and the Canadian market as well. So again, the information garnered today from the business community was extremely important, especially in light of the fact that the First Ministers' meetings are set to go on this week, and Yukon will have an opportunity to continue the dialogue that we started with the chambers at that time on a national level.

With that being said, I will cede the floor to any other colleagues.

Ms. Hanson: I just rise in support of the motion by the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. Mr. Speaker, there are rare occasions when Members of the Legislative Assembly are asked to act in a manner that expresses the will of the whole of the Legislative Assembly in terms of unanimous support for a motion. What I didn't hear from the member opposite — from the Premier — was any declaration of support. What I heard

was a statement of a fair amount of information that we have now received via the media with respect to the work that has been done by the chief medical officer health and the many, many volunteers and those involved with the preparations for the Arctic Winter Games.

The purpose of this motion was to offer an opportunity — to echo both the Premier and the Leader of the Official Opposition — in a truly non-partisan way — so not a stacked committee, but just a single representative from each of the parties to be involved in this. So it's not an executive council after the fact, telling members of this House by ministerial statement what has gone on, but to allow the voices of Yukoners — who are equally represented — well, actually a little bit heavier in terms of percentage of the vote on the opposition side to the government side — to allow the voices of all Yukoners to be reflected in the work that this House is ultimately going to be doing as we go forward with the economic impacts of a situation that has arisen outside the boundaries of the Yukon. I agree entirely with the Premier — we don't know — as far as we know, there are no active cases of COVID-19 in this territory.

We have all read the various reports and the various scenarios that have developed around the world, but as I understand the purpose of this motion, it is to address the adverse economic effects in Yukon from COVID-19 and many of those are generated elsewhere. So, it is how we, as a territory, respond. That is what I understood that the committee is being asked to be tasked with.

I think it would be unfortunate if we didn't seize this opportunity for the first time in this Legislative Assembly to actually try to find a way to work in that manner — in that truly non-partisan manner — on an issue that has rightly seized all Yukoners — whether it is for the health, economic, social aspects, cultural — every aspect of our community has been touched in a real way because of our requirement for the health and safety issues — our requirement to cancel the Arctic Winter Games. Nobody questions that; nobody has questioned that, that I am aware of. We understand that.

The next part is: Now what? How do we work together to rebuild, to make sure that we have that resilient base as we — along with other jurisdictions across the country and around the world — address this issue and how we are going to not just mitigate the health concerns, but respond to the economic challenges.

So, I hope that we will get the support of all members of the House for this motion.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I appreciate the opportunity to speak in the Assembly today and to update my colleagues on the activities today with our business community, as the Premier had reflected on, as well as the activities over the weekend — really, in speaking to our government's immediate, short-term, and long-term view of the current circumstances.

I would like to thank the opposition for tabling this today and for giving us an opportunity to have a dialogue about it and to provide further information to Yukoners.

First, as you can imagine, over the weekend — first and foremost — it was really focused on having the host committee, the chief medical officer, the Minister of Health and Social Services, the Premier, and others focusing on the health of Yukoners. Shortly after that announcement was made and people had an opportunity to reflect upon what had been communicated — of course, with heavy, heavy hearts — we also have to take into consideration the other impacts that come with COVID-19.

Now, this is not something that was new to the weekend, of course. We were in a situation where the markets, over the last number of weeks, have been tumultuous, to say the least. It's not just the activity of today, but also what we've watched over the last number of weeks.

Having returned from the Prospectors and Developers — PDAC — event in Toronto — our staff from Energy, Mines and Resources and Economic Development were in a position to have dialogue with global investors, to have discussions with Canadian companies, and to understand some of the key trends that we were seeing and a chance to really have a discussion about what companies thought they were going to be doing. It was really an opportunity to see a slice into a sector and understand that we had some very significant conversations in front of us and that we had an opportunity to monitor.

Of course, it was also prudent for me to make sure that I was working hand in hand with the Premier and getting direction from the Premier as the Premier prepared to meet with other Premiers from across this country and for us to monitor the comments from the federal government.

Shortly after the announcement on the games this weekend, we had to really focus on some immediate conversations and measures because we are in a situation where we have a lot of items. Some are for our food distributors, who are dealing with items that are perishable. We have, in the hospitality sector, impacts where there will shortly be empty rooms in our city. We have Air North, Yukon's airline, which is, of course, a major player here, and they have identified the impacts that they are experiencing. Of course, there are many, many members of either the Yukon chamber, the Whitehorse chamber, or the First Nation chamber.

Some people directly reached out to us. In some cases, we saw the concerns that people were sharing, and we thought it was appropriate and prudent to make sure that we had the business community come together as soon as possible to have a discussion about what they saw in the early analysis of impact and about ideas and strategies that they may feel need to be put into place quickly and to understand how we could work together to communicate not just to Yukoners but to the broader community as well.

I think that, right from the start, Minister Dendys in her role, understanding how tourism is such a hot topic now — and I know that she may share with us over the next while about the work that she has been doing — and it started before this weekend — working with her counterparts as well to understand how people are pivoting when it comes to their strategies — but I leave that to the minister to share with you. What we did do — we reached out over the weekend to the

Whitehorse chamber, the Yukon chamber, TIA, representing the tourism industry, the First Nation chamber, as well as some of our key business players — understanding that the business leaders really would be significantly impacted by this particular event being cancelled, but also understanding what they felt, moving forward.

We did have an opportunity to meet at 10:00 a.m. this morning. As I said, the groups identified were in attendance. The tone of the meeting — which I think all Yukoners can be proud of — was about how we come together. I think we all saw that over the weekend — anybody who is monitoring social media: How do we come together quickly and efficiently? How do we prioritize impacts and understand impacts? How do we get to work? That is really the tone today. It's about partnerships and even collaboration on strategies, whether on the hospitality or travel side of things. How do they come together quickly to look at some of the short-term impacts as of next week, and how do we turn it?

All the while, what is really important about this is that we have to continue to stay in touch with the chief medical officer. There have been a lot of different concepts and ideas that have been shared over the weekend on social media and with the business community. Some of those strategies could be very effective with the challenges we have. Others are ones that we probably need to get further advice on from the chief medical officer. That is one of the other points we communicated today to the business community.

What is important, I think, when we talk about making sure — as the opposition stated this is absolutely imperative here, that all voices are heard. Well, what is very important is that we work with our business chambers as we talk about the economic development aspects. We are in a situation where the Yukon chamber has over 1,200 members and they reach out to the chambers in all of our communities. We also have the Whitehorse chamber — and today, as they stated, they have over 500 members. Both chambers committed to ensuring that they will communicate all types of information and work to return and communicate collectively with us so that we can move forward to support the business sector. As well, the First Nation chamber came with great ideas and with a real focus to reach out to their members.

First of all, I want to commend the business sector. Today — to be very open — we talked about — as we look at our strategies, the communication, and the marketing — really, as many would understand here, the first steps are really about focusing on supporting our local businesses and using our previous work around buying local and putting that into place right away. Of course, on the tourism side, I think that anyone who understands what is playing out understands about supporting our local tourism sector. I will leave that to the minister.

Those are the things that were discussed. There were lots of great ideas, but the table also knew that today was the first gathering and it was time to start the work.

We proposed that we start the work tomorrow. They proposed that they start the work now. So actually — as I look at my watch — they're probably an hour into the strategy work

on the short term. Right now, the business community, the chambers, some of our most well-known entrepreneurs, representation, I believe, from the host committee — and I want to thank the host committee — especially the sponsorship team, who also was in attendance today — helping us to understand what the relationships were with specific businesses that have been leaders on the sponsorship side — so that work, first of all, is underway.

So I do understand that part of what we're being asked today is — it's about solutions and it's about hearing voices, and I want to be able to tell Yukoners today that, through their chambers and through their membership, all the voices that are coming to the table through their lead organizations were being heard today and will continue to be heard.

Also, there are just so many brilliant business people. The direction I had today from the Premier was to gather the business sector and to let the people in business who have the expertise and the experience come together to give us direction so that we can understand how we can help. That is what we saw today. There are incredible minds at the table — really focused on Yukoners coming together, understanding where we can most benefit different areas of our population — still all the while focused on the emotional impact that has come to our coaches, volunteers, and athletes and understanding, in each case, the uniqueness of trying to move forward with the proper strategies.

I think that I did hear from the opposition — from a standpoint of “We didn't hear in your budget any specific spending” — this is the largest capital budget that we have had. This is a significant, significant budget. What we did hear 72 hours ago was that it was too big of a budget, but now it — there is a reason that our Premier led this with leadership, and it was because we have been watching not just over this weekend but for weeks on this. This is a very significant capital budget. We also believe that reducing, over this next year, individuals' tax burdens and eliminating the small business tax for most of our local businesses is the right strategy.

So, I look, as we move forward, to see all opposition members work with us to support these measures as we go through the session. I know they will stand up for their businesses and that is what they are doing today. They will stand to see that small business tax eliminated and they will stand up to make sure that we have a capital budget that moves appropriate stimulus, as well as much-needed infrastructure projects into our economy, which is going to be key. That is when we talk about what is playing out on the long term — that is not so much what we are looking at over the next couple weeks here.

As well, I think it is important to focus on — and just for that member, I know it was touched on — but it was about \$50 million extra, as compared to last year's capital budget. I think that we all have come to understand that it is clear that it is really important that we have clearly identified the need for spending.

I want to thank the Economic Development staff who worked over the weekend analyzing different strategies that

have been deployed around similar circumstances at a regional level and were there to support us today.

Again, passing on to Yukoners, the teams are working with the business sector. The business sector has many great ideas on a short-term strategy. I ask all Yukoners to support their local businesses — to ensure that they are buying local, maybe getting down to our main streets — not just of Whitehorse, but any of our communities — and ensuring that if they can afford it, to spend a bit more at our local businesses to support them.

I know that I will be available here to answer the questions of the opposition as we move through. I know that this is something that we have committed to working on, on a daily basis with the business sector. It is not just concern about spending, but it is also concern on the labour side too. We have had a lot of questions. I know that the Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board committed to working with the sector. Some others have reached out about labour rules. It also affects — one of the great questions today from one of our business leaders — which we have to do our due diligence on — is really, how will this affect our nominee program. Of course, last year, because our economy has been strong, the nominee program was fully utilized.

So, I think we have a good foundation to stand on here in the Yukon. We do have to be creative. I think the business community is going to give us a lot of great advice and then coming together to work on that and to meet the demands and the challenges. I also think that, in this particular case, this is the responsibility that comes with the job. In the role I'm in — or the role of my colleagues — when you have these challenges, you need to show leadership and do the work that you need to do. That's what we're committed to doing.

Mr. Cathers: In rising to speak to this, I would like to just note that this is a rapidly developing issue. I would like to thank our staff for making me aware of the fact that, since this debate began, there have been significant developments worldwide. The British Broadcasting Corporation is reporting that Italy has extended their coronavirus measures nationwide and that their strict coronavirus quarantine measures, which include a ban on public gatherings, have been extended now to the entire country. The prime minister has stated that people would only be permitted to travel for work or family emergencies.

I would like to note in speaking to this, Mr. Speaker, that the lessons learned from previous health situations like this, including the SARS epidemic, is that it's important to be measured, thoughtful, effective, and coordinated in the response. An over-reaction or a failure to react quickly can cause significant unnecessary impacts, whether from a health perspective or unnecessary economic impacts.

The proposal made by my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition, is offering the government an opportunity to work together in a coordinated approach and to have the opportunity to have the Yukon businesses and others who may be affected by this, to meet with MLAs from all parties, showing a coordinated and united approach on this issue.

As I noted since the start of this debate, the worldwide economic impact has grown and we're all aware of what has happened with the crash of stock markets in North America. This morning, it caused their measures to "circuit break" — evidently the term was — to kick into effect to prevent a further decline.

I have heard, since the cancellation of the Arctic Winter Games, from Yukon businesses, NGOs, and others who are concerned about not only that, but what will be in place for the summer — the fact that we've seen — as my colleague noted — warnings coming from the federal government and from the chief public health officer about the expected economic impacts as well as encouraging people to not travel by cruise ships, which of course do provide a large number of tourists who come into the Yukon market.

With that, I would encourage all members of this House to support this motion. It is a motion for us to work together in a non-partisan manner on an important issue. I would note — having been the chair of the all-party committee on smoking and having served on another committee that also reached unanimous agreement on recommendations — that it is possible for committees of this Legislative Assembly, on important matters, to reach unanimous agreement on a path forward.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: It is an honour of course to rise to speak to this important motion today and bring my voice to it as Minister of Tourism and Culture.

First, I want to bring my voice — as a Yukoner, a mom, and a person who was born and raised here in the territory — about the pride that our territory had in moving toward hosting the 50th anniversary of the Arctic Winter Games. To move toward the cancellation of the 2020 Arctic Winter Games was probably one of my most difficult days in this job. I have to say that it felt like — I have described it this way, so I will describe it here in the Legislative Assembly — it felt like there was a death; that is how it felt. The grief was so heavy for each and every one of us. It was collective and you could feel the hearts break across our territory — our young people, our volunteers, and each and every person in this Legislative Assembly.

We understand that this was a difficult decision but the most responsible decision to make. It was certainly for precautionary measures to reduce the threat of any spread of COVID-19 and to protect our children and our loved ones. The thought for us was somebody potentially — if something were to happen at the games and take it home to one of our remote communities where we have a lot of folks who have medical and health challenges. The last thing we would want to see is that threat upon our communities — so, yes, it was a heavy day for all of us and not the way that you would want to spend your weekend, the weekend before we were to host and welcome visitors from around our circumpolar north. I just wanted to express that first.

In terms of the economic impact — the Minister of Economic Development and I, along with other colleagues, certainly have been aware that there could be impact as a result of the coronavirus/COVID-19 on Yukon. We have been

working on this for some time, but quickly after the games were cancelled — looking at the immediate impact on our business community was absolutely vital. I am proud of the team in terms of people coming together to support one another and really bringing that Yukon spirit together in a way that we expect as Yukoners.

I want to go back a little bit in time because, when we started planning for a new Yukon tourism development strategy in Yukon, we had taken a whole-of-Yukon approach, really bringing all partners together. That was the approach that we took in Yukon. As the Minister of Economic Development described today — the business community coming together in the way in which they did — I think that some of that is a result of the good work that has been done around building solid partnerships and that we have a collective responsibility. This, again, was not a Yukon government strategy. It is a whole-of-Yukon strategy, and when we entered into that, we entered into that principle of shared responsibility and that we would work collectively with our partners. We are working toward managing tourism as a collective in the Yukon. That was one of the key shifts.

In bringing all of those partners together, we are certainly working in a whole-of-government approach to tourism. It's a complicated industry and it's one of our most important industries. It's the second largest in Yukon. It's the largest private sector employer in Yukon. It represents 4.4 percent of our GDP. We are only second to PEI. So, it is very important to us — we recognize that absolutely — and we have made a lot of investments into moving this industry forward. Our goal is to double revenue as a result of tourism over the next 10 years.

Now, I had received some criticism — when we were working toward a new strategy in Yukon — saying, "Things are going well. Why are you doing this now?" It is because of this: You want to plan when things are going well, and we have had three consecutive record years for tourism. The good work that was done alongside all of our partners in Yukon, from the culture community to heritage, and everyone was part of that circle — all of our chambers of commerce.

Building this new approach to tourism — it was an important move for us — to plan when things are going well and to be in partnership with each other when we have challenges like this. So, this is certainly a challenge that we are seeing across Canada. What we have been doing in tourism — and I talked a little bit about this, of course, last week when the question came up around the impact of COVID-19 on tourism — we want to continue welcoming visitors to our territory and sharing it with the rest of the world.

The department is, of course, actively monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on Yukon's tourism industry and is working with our local industry partners like Destination Canada, and — of course, as my colleagues have said today — we will continue to make this our highest priority, to work with our Yukon's chief medical officer of health to assess the situation as we go forward. That is a must. We must take that step in every decision that we make. That was certainly part of our discussion with our business community today.

Tourism Yukon officials are participating right now — as of last week — in biweekly conference calls convened by Destination Canada with federal, provincial, and territorial counterparts to receive the latest data. We may bump that up a bit more. I had a call last week with the federal Minister of Economic Development, who is also responsible for tourism, to talk about how things are going in Yukon and what is happening across the country.

She was able to discuss some of the strategies that the federal government is looking at. Some of those strategies are certainly being discussed in those biweekly conference calls, so there are some immediate, mid-term and long-term plans that are in the works as we speak to move toward strategies. I will say it here that we have talked about a Canada-type marketing strategy to encourage folks to explore their own backyard and travel within their own country. That is something that we were working toward already, because that is a new strategy of Canada — to market within Canada and encourage folks to visit their own backyard, pushing tourism out from our major centres into our other territories and places that are usually secondary types of destinations. That dialogue is established at the federal level. We have committed to ensuring that they have up-to-date information from Yukon.

Of course, since last week, things have changed a bit in Yukon. We have had to cancel the Arctic Winter Games, so, yes, there is an immediate impact. Our approach, of course, to this situation is to work collaboratively with our local business community. They are the experts, as the minister has discussed. We also have experts within our departments of Economic Development and of Tourism and Culture. It is very much evidence-based decision-making. It is how we make all of our decisions in Tourism and Culture; it is very much based on data. We will continue to do that.

Maybe I will just outline a little bit in terms of the visitation. Folks may be aware of the number of tourists who come into the territory. We have 500,000 visitors every year, and 62 percent of those visitors are from the United States, 28 percent are from Canada, and 10 percent are from overseas. That is the general breakdown of the types of visitors who are coming to our Yukon.

I think that my colleagues have covered very well — in terms of where we're at and how we're moving things forward. I just wanted to assure the Assembly and Yukoners that, as the Minister of Economic Development has said, we were elected to lead, and we are doing just that on behalf of Yukoners. I absolutely represent every single Yukoner, whether they live in my riding or another riding.

We will work toward short-term, mid-term, and long-term strategies, work with our federal partners, and continue very much to work with our business community to ensure that we are making good, sound decisions that take into consideration the impacts on their businesses and their livelihoods. We uphold our commitment to work in a whole-of-Yukon approach to tourism, from my perspective, and we'll continue to do that.

I would like to thank the Assembly for allowing me this time to talk about this important matter that we are all faced with. I look forward to further discussion.

Mr. Kent: I had not planned on speaking this afternoon, but I did want to add my voice to the discussion.

I thank the MLA for Pelly-Nisutlin, Leader of the Official Opposition, for bringing forward this motion and thank all members for granting unanimous consent that we could have these discussions here this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, as the Member for Lake Laberge said, this is an ever-evolving situation. Obviously, what we saw last week with respect — even the Premier's announcements in the House here and then speaking at the chamber of commerce luncheon and later on CTV's *Power Play* — was talking about how excited we were to be hosting the Arctic Winter Games, and then 24 hours later, obviously things changed and the games had to be cancelled. I think that's a measure of, again, how quickly things are evolving with this.

As mentioned, we saw significant losses in stock markets around the globe over the last 24 hours. We've seen significant declines in the price of oil as well as in the value of energy companies. All of this, of course, will not only affect localized economies; it's going to affect the economy up here. That's why we felt that this was an opportunity for all elected members to come together — a representation of all Yukoners to come together — and come up with some constructive recommendations on how to mitigate many of these challenges that we're going to see in our economy as a result of COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, when we received the budget documents last week, of course, there was a fiscal and economic update. I think I wanted to read one excerpt from the tourism sector portion that really highlights how things have changed so quickly recently. Under "Tourism sector" it says — "The tourism sector continues to impress" is the title. Then if you go down below the chart on annual border crossings — I'll quote from this document: "US visitation historically accounts for about 70 percent of Yukon's annual international border crossings. Several factors bode well for US visitation to Yukon going forward. The US economic environment is expected to remain generally positive over the forecast and little to no appreciation in the Canadian dollar anticipated over the medium term."

I think that, in and of itself, given what we've heard recently with respect to Canadian health officials and health officials in British Columbia advising Canadians not to go on cruises or potentially advising the cruise industry in British Columbia to postpone the upcoming cruise season, would be devastating news and would certainly affect what was in the fiscal and economic outlook with respect to the tourism sector.

Again, when it comes to the mining industry, what kinds of effects do we anticipate to the mining industry, given some of the market volatility that we've seen lately? This would be, again, a good opportunity for members on all sides of the House to come together to talk to those in the financial markets and get a sense for what the summer exploration would look like here and then, of course, production. Obviously, we see precious metals, at a time like this — gold — on the upswing but base metals like copper and zinc on the downswing.

Again, those would be opportunities for all of us to get together. Each and every one of us as elected officials in here bring different backgrounds and perspectives and different expertise to the table when we are talking about the various economic sectors, the labour market, or the health care field — so many of the things that are going to be affected with respect to this. But again, I thought we would be able to focus on the economic side of things.

Of course, the Premier and several of his Cabinet ministers have some focus on dealing with some of the economic challenges around the cancellation of the Arctic Winter Games, but we wanted to focus more on other economic challenges in the short, medium, and long term, and I thought that this would be a good opportunity to do that.

When we are talking about investor confidence and visitor confidence in the Yukon, what a great opportunity for all MLAs to come together — all three parties represented in this House to come together — and come up with suggestions that would be arrived at unanimously to support the economy as we weather this storm that has been caused by COVID-19.

Again, I am hopeful that all members will vote in favour of this motion brought forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition, and of course time will tell when this debate closes and it does come to a vote. I urge members to look at this motion for what the spirit and intent is, which is to break down those partisan walls in here. We are all elected to represent Yukoners and I think that we all have valuable input, as well as reaching out to the various business and industry organizations when it comes to getting us through what promises to be a difficult economic time associated with this virus.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks.

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the motion?

If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Hassard: Thank you to everyone who took the opportunity to speak to this motion today. I certainly appreciate the NDP's willingness to support this motion and understanding the importance of it.

It doesn't appear that the government is going to be in support of this motion unless some minds have changed from the last couple of speakers. I really think that this is unfortunate. This Premier we have here today has spoken on numerous occasions about how he is willing to take good ideas from all sides of the Assembly. If the government votes against this motion, then obviously that is just another case of a lot of talk but not following through.

The other item that I wanted to mention was the Deputy Premier talking about the budget and that we don't need a line item in the budget for this type of thing because we have the largest budget in history. I'm not quite sure where he draws the line on the budget — actually not having a line item in the budget. One thing though that the Deputy Premier did say was that he was here to answer the questions. So once this motion has been voted on, we will move into Question Period. I guess we will see if that stands true or if we will continue to get non-

answers and just be told, "We have a plan. We have a plan. We have a plan, but we are just not going to tell you the details of the plan."

I could go on at length, Mr. Speaker, but I don't see the point in it, I guess. So, if we can get to a vote, we will see where we go from there.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Disagree.

Mr. Gallina: Disagree.

Mr. Adel: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Disagree.

Mr. Hutton: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are eight yea, 10 nay.

Speaker: The nays have it. I declare the motion defeated.

Motion of Urgent and Pressing Necessity No. 1 negatived

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: COVID-19 coronavirus preparedness

Mr. Hassard: In our questions to the Minister of Health and Social Services last week, we asked about specific preparations that the Yukon has taken to respond to COVID-19. Unfortunately, the minister was unable to provide specifics. We now see over 100,000 cases worldwide and the number of cases growing in Canada. The federal government has stated that they are anticipating community outbreak within Canada. In Italy, the entire country has now gone into quarantine. There are no recorded cases in Yukon, but we do need to be prepared. The territory is already feeling the effects of the spread and has had to make some very difficult decisions in response. We know that there have been global supply shortages for personal protective equipment for health care workers. In fact, Canada's

Health minister announced just hours ago that several provinces are facing shortages.

So, Mr. Speaker, does Yukon currently have an adequate supply of personal protective equipment in all of our health care centres?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am happy to rise today to speak to the issue around Yukon's preparedness. What I do want to say is that we are working very closely with the chief medical officer of health — both the acting and the chief medical officer of health — to ensure that Yukon is prepared. We are prepared. I look forward to the next question.

Mr. Hassard: The question was about the supplies that we have here in the Yukon. I am not sure if the minister didn't hear the question or just wasn't prepared to answer, so we'll try again.

These are essential materials for health care workers who need to protect themselves not only from this virus but any other health risks that appear in hospitals, ambulances, or health care centres throughout the territory. Another area that needs to be monitored is the supply of test kits, because we cannot address the virus if we can't actually test for it.

Again, while there are no recorded cases in Yukon yet, we cannot rule out the potential for it to appear. So, what are the testing protocols for COVID-19 in the Yukon and how many test kits are currently in the Yukon's supply?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Interesting question. I certainly would not know how many test kits we have. What I can say is that we are continuously working with the chief medical officer of health and we will continue to do that. The risk of COVID-19 remains low in the Yukon, which we have heard frequently today. Our medical system is — and remains — prepared to handle suspected cases of COVID-19 should they arise in the Yukon.

I would really like to extend my appreciation to the chief medical officer of health and the Health staff for being prepared and keeping us abreast as things evolve. Of course, what we have been informed of is that we are prepared. We have all the necessary resources available in the Yukon, which we are very pleased about.

We are following the guidelines of the World Health Organization. We will also look at the Yukon context and work with that through the chief medical officer.

Mr. Hassard: So, during motion debate a few minutes ago, the Deputy Premier said that he was here to answer questions on behalf of Yukoners, so maybe he could answer the third question, because we certainly aren't getting any answers from this minister.

We recognize that to address a community outbreak, financial resources are needed to do so. Canada's Finance minister has indicated that they will be tabling a budget with specific measures to address COVID-19. We haven't seen anything in the Yukon budget that suggests that the Yukon Liberal government was prepared for this issue. We don't want to be caught flatfooted and find ourselves looking back at what we could have done if the situation gets away from us.

Can the minister tell us what financial resources, if any, have been allocated in this budget to prepare and respond to

COVID-19, including ensuring personal protective equipment and test kits are in adequate supply?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, I believe the Minister of Health and Social Services did answer the member's question and said that — and I will reiterate — we are prepared. We do have a plan in place should the virus be detected here. Yukon health care providers are keeping up to date with the virus and they know how to recognize someone who is infected, as well as how to care for them.

We on this side of the Legislature have full confidence in our medical team, our staff, the Department of Health and Social Services, and also in the minister as well. People who have flu-like symptoms are being asked to stay at home and to seek health care via telephone if they do not require immediate attention. In Yukon, they should be calling 811. Also, currently all influenza samples in Yukon are now being tested for COVID-19. I hope that alleviates some of the concerns from the member opposite as far as how prepared we are for this situation.

Also, when we speak about economic considerations for COVID-19, that work obviously is ongoing as well. Experience from China already indicates that containment may be a matter of months, not quarters. The TD bank has indicated that it may lower its GDP forecast for Canada by 0.7 percent in the first quarter of 2020 and they've raised their forecast for early 2021.

Again, as we deliberate here in the Legislative Assembly, we'll have an opportunity to show how this government is prepared for this crisis.

Question re: COVID-19 coronavirus preparedness

Mr. Cathers: The serious impacts of COVID-19 include health impacts and also significant economic impacts. Over the last several weeks, world markets have declined significantly. The federal government warns that tourism from the Chinese market alone will drop by \$550 million by June.

Canada's public health officer told Canadians not to go on cruise ships, and since a large portion of the Yukon's economy depends on tourism, this is concerning for many Yukon businesses. The Bank of Canada and the US Federal Reserve took significant actions to try to bolster the economy and G7 Finance ministers have met to discuss coordinated actions.

Concerningly, Thursday's budget from this government and their economic forecast does not include a single word about COVID-19 or its health or economic effects. Can the Premier tell us what actions he is planning to take to minimize the impacts of COVID-19 to the Yukon's economy?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I can alleviate some of the concerns for the members opposite — and more importantly, for Yukoners as they listen in on debate. This government is prepared. What we've done to prepare, in a large sense, is we have balanced the budget. We have lowered taxes, both income taxes and also small business taxes. There are lots of things that we've done before being told by the medical community of the severity of these certain conditions and situations now. The decision to cancel the Arctic Winter Games, for example — things changed in a 48-hour period very quickly.

Members opposite make it seem that the day that you release the economic forecast, that's the day that you develop it, whereas they know obviously that is not necessarily so. But for the members opposite, we are currently working with the federal government. We're working inter-governmentally with all of our departments to make sure that this government is as prepared as possible. Again, we spoke in the Legislative Assembly that currently all influenza samples in Yukon are now being tested for COVID-19. That's amazing, Mr. Speaker — knowing how very well Health and Social Services and the Hospital Corporation, working with the chief medical officer, are on the health considerations. The conversations I have had with the federal government will continue again this week.

So, members opposite can be very relieved to know that we are working hard on this.

It would be interesting to know what their preparations were during the SARS or the H1N1 outbreaks in the past and what — maybe they can lend us some of their planning and budgeting for those.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, concerningly, in the speech the Premier delivered last Thursday and the budget he delivered, there's not one mention in the budget, the speech, or the economic forecast of coronavirus and the risks, either from a health perspective or an economic perspective.

Last week's budget estimates Yukon's GDP growth for this current year at 6.2 percent. It states that tourism is 4.4 percent of Yukon's GDP. As noted in my first question, major world events unfolding in the last couple months will negatively impact the Yukon's economy, and the projections that the Premier delivered last Thursday are now unrealistic.

Can the Premier tell us what the projected impacts of COVID-19 will be on the Yukon's growth of the tourism sector? If he doesn't have estimates of that yet, can he please tell us when he expects to have revised economic forecasts?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, one of the really good positions that the Yukon is in right now as far as our economic future and where we are on a global or national sense when it comes to COVID-19 is that our territory has the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. It also has the highest workforce participation rate in Canada. Do we have struggles because of this current situation? Absolutely. Are we working hard on this? Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. We have worked through all weekend. I don't think that a lot of people on this side of the House actually slept very much this weekend with all the work. I want to give a shout-out again to the deputy ministers, the assistant deputy ministers, the directors, and everyone else who is working extremely hard on this side of the government to make sure that we are prepared for these things.

The members opposite should know as well that budgets are made with the best information possible at the time in which they are made. The good news — the members opposite may have forgotten about this — is that there are also ongoing concerns called "supplementary budgets". So whether or not the financing is being indicated about a virus that we didn't anticipate back in November and into December as we were making the budget in January, they can be keenly aware — as opposition members who have spent time in government —

that this doesn't mean that it is not going to be considered financially in how we move forward to address both the health concerns of this situation but also the financials.

Mr. Cathers: Again, I have to point out that the government has been aware of the growing worldwide concern about COVID-19 over the last couple of months. Yet, concerningly, the budget speech and the budget that the Premier delivered last Thursday made no mention of either the health or economic risks of COVID-19. The government has been slow to realize that this is an issue that will have major impacts on the Yukon and they appear to have been slow to act. We have heard from municipalities that have not been receiving information or updates directly from the Yukon government about the response or preparations for COVID-19 or its effects. If that is the case, it seems that the government has forgotten some of the key lessons learned from the SARS epidemic.

Will the Premier commit to providing regular updates to municipalities and First Nation governments to ensure that there is a coordinated response between all levels of government?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with our partner governments whether federal, municipal, or First Nation like we have on lots of issues, whether that be through the Association of Yukon Communities or through the Yukon Forum — which the opposition didn't spend a lot of time on. Again, we have constant conversations and communications with all levels of government all the time, especially when it comes to a situation as serious as this one.

Question re: COVID-19 coronavirus preparedness

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, the cancellation of the Arctic Winter Games, announced this weekend, shows not only how far-reaching the impacts of the COVID-19 virus are, but also how close they are to home.

Tourism in Yukon represents the biggest share of our economy compared to other provinces and territories. The Public Health Agency of Canada is now recommending that Canadians avoid all cruise ship travel and other jurisdictions have issued similar warnings. We have just heard from the Minister of Tourism that this will have a very serious impact on summer tourism in Yukon.

What concrete steps will this government take to alleviate the impacts of the COVID-19 virus on Yukon's economy and particularly on Yukon's tourism sector?

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Thank you for the question. As I stated a little while ago during the motion debate, tourism is a very important industry for Yukon — second largest in the Yukon. We take this situation very seriously. We're working closely with our partners at Destination Canada and the federal government. We have established an FPT — or federal, provincial, territorial check-in — with the minister. The federal government is certainly considering many actions to assist in the impact on tourism as a result of COVID-19. Our department is working very closely with our operators to monitor, on a regular basis, any impacts. As of last week, there were few.

I spoke directly — myself — to many operators, particularly in the Carcross area. They indicated to me that it's

business as usual. They're moving forward. Now, we need to of course speak to our federal counterparts, talking about — of course everyone is concerned about the cancellation of cruise ships, and we will work with our partners as we go forward on this particular matter.

Ms. White: While no case of COVID-19 has been diagnosed in Yukon so far, health authorities recommend precautions like regularly washing hands and monitoring for symptoms. Yukoners just heard from the Premier that they should stay at home if they're sick. That sounds easy enough. Everyone knows in theory that this advice should apply at all times, not just during a virus outbreak. But this is much easier for some workers than for others. Many workers don't have access to paid sick leave. That's often the case for minimum-wage workers or for retail and service workers who interact directly with the public. Whether they feel sick or not, these workers have to pay their bills and rent and put food on the table. Without paid sick leave, they're forced to make impossible choices.

Will this government introduce paid sick leave for all Yukon workers so they can make the sensible decision to stay home when they are sick?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, whether it is the tourism industry or working hand in hand with the Minister of Community Services or the Minister for Health and Social Services when it comes to this issue, members opposite can know that we are working on this issue with all of our stakeholders. When it comes to tourism, again, we are immensely proud of the work that we have been doing here with the tourism strategy to support the industries but at the same time helping them to grow and modernize. As the minister talked about, we have the second-largest GDP contribution in Yukon.

When it comes to services and supports for our employees, I am extremely proud of the work that we have done for the last three to four years when it comes to making sure that we have the best programs and services but at the same time reducing our taxes for individuals and also raising the minimum wage.

We will continue to work with agencies to make sure that we provide for the Yukon population, whether it be through the private sector or the public sector.

Ms. White: Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I think that the Premier has missed the point. This is not a hypothetical question that the government can sit on for months, or even weeks. Just earlier today, BC's provincial health officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry, said — and I quote: "Right now we want everybody to stay home if you're sick. Even if you have the sniffles, you have a bit of a cold ...keep yourself home from work if you're not feeling well."

Just to be clear, Mr. Speaker, this is for British Columbia, but at the speed things are moving, we could face the same situation here in Yukon. So, if we get to that point, Mr. Speaker, what will the minister tell workers who simply can't afford to go without a salary because they don't have paid sick leave? Where are they supposed to find money to pay for their rent, to pay for their bills, or to feed their family?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will try to follow up further with the member opposite and with the department, but when people were being asked to stay home, it was not that they weren't going to be working. They were working; they were working from home. In other words —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. What I am trying to say is that if they are sick, they are sick. If they had symptoms that they didn't want to put their co-workers in touch with — it was about working from home. So, I am happy to try to follow up, but I'm not sure if this is about getting them paid, because if they are working, they are going to be paid.

Question re: Salvation Army Adult Resource Centre closure

Ms. Hanson: The Salvation Army announced last week that they will be closing the doors on the 18-bed Adult Resource Centre on April 30, 2020 — just under two months from now. Since the 1980s, the Salvation Army has been providing supervision and support services to inmates leaving the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and those released on bail who have residency conditions. Federal inmates leaving the penitentiary system have also been housed and supported at the ARC.

There have been discussions and negotiations ongoing with this government since this closure was first announced last year.

Mr. Speaker, what is the plan for those individuals currently residing at the adult residential centre?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the member opposite for the question. On December 23, 2019, the government received formal notification from the Salvation Army that they had decided to discontinue the residential programs that they have provided in the territory, commonly known as the Yukon Adult Resource Centre, or sometimes called the ARC. Consequently, the organization will not be extending the contract that they currently have, which will end on March 31, 2020.

Immediately upon that notification, which was seven days longer than what is required by the contract, the Department of Justice began working expeditiously to explore alternative options to provide the services. We agree that the services provided by the Yukon Adult Resource Centre are critical to the justice system and that they are important to individuals who might otherwise be held in custody but for their ability to live there. We expect that the programming will continue, and we would like to thank the Salvation Army for the many years of service and dedication that they have made to our justice community through the operation of that location.

Ms. Hanson: It sounds like the minister and I are on the same page, except that we don't have an outcome yet. Many individuals leaving the Whitehorse Correctional Centre are those being released on parole from the federal system and often have conditions attached. These may include a residency requirement or supervision requirement. The conditions attached to releases are there to protect the public and to protect the individual. Some individuals leaving the correctional services may require one-on-one supervision, assistance with

activities of daily living, or a safe place to reside. Others may be returning to Yukon and need to re-establish themselves before returning to their community. As the minister just indicated, without services such as those offered by the Salvation Army Adult Resource Centre, there are no real options.

What are the plans to provide supports to individuals who have supervision or residency requirements attached to their bail or release, or will they be forced to live outside Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don't disagree at all with the description made by the member opposite of what the Yukon Adult Resource Centre has done in the past and the services that it provides. It is a good description.

She, of course, reinforces my earlier comments that it is a very important program and that it is extremely important to provide these services for Yukon adults who might otherwise be required to be in custody.

I don't understand the concept of living outside of the Yukon, but I will leave that for now.

This is an extremely important program. We were notified about this days ago — at the very end of December. Immediately work began — negotiations. Options are being explored, conversations are happening, and we expect that this program will continue, likely, of course, in a different form than it has been in the past. Certainly, the elements of the program are a necessary part of our justice system and something that we are working hard to maintain because we are proud of the services that have been provided.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, men leaving the correctional system are not the only ones with residency requirements or support needs. Women in our correctional systems also may need supports.

Before the new jail was built, there was a separate residence on the property for women that offered life-skills programming and supports to the female population housed at the WCC. When the new jail opened, the women were incorporated back into the main building, and the women's residence became Takhini Haven, a group home for adults with disabilities. Since May 2019, that building has been empty. Women leaving jail or out on bail have nowhere to transition to, and the Salvation Army Adult Resource Centre was never an option for them.

Mr. Speaker, what are the plans for this building now that has been sitting empty for almost a year? Has this government considered turning it into a halfway house for women leaving the correctional system?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. I completely agree and have had conversations for more than several years regarding the opportunities for women to have a location similar to that of the Yukon Adult Resource Centre. As a matter of fact, many years further back than that, when I did not have this job, it was a concern and a priority for me and a number of people who work in the justice system.

It is entirely appropriate that the Department of Justice explore options whereby women would also be provided with similar services. It is not something that has been done for the last 15 years, or maybe even 30 years. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, it

is a gap in the services that have been provided to date and is something that we are focused on and intend to improve.

Question re: COVID-19 coronavirus preparedness

Mr. Kent: We asked this question last week and didn't get an answer, so I will try again here today. Airports across the world have taken actions to improve sanitation and address health risks in response to COVID-19.

Some have stationed health officers full time to monitor arrivals and check for signs of illness among arriving passengers. Others have installed temperature sensors to detect fever. Some airlines now require travellers to fill out forms to outline their recent travel history, and in some countries, people who have travelled from high-risk areas are being quarantined and tested immediately on arrival. Yukon also, of course, has an international airport that is quite busy, especially during the summer months.

What are the current health screening procedures at Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport, and does the government plan to make changes tailored around monitoring the health of our arrivals?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Coronavirus, of course, is top of mind for many Yukoners, and it's important to remember that the risk in the Yukon and Canada is considered low and that there have been no confirmed cases in the Yukon.

As far as the airport is concerned, currently we have no international flights coming into Whitehorse International Airport. We were preparing for that eventuality when the Arctic Winter Games were going to go ahead, but right now, we don't have any current international flights coming into Whitehorse. We are working with our partners in the provinces and federally to find out and put in place the most appropriate measures to make sure that Whitehorse airport is screened for those international flights when they come into Whitehorse sometime in May.

Mr. Kent: As we've noted previously, travel restrictions and warnings have been issued about travel in the most affected areas. Across Canada, businesses and organizations are beginning to restrict business travel to these areas as well. The Yukon government undertakes a lot of travel for meetings, conferences, and international conventions. However, in light of the decisions made by public health officials and, in some cases, proactively by Canadian businesses, has the government given thought to what it is going to do about government travel?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Health authorities are regularly updating that assessment, and Yukoners will be informed of any changes. We are working with the medical officers of health to make sure that our processes are in line with other Canadian jurisdictions. We will continue to consult with our medical professionals to make sure that we're making the right decisions on behalf of Yukoners. That's within our government as well as outside the government.

Mr. Kent: So, across the country, we've seen several universities and high schools announce that they were cancelling school trips as a result of the spread of COVID-19. For example, the University of Calgary has suspended travel for all students and non-academic staff to several countries

overseas until September as the coronavirus continues to spread.

A high school in Halifax has also cancelled international student trips. Usually around this time of the year, schools plan academic trips, sometimes internationally, such as battlefield tours.

I know there is travel planned for Yukon students this year, but will the concerns around coronavirus have an impact on this travel?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The member opposite is asking lots of good questions about specific agencies. I'll reiterate that coronavirus is definitely on top of mind for many, many Yukoners. It's very important to remember that the risk in Yukon and in Canada is currently low and that we have no confirmed cases in Yukon. Health authorities are regularly updating the assessment, and Yukoners will be informed if that changes.

To answer the members opposite's questions, basically, in a nutshell, government departments and agencies are currently working together to prepare and to ensure a coordinated effort, working effectively in response, and we are regularly working with our federal and provincial counterparts and territorial jurisdictions as well as part of a coordinated, pan-Canadian response. Yukon's chief medical officer of health is leading all activities related to coronavirus preparedness. We are prepared. We have a plan should this virus be detected here.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed. We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 203: *First Appropriation Act 2020-21* — Second Reading — adjourned debate

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 203, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver; adjourned debate, Mr. Hassard.

Mr. Hassard: It's an honour to rise today to respond to the 2020-21 budget as presented by the Premier.

I would like to begin by thanking the constituents of the most remarkable riding on the planet, of course, which is Pelly-Nisutlin. I knew the Minister of Community Services would like that one. I just thank them for continuing to entrust me with being here on their behalf today.

I would also like to thank my family, of course, for all of their continued support. Some days certainly are rougher than others, and I know that all members of the Assembly appreciate the support from their families and know just how important it is to have that support.

Mr. Speaker, in regard to the budget, I would like to begin on a positive note. I'm certainly happy to see the government finally living up to their platform commitment on cutting the small business tax. I'm also happy to see the government making investments, particularly in my riding, with projects such as water and street upgrades in Faro, completing the lagoon in Ross River, as well as the commitment of a new

swimming pool in that community. As we all know, the current pool is in quite a state of disrepair.

We know that the government has continued to make unfulfilled promises on paving the Campbell Highway between Faro and Ross River. I and my constituents wait patiently to see if this latest announcement will actually lead to any work being done — and we hope that it will.

Another thing for Ross River — I have questions for the government regarding their proposed spending on the Ross River school. In the Premier's budget speech, he made mention of working with the Ross River Dena Council and the community to move forward with building a new school, yet when I look through the five-year capital concept, I don't see any mention of a new school, but rather monies for remediation of the old school. I guess that begs the question: Is the government throwing good money after bad?

Mr. Speaker, we did move south a little to Teslin, my neck of the woods. We see a new fire hall in the budget — certainly appreciated — and we also see continued movement on the Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement. Both of these projects are very important not only to the community of Teslin but to the Yukon as a whole. Obviously, the highway has a great effect on our territory.

I would like to spend a few minutes to talk about a few of the things that I think are missing from the budget. Last year, there was a proposed new fire hall in Faro. Unfortunately, it came in overbudget, and it was one of the projects that the government decided to cancel.

I thought that the government was working with the community to revamp the plans and ensure that the fire hall would move ahead. Unfortunately, I don't see it in the budget or in the five-year capital concept, so I am left wondering what happened to that fire hall.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we know that this is the fourth budget for this Liberal government, and they continue to say that there is going to be money for new RCMP stations, but we still haven't seen that commitment come to fruition either. We know that Faro would dearly love to have a new building, as the one that they have been working out of for the last few years is certainly beyond a state of anything that I think any of us would like to have to work in on a daily basis.

If I could move on, Mr. Speaker, to Resource Gateway funding — in 2017 we saw Prime Minister Trudeau travel to the Yukon and have great fanfare and photo ops, and he promised Yukoners millions of dollars in our resource access roads, but we have seen very little transpire since that time. I guess it just proves to Yukoners again that we have a government that is more interested in photo ops than actually producing results.

We know that, at the time the money was committed, it was to be spent by the end of 2024, but to date, very little of the \$112 million has actually been spent, and according to the five-year capital concept, the maximum allowed spending by the end of 2024 adds up to only \$49 million. I guess it begs the questions: Where is this additional \$60-plus million? Are we going to lose it? Other questions around that are: Why were agreements not in place with the affected First Nations before

the announcement was made? The government talked about the great relationships that they had with the First Nations, and here we are some three years later, and we still haven't seen any of these projects come to fruition. I think that these are important questions, and Yukoners certainly deserve answers to them.

Mr. Speaker, if I could talk about mining for a minute. You know, time and again, we talk about the importance of mining here in our territory. We all know that it is a fact that mining is the cornerstone of our economy and has been for well over 100 years. It was very concerning to many Yukoners to see the Fraser Institute come out with a report showing that Yukon has fallen from ninth to 23rd in the world rankings for places to invest in the mining industry. Of course, we know and the industry knows that this is a direct result of our troubles with the permitting process here in the Yukon. It is unfortunate, but we have seen major mining companies come into the Yukon a few years ago, only to now be pulling out. There were other major companies that were hoping to come to the Yukon that have chosen not to.

So, it is interesting when the government comes back from Toronto and PDAC and says that, well, people aren't talking about it and that it doesn't seem to be an issue. I don't think it should be a shock to government that, when companies are looking for investors in their Yukon properties, they are not going to be out announcing the fact that the permitting process is having issues and creating fear among the investors.

That being said, it is important that the government really pull their heads out of the sand and realize that if things don't improve and don't improve soon, we are going to lose even more investors and more potential properties and potential projects here in the Yukon. That is very unfortunate.

In terms of budgeting, the Premier has touted that his government has a new and improved way of doing budgets and that this improvement was going to do away with supplementary budgets. But it appears that this government has failed quite miserably in this endeavour as well. Last fall, when we actually had time to scrutinize supplementary budgets, the government bragged about the fact that there was very little in terms of supplementary budgets. Just a few short months later, we see the largest supplementary request in history. So, obviously, the government needs to do a lot more work in that area too.

Another interesting thing about this budget is that the Premier had boasted about providing a budget with a \$4.1-million surplus and brought Yukon back to a surplus a year ahead of schedule. The interesting part about that is that the only reason we see a surplus for this year is because of a last-minute injection of \$25 million-plus from the federal government. It didn't appear anywhere last fall in the government's projected revenue from the federal government. Yukoners deserve to know that the reality is that, had the federal government not come through with this \$25 million-plus, Yukon would have been looking at a budget with a \$21-million deficit. I think it's pretty rich that the Premier and this government continue to spread the story of being a fiscally responsible government when that, in fact, isn't the case at all.

Mr. Speaker, I know that we have spoken at great length this afternoon about the coronavirus, but I would like to just take a few minutes to talk about that again, if I could, please.

We have all thanked the coaches, the athletes, the staff, and numerous volunteers who had worked so hard to be prepared for the 50th anniversary of the 2020 Arctic Winter Games, and our hearts go out to all of those involved due to the cancelling of the games. It's devastating to places as small as the Yukon to have to cancel such an amazing event, especially so close to the opening ceremonies, but I think that one thing it does is that it really brings the reality of this coronavirus home. It really hits home, because we see these types of things happening throughout the world in various different places, but we always seem to have the idea that it is not going to come here and it is not going to affect us.

In saying that, I think that one of the worst things that can happen is for people, governments, or anyone to create unnecessary fear or panic, but the flip side to that coin is for people to ignore something like this, because everyone needs to be prepared. In the past several days, we have seen the Bank of Canada and the United States Federal Reserve take significant action to help mitigate the impacts on our economy. We have seen G7 finance ministers meet to develop a unified response, and the federal government has announced that their upcoming budget will have measures to protect the economy from any fallout. We have also heard a couple of times today that we know the federal government has forecasted a drop of at least \$550 million in tourism revenue from the Chinese market alone by June, but the problem here is that this Liberal government doesn't appear to be doing the necessary planning for Yukoners.

We see no money currently in the budget for planning. We have had the Deputy Premier tell us today that we don't need money in the budget for planning because we have the largest budget in history, so why would we need individual line items for things?

We have seen the Premier tell the local media that he is not interested in answering questions about what he calls "speculation", but unfortunately, we have gone past the point of speculation. Yukoners truly do deserve a government that will answer the tough questions, and they deserve a government that really will plan for the well-being of Yukoners' health as well as the well-being of our economy here in the territory.

This is why today I brought forward the motion to the floor of this Assembly to create an all-party committee to examine and address adverse economic effects from COVID-19. It really is unfortunate that the Liberal government used their majority to vote this idea down. They voted against the idea of all working together. It's just another example of this Premier, who has said many times that he was willing to take good ideas from all sides of the floor, but yet again, we see that this is all talk and no action. It is certainly unfortunate.

It was also interesting that the Deputy Premier spoke to the motion this afternoon. He told us that he was here to answer questions on behalf of Yukoners, but we just got through Question Period 10 minutes ago and we certainly didn't receive any answers on behalf of Yukoners again today. It was more

about how they have a plan, but they are not going to tell us what the plan is. It really is unfortunate, and I had hoped that something like this, where all three parties could work together for the betterment of the entire territory, would have been a good thing. Again, I guess I shouldn't be surprised, because it appears to me that this is a government that is more interested in shiny objects and big numbers than planning for Yukoners and actually trying to work together on behalf of Yukoners.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat. I am happy to hear what other members of the Legislature have to say and give them an opportunity to raise their comments and concerns regarding the budget that is before us.

Mr. Gallina: Mr. Speaker, before I get into the important details of this budget, I just wanted to take this opportunity to also recognize some of the challenges that we have been facing recently in the territory. The decision to cancel the 2020 Arctic Winter Games has had a significant impact on our community.

As leaders of the territory, I believe it's important for us to ensure that we hold one another up and also take care of ourselves.

As someone who has worked on multiple Arctic Winter Games, I know all too well the impact that this decision is having on volunteers, games staff and organizers, cultural performers, the business community, coaches, athletes, and supporters. Just in my household alone, we have six supporters, three volunteers, and one athlete, and this weekend was particularly trying for us, but there are already talks about ways that we can celebrate all the work that has been done to prepare for these games, whether it's smaller sports, hosting mock meets, gymnastics, and parents coming together for potlucks, athletes still receiving their uniforms — which they can wear with pride in this territory — and volunteers celebrating the work that they have done.

Here in the territory, we find ways to celebrate our diversity and the challenges that we have been faced with. I'm confident that we'll move forward together in a fashion that will give Yukoners confidence that we understand the priorities of Yukoners in the territory, and we will continue to show leadership as we transition into this new reality that we're all facing.

Mr. Speaker, as I read through this budget, and as I hear from the Premier in his address, I see how this budget reflects the promises and commitments made by this Liberal caucus toward sound financial management and fiscal responsibility on behalf of this government and on behalf of Yukoners. It's representative of a growing population, an expanding territory, a diversified economy, and a commitment to investing in Yukoners while maintaining financial viability.

This budget tabled includes a surplus of \$4.1 million, and for the third consecutive year where main estimates have been tabled, it includes a five-year capital plan. This exemplifies the commitment this government has made to prudent fiscal management, openness, and transparency with our stakeholders and the citizens of Yukon.

As I listen to the Premier table this budget, I reflect on the commitments this government made to supporting First Nations, municipalities, and the private sector. I reflect on the decisions to put Yukoners first with a reduced small business tax rate to zero percent. This reduction on small business tax will save Yukoners over \$2 million each year. Expanding the business investment tax credit will also enable more investments to support Yukon businesses.

Sustainability — it's a word that signifies forward thinking, anticipation, and long-term strategy. Much like our renewable energy plan and our goals to tackle climate change, this budget is about sustainability. I would like to spend a few moments highlighting particular areas that focus on sustainability and long-term strategy here in this budget.

I heard the Premier indicate that money has been allocated to advance planning for a new elementary school in Whistle Bend. The Whistle Bend school is an important project for my constituents and for Yukoners throughout the territory. I have been advocating for this on behalf of my constituents since I was elected as a member of this Legislative Assembly and I'm proud to see this continue to move forward.

This new school will provide more access to education facilities for families with young children living in the vicinity and it will alleviate some school capacity pressures in neighbouring schools. It will also have a positive influence on land and asset values in the neighbourhood and it will support teachers by helping to maintain healthy classroom sizes.

I heard the Premier say that planning for the school involved the engagement of neighbourhood residents, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and the City of Whitehorse. This is another prime example of how this government is working with Yukoners through reconciliation with First Nations and working directly with other governments to ensure that the priorities of everyone are considered when planning for the education of our future generations.

I would also like to highlight the development of the new French language school in Riverdale. I heard the Premier say that the school was ahead of schedule for construction and completion is anticipated for this fall. I'm proud to learn this and it means this government is continuing a proactive approach to project management. It means that fiscal responsibility is a priority and that sustainability isn't just a word being used to receive unwarranted attention. This government isn't just changing the landscape for Yukoners; it's fundamentally changing the way government operates and prioritizes responsibility.

I heard the Premier say that this budget is not about flash. He wasn't kidding. Members of this House, there is nothing flashy about sewage lagoons or energy retrofits, but these types of infrastructure developments and upgrades that are being highlighted in this budget today are vital to ensuring that each and every one of us in Yukon are moving forward on a clear path — one that is conscious of our future health — be it mental or physical — and one that is sustainable — be it our energy requirements or management of our resources.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is setting a precedent for change that promises to have direct positive influences and impacts on Yukoners. These changes will resonate for years to come. One of the major priorities of this budget is to deliver programs and services that focus on healthy and happy living. Supporting recreational activities is important to myself, to my family, and to my constituents. Many Yukoners have growing families, and amenities go a long way to improving overall happiness and community participation.

We want to provide an environment where creativity and artistic talent are encouraged and nurtured. Support for outdoor activities such as the upgrades to the skateboard park will provide much-needed facility facelifts for the community and provide new opportunities for adolescents and young children to explore their creative gifts. Whether it's a young child making their first attempt at traversing a bowl on four wheels or teenagers exploring artistic talents through spray paint, skateboard parks across the world are gathering places for imaginative youth to express themselves.

Mr. Speaker, a new state-of-the-art track and field facility at F.H. Collins school will support all students, not just those attending F.H. Collins, with opportunities to push and explore their physical limitations. These are not just investments in infrastructure and programming. No, it goes without saying: Physical activity is paramount for ensuring a healthy life. It's crucial for positive mental health status and it aids in avoiding future health issues. These are investments in Yukoners. These are investments in our future. This year, we are celebrating the victories of some of our local athletes — Dylan Cozens and his victory with Team Canada at the World Junior hockey championships and Brandon Cormier with his gold medal victory at the X Games Aspen 2020.

Too often, there is more that can be done to expose and nurture the talents of our youth. This is why I'm happy to hear about the planned upgrades for the Polarettes Gymnastics Club. Mr. Speaker, the Polarettes Gymnastics Club has increased membership from 500 in 2014-15 to just under a thousand in 2017-18, which is approximately 15 percent of Yukon's entire youth population. This club supports 22 national coaching certification program coaches, 10 Gymnastics Canada coach and training program coaches and 29 women in coaching. These programs and achievements are to be celebrated, and with a new gymnastics facility, we can expect the success of this club to continue to grow.

Mr. Speaker, in moving through the budget, we know that housing demand has increased steadily in Yukon over the years. While 350 new housing units have been introduced across the territory since 2018, there is still a shortage that is being addressed. This budget is committing \$9 million for a 47-unit mixed-housing project in downtown Whitehorse. It also includes funding for new multi-unit mixed-housing projects in the communities of Carcross and Old Crow. With that, this year, \$27 million will be invested into Whistle Bend lot development. This government will be releasing 200 new lots in the Whistle Bend subdivision, including the first commercial lots in the neighbourhood. The release of these lots will go a long way toward relieving pressure on existing housing

markets. They are expected to positively affect rental prices as supply and demand balance out over time.

Mr. Speaker, adding to these investments, \$3.6 million has been allocated to the housing initiative fund as well. This is what a proactive approach to the housing crisis looks like. We are not only addressing the present concerns, we are also making strategic long-term investments for the future as well.

Mr. Speaker, aging in place is an increasing concern among our senior residents. Many have expressed a desire to stay in their home or in their community as long as possible — understandably so. I heard the Premier make a commitment of \$500,000 to expand the home care program. For the seniors not just in my riding but all over Yukon, this will go a long way in providing the necessary comforts as they venture closer to the next journey of their lives.

Mr. Speaker, this government committed to making life more affordable for Yukoners. It is investing in affordable housing, reducing the small business tax to zero, and increasing the minimum wage for Yukoners by an additional \$1 per hour. This is all while delivering a surplus budget. This government is not just making promises; it is delivering tangible, sustainable — it's doing this in impactful ways.

As I bring this address to a close, I want to reiterate and highlight some of the key points of this budget. Finalizing a climate change, energy, and green economy strategy for Yukon is one of the most ambitious, important, and impactful things that we can do as a government for securing our future. It is vital for ensuring that the generations after us have the best chances for success in our ever-changing world. An investment of \$1 million to begin implementation of this 10-year strategy will go a long way to improving the quality of life of everyone for years to come.

The investment of \$29 million for climate change, energy, and green economy projects will create sustainable and renewable energy options for Yukoners while providing employment and training opportunities for the foreseeable future.

\$120 million over four years for energy-efficient retrofits for residential, commercial, and institutional buildings throughout Yukon will help to ensure that the power we generate for our citizens to heat their homes and businesses will be used more effectively and efficiently, ultimately reducing operational costs for everyone. It will help us to reduce our carbon footprint, save Yukoners' money, and reduce load requirements on our energy grids.

Mr. Speaker, we have the third-lowest unemployment rate in Canada. We have a strong, diverse economy, and we have shifted our perspective to focus on all aspects of health, whether it is working with partners to develop regulations in models of care for midwifery, providing operational funding to Queer Society Yukon, developing an action plan to address LGBTQ2S+ rights, or developing inclusive and discrimination-free legislation and workplaces in the territory.

Mr. Speaker, we are actively working to ensure that all members of our society are not just heard, but they are respected, included, and supported. That is why we are introducing legislation to ban conversion therapy in Yukon.

This government ran on a promise to work with and support Yukon First Nations. Reconciliation is something that we work toward each and every day. We are funding the development of Yukon's strategy on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and supporting violence prevention initiatives in Yukon communities to help address violence against aboriginal women.

The progress that we have made and continue to make is a national example for other jurisdictions on what reconciliation really means, because it is not just about consultation. It is about fostering healthy government-to-government relationships. It is about breaking down the barriers on perspective between the government and citizens. It is about understanding that we are all working toward the same goals — a happy and healthy place to call home. That is what this government is about and that is what this budget is about.

Mr. Istchenko: I would like to start by, of course — I have been looking forward, actually, to my response to the budget today, but I wholeheartedly want to thank my wife and kids, my family, and my friends for the support.

Without them, it would make this job so much more difficult. It's so great to have them in my life. Also, I would be very remiss if I didn't thank my constituents of the great riding of Kluane, from the Takhini River bridge north on the Alaska Highway to Beaver Creek and to all those south along the Haines Road, one of the largest, most diverse ridings in the Yukon.

In the riding of Kluane, we have three First Nations, a municipality, and many small communities. Each is different in its own way, but all have wonderful community spirit. Meeting with many of them on a regular basis, one can see why they are so dedicated to living there and have so much love for the Kluane area.

Over the past few years, I'm starting to hear something — more and more sentiment toward the Liberal government's lack of attention to the Kluane riding. I'm going to concentrate some of my budget response to these issues and give a little bit of an update from earlier discussions in the House.

First of all, I want to talk a little bit about Highways and Public Works and Shakwak. Before I start this, I want to remind the Minister of Highways and Public Works that, yes, Destruction Bay, Burwash, and Beaver Creek are in the Yukon. They are not constituents of Alaska. I was just floored when he said that.

When you have a road that is built on permafrost, cutting budgets to the road and its maintenance has a long-term effect. You just need to drive the north Alaska Highway to see that this is happening. Closing a grader station for the summer and tasking other grader stations with twice the work with less employees only brings you less maintenance and creates long-term systemic issues. The Liberal government should not be cutting front-end services. It is about public safety.

This Liberal government promised seasonally tendered contracts by March 31 of each year. It looks like now, because they couldn't stick to that promise, they had to revoke it. Instead, the Premier now promises to tender projects at the right

time, or he makes reference to procurement strategies. Mr. Speaker, that's not how you do it. We have a section of road in Mendenhall that is a product of the Liberals' failed procurement. It was tendered late and was only half-finished. The road is gravel, rough, and it's unsafe, and I wonder what condition it will be in when spring comes and things start to melt. I put a motion on the floor on the first day about this issue.

We have had brushing contracts come out in the middle of winter when it's 40 below. With all the excess snow and the cold temperatures, the cost for this just goes up, but I can guarantee — I'm sure the department officials warned the minister that this isn't the way they should be contracting, but it probably fell on deaf ears.

When it comes to federal water and sewer money for Haines Junction, I see there are dollars in the budget for phase 3 and 4, but if it's not tendered now, the Liberal government will face the same problems as they encountered in their first year in government. They will tender so late, we will miss the season, which means money spent and jobs lost. You can call that false budgeting.

I went through the budget this weekend and looked at the five-year capital plan and it's never the same. You would think the five-year capital plan — what was in it last year for this year would be in it this year. I don't know what that is; it's a colouring exercise or something. It seems to be quite the Liberal trend.

In this year's budget, we see money going forward for a Burwash school. That is great. This school is a product of the previous Yukon Party government commitment. The issue that I'm hearing from constituents is that \$12- to \$18 million has been budgeted for the building of this school. Mr. Speaker, where did this number come from? There has been \$50,000 allocated in the past three years for determining what is required going forward for the construction of this school, and every year, this amount is pushed down the road. This should have been done by now. It's not done.

I also have constituents who are frustrated with the inability to voice their ideas and concerns, as no one from the Liberal government will meet with them. There has been no planning done to date on this school — and yet the government is able to budget for the school? Perhaps get the planning done and then focus on the budget — and the planning should have been done.

Again, switching gears to the bullying policy in schools, this still has not been implemented. I met with the Porter Creek Secondary Gender and Sexuality Alliance a few months ago who are frustrated with the Liberal government's handling of bullying. We spoke of their concerns around bullying and the government's handling of bullying in this school and others, and I hope there is money in this budget to get this bullying policy implemented. It's not accepted at any level and needs to be standardized throughout our Yukon schools.

I want to talk a bit about land planning. The previous Yukon Party government changed land titles so First Nations could now register and develop land. This was very important. I'm so excited to see Champagne and Aishihik First Nations moving forward with the development of what I believe is a 50-

lot subdivision in Haines Junction. Kluane First Nation is looking to develop a subdivision also.

In the Premier's budget speech, he mentioned legislative changes to allow for more registration of category A and B land. I hope this is done in a timely manner and that it does not affect this land development. I know that they would like to move forward with this.

It also begs me to wonder about local area planning along the Alaska Highway from Haines Junction to Takhini. I believe it has been four years since the previous government signed the agreement. What's happening — with a big question mark — what's happening? It seems to be stalled. Every year, I ask and get the same answer: "We're working on it." This needs to get done so land can be developed so we can grow and stimulate economic development.

Also, I think the minister promised residents in Destruction Bay and Burwash a meeting. They are still waiting. It is so that they can provide input into more land availability. There are zero lots available in that area.

This is also concerning to the riding — I wrote a letter to the ministers of Highways and Public Works and Energy, Mines and Resources on October 23 about the government closing all gravel pits. Gravel pits are co-managed by Highways and Public Works and Energy, Mines and Resources for public, commercial, and government use. It has been working fine. I still haven't received a response. I sure hope the ministers are not still planning on closing all these pits, because it is going to be very hard for landowners and First Nations developing their lots to get anything done if they can't access material to build.

Last year, I was corresponding with the minister with regard to the community club folding in Beaver Creek due to volunteer burnout. This resulted in the swimming pool being closed last summer. This is important for our communities. In this year's budget, I see a new pool in Pelly Crossing and Ross River, but I would hope that — because Community Services does the hiring and provides the funds for the positions of lifeguards and the good Property Management folks do the maintenance of the pool in Beaver Creek — it can be open this summer and that the minister can make this happen.

Speaking of pools — I will stick with that — the pool in Haines Junction was closed last year because of structural issues. There was an earthquake. The Minister of Highways and Public Works will understand — because I put a lot of work into the Blanchard camp for the damage. The rumour around town was that there was \$20 million for a new one. There is a local online petition with over 600 signatures on it asking the Village of Haines Junction to move forward with this project, but I can't seem to find those dollars in this largest-ever budget.

Many constituents are very disappointed with the government's handling of non-profit groups, especially Many Rivers. Mental health is an issue and the minister's wellness hubs are not enough. I hope work will be done with any community organization that steps up with an offer to amplify mental health services, particularly for those clients who may not feel that government support is the best fit for them. I have had many conversations with many of them and they are frustrated.

One of those most important things, of course, is taking care of our seniors. Our local seniors have still not seen the minister or the Premier. The Liberal government committed to seniors facilities in communities. Haines Junction appears to not be included in this commitment.

I would be remiss — and this will be an issue that is concerning to you also — if I didn't mention the issue of hunting and regulation change proposals. Yukoners are actually worried that, with this Liberal government, in the direction they are going, hunters will lose their ability to actually hunt in the Yukon. This is what I'm hearing. For the past few months, the cost to Yukoners with this is very, very concerning.

I want to talk a little bit about COVID-19. First of all, I want to talk about the motion that was put on the floor today and it has to do with budgeting. This is my budget response, and budgets need to be tweaked for major issues that happen. Two weekends ago, I was at a community function at Champagne and I was talking to some tourism people who run tours. They were dealing with this issue. They were talking about clients who they were accepting and clients who they weren't accepting. They were starting to prepare for this. It got me wondering, "What are the government's thoughts on this one?" It has been in the media for a month and a half. Every time you turn the TV on, it's one of the first things they talk about.

So, I waited. I waited all week. It came to Question Period, and we asked a couple of questions in Question Period. The Premier said the same thing today — low and no confirmed cases. That was basically his answer.

Now, when we put this budget on the floor today to have all three parties — equal representation — get together and try to help the Yukon on this, we had the Premier get up and say a few words. They agreed that we should talk about this motion, so they have to get up and speak. The Premier got up and said a few words; the Minister of Economic Development got up and said a few words; the Minister of Tourism said a few words. The one thing that was completely missing was words from our Health minister. I haven't seen a press release out of the government offices from upstairs. I saw one earlier and I wrote it down here. It was on electric cars. But I haven't seen a statement from the government on this huge issue that's worldwide.

Mr. Speaker, in Question Period, we spoke. My wife and I watched it. The Premier on national television on Friday and in a span of — you heard earlier today — something drastically changed, but there were no comments out of the government. Do you know what? The government — this government and this — what did I say earlier — largest budget ever is where the money comes from for our health care. There should be a statement coming out of this government and from the Health minister.

One of the things that I didn't hear today that much when all rose and spoke about this motion today was about senior citizens — senior citizens and those with compromised immune systems. I have the opportunity to travel somewhere later this week and I'm not going. My wife has a compromised immune system.

I know it's hard, and it was hard to cancel the Arctic Winter Games, and I'm with everybody else. I know what it's like to train as an athlete. I have coached; I've done that too. It's so disappointing, but when it comes to seniors, all you need to do is be someone like me who is in the public all the time as an elected official and going to events and take this home and give my wife a hug. Her immune system can't deal with this. Mine can — I'm fairly healthy — but hers can't.

The seniors at the seniors complex that I so often go and visit — we need to take this seriously. It is serious, and it's very important to Yukoners. I'm going to leave that there.

I want to speak a little bit about the time change. I'm so happy to see that the government actually came out and consulted. First things first, AYC needs to be thanked for bringing it to the attention, and this side, the Yukon Party, put a lot of effort into bringing motions forward that were basically watered down quite a few times, but I see that Yukoners are happy to get rid of the time change. I hope that British Columbia and other jurisdictions are still in the conversation and that this isn't something that we've done and no one else is going to do.

For the last few months — in my final statement — the cost to Yukoners for items of necessity has been brought up by my constituents. We talk about this all the time. We don't have the luxury of being at Walmart in five minutes to pick up what you need, go home, and get a great deal on it. We don't have that luxury in rural Yukon. Fuel prices are some of the highest in the country, and they don't seem to be going down. They have gone down everywhere else in the country, but not up here. For someone who lives in Beaver Creek who needs supplies, that's huge.

Electricity prices are climbing. Some people are reporting bills that have tripled in a month. Food prices increase, and fees are going up. Thanks to the carbon tax, everything has become more expensive. In rural Yukon — and we have said this a million times — Yukoners do not have an option at all.

The Premier's budget talks about a changing climate, and all he is doing to address it is — what Yukoners see — a government that buys its biomass from British Columbia logs when it could be getting it from my riding. It tenders contracts for heating upgrades to government buildings like schools — looking for a propane heating system — but they come out and say, "Oh no, all new buildings will have biomass." It's a government that trucks fuel from the south, load after load, to fill these rented generators so we can keep the lights on. Mr. Speaker, the Yukon needs a government that supports Yukoners, using our own resources to create economic opportunities, to create power, and to create local partnerships.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, there's a growing sentiment that there's lots of talk from this Liberal government but not much action, and what little action there is just makes things harder to get by.

Once again, my constituents of the great riding of Kluane, I am honoured to serve you — I always am. I was on the phone all morning with somebody with feral horse issues. I look forward to serving you the best I can, and I thank you for your support.

Mr. Hutton: Thank you, Mr. Acting Chair, for this opportunity to reply to the budget speech. I would like to begin by saying a truly sincere and heartfelt thank you and mahsi' cho to all the good folks out there in the Mayo-Tatchun riding for all their support and encouragement over the past three-and-a-half years. Thank you also to my family and especially my wife. I could not do this without her support. Without all of these people, I would not be here today pushing forward solutions to the problems that our community faces.

I want to acknowledge that the Mayo-Tatchun riding is encompassed by the traditional territories of the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, Selkirk, and Little Salmon Carmacks First Nations. I would say that their land makes up the largest and most beautiful riding, among many beautiful areas in our Yukon, and I am privileged to be welcomed and living on it for all these years.

I also want to thank the Premier for the excellent budget. Believe me, he doesn't hear that every year. I am truly grateful for the continued focus on improving the well-being of our citizens in our rural communities. For many years, we saw little or no investment in our small rural communities. We certainly have a lot of work left to do, but I am very encouraged by the progress that our Liberal government has made since taking office. Investing in our water supply and distribution systems is critical and, again, is not flashy, but it's absolutely critical for the well-being of our communities and for their continued health and wellness. Seeing investments being made in water and sewer infrastructure in Mayo, Pelly, and Carmacks as well as ensuring that residents in Keno City have access to safe, clean drinking water is very encouraging. These are some of the most valuable investments that can be made. Clean water is a human right, not a privilege. This government recognizes that and is taking steps to make sure that all Yukoners have safe, potable water for daily consumption and use.

Community recreation facilities are another very critical component of health and well-being for our communities as a way of providing healthy, alternative activities for our youth. Our government is investing \$3.75 million this year to complete the new arena in Carmacks. Mayo is receiving \$2 million to upgrade our existing hockey arena. There is \$2 million going into a swimming pool for Pelly Crossing. These are three communities that saw very little investment over the last 15 years. I am absolutely thrilled that money is now being spent in all three of these communities, bringing some well-deserved and much-needed recreation opportunities for our youth.

Seeing our government funding these upgrades and developments, with the new swimming pool for the residents of Pelly Crossing, shows just how important these facilities are. I can speak to the challenges facing all of these communities. It was in the paper here a couple of weeks ago that there was a big drug bust in Mayo. I was absolutely shocked to find out what kinds of drugs are making their way into our communities. This wasn't grass — cannabis or pot. These guys were caught with crack, cocaine, crystal methamphetamine, heroin, and fentanyl in Mayo. When I grew up in this territory, you couldn't

find heroin in Whitehorse. You had to go to Vancouver to get it. Now it's in every community in our territory, and we need to do something about that.

I am really encouraged that, at the very least, our youth are going to have some alternatives. There are other things for them to do out there. We are building arenas and swimming pools and making sure that they have something to do with their time besides supporting these parasitic drug dealers that are out there.

In the area of health care, I am glad to see our government's continued support for a nurse practitioner in Mayo. Residents were very concerned about losing their community doctor, but I am happy to say that the nurse practitioner has been a very positive change in bringing positive, quality health care to our communities. I am also encouraged by the success of this new model of collaborative care, and I hope to see it expand to communities like Pelly and Carmacks in future years.

Our north Klondike Highway has been sorely neglected for many years. At long last, we are going to see some major upgrades over the next 10 years to the tune of \$157 million. Constituents will be happy to know that geotechnical and design work this year will support a new bridge for Crooked Creek in 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023.

This year alone, we'll see \$13 million worth of construction projects for the north Klondike Highway. I'm also very happy to see the Carmacks bypass project going forward. These upgrades will increase the quality of the drive for Yukoners, businesses, and tourists along the highway. They will make the road safe overall and provide a much-needed upgrade for frequent drivers, such as myself.

Our airport in Mayo has finally seen some much-needed upgrades as usage continues to grow at this facility, with another \$1 million to \$2 million in planned spending for site improvement over 2020-21. Kudos to Air North for the ability to fly out of Mayo on an almost daily basis, and I look forward to more improvement in the years to come.

I'm also extremely pleased to see that this year's budget shows our government's continued support of Yukon First Nations. The approval and implementation of the Peel River watershed regional plan shows that great things can happen when governments work together. Our work to build positive, respectful relationships with First Nations is an essential step in what will likely be a lifelong journey toward true reconciliation with Canada's first peoples.

I'm tremendously encouraged by the progress being made by First Nations in our territory. First Nation economic development corporations are forming new partnerships at an astounding rate, creating economic opportunities not just for First Nations but all Yukoners.

I want to give a huge shout-out to Chad Thomas and Jordan Profeit for their fantastic achievement of winning \$400,000 from the Arctic Inspiration Prize. They are also receiving an additional \$600,000 contribution from the federal government to pursue training opportunities in wellness and health for wildland firefighters in Yukon. This project aims to respond to challenges of mental illness, addiction, and suicide

among youth and wildland firefighters. The program will employ a holistic approach to wellness that can be tailored to each participant and address trauma through traditional practices, land-based healing, and mentorship based on a foundation of traditional knowledge.

Kudos to everyone involved — a great accomplishment indeed for Yukon First Nation firefighters.

I also want to give a huge shout-out to Geri-Lee Buyck for her work as team leader of the Yukon Youth Healthcare Summit. Their aim is to address the need to increase the number of indigenous Yukoners in post-secondary education, particularly in the field of health care.

They're exposing the youth to a variety of health care professions through a series of multi-day summits in partnership with Whitehorse General Hospital. The initial phase of the project would have team members travel to Yukon high schools to recruit students. The second phase would bring these youth interested in health care to Whitehorse to participate in the summit, which could include use of the new clinical simulation centre. These students will participate in workshops hosted by health care professionals and learn about paths to a career in health care.

Congratulations, Geri-Lee. You make our whole community proud for winning \$100,000 from the Arctic Inspiration Prize in the youth category. I truly wish you the utmost success as you move this project forward.

I'm very pleased to see \$5 million in new funding allocated for wildfire suppression, in addition to funding for fuel management and fire mitigation projects, as well as extending the regular season for First Nation fire crews. Wildland Fire Management is facing new challenges each year with extended and more severe fire seasons. Protecting our communities from disaster and working on preventive measures is becoming a clear priority with this government.

I'm very pleased to see that wildfire protection plans will be developed within the communities in an effort to mitigate forest fire risk while creating jobs in the communities and among the First Nations.

First Nations have always played a key role in wildland fire in the territory and I'm very happy to see the ever-increasing role played by our First Nation firefighters, many of whom I have had the pleasure of working with during my career in Yukon.

A final crowning accomplishment — finalizing the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* after 15 years of hard work. Working with our First Nations to develop sustainable, respectful land use plans is essential for securing our future and ensuring that reconciliation isn't just a buzzword.

Thank you, everyone, for taking the time to listen to me today. I look forward to hearing the responses to the budget from other members, and I look forward to future opportunities to speak and expand on some of the topics I discussed today. Thank you and mahsi' cho.

Ms. Van Bibber: As we continue to work on behalf of Yukoners and their concerns, I want to give special recognition to my constituents in Porter Creek North and thank them for

their continued support. It is with great pleasure that I serve in this Legislative Assembly, and I hope that if you have any issues and you need assistance, you will feel free to contact me.

I too would like to give thanks to my family — especially my husband, Pat — for their support and care through my time working here. They are my anchor.

There are many issues facing our world at the moment and there are always pressing issues that we must address close to home as well. As we move through these interesting times, we have expectations of how our economy works and will continue to work year after year. With a slowdown or possible stopping of travellers to our beautiful territory, we must be prepared for the negative impacts that can or could occur. We need to ensure that we are aware of the issues that happen around the world and the impacts that can impact us on a territorial level. Perhaps as we move through the budget debate, the government and the Tourism and Culture department should consider refocusing or redirecting marketing funds to other areas, such as from overseas to the Canadian market, to lessen the impact on our many summer businesses.

With recommendations coming daily and the situation also changing daily in each affected country, the stress on our tourism businesses could be something more than awful. For an operator, it is paying the bills necessary to operate. It is employment. It is about supply and it is about just keeping the doors open. As someone who worked on the front line for many years in a summer tourism business, I know the impact, even when the norovirus hit a segment of the cruise ship population. Employment will not be as available should the cruise industry stop.

I have raised concerns with this government on behalf of my constituents that have been punted down the road or ignored. These concerns are with respect to highway safety for both motorists and pedestrians. There are a number of residents who cross the Alaska Highway at the junction of Birch Street and Super A Foods, and the crosswalk is inadequate. Not only do they often have to wait for a break in the traffic as there is no flashing indicator at this crosswalk, but they are often forced to run.

I have raised this issue with the minister. I have been told that this will be addressed when it comes time for that area of the highway to be considered for upgrades. Well, the safety issue is now, today. The crosswalk sign is in a state of disrepair. One of the overhead signs is missing, as one of the posts was hit in a vehicle accident. The fix? Well, the government put a small sign on the post to indicate that there was a crosswalk. The crosswalk at 17th Avenue and the Alaska Highway also needs attention. It has a missing sign, and when heading south on the highway, a driver is greeted with a lightbulb — no sign.

Both of these crosswalks, located along a major highway, should have pedestrian-operated flashing lights for their safety and for the safety of motorists. This should be done sooner than later, and I would say that all of us in this House would not like to see anyone hurt.

The other issue directly in my riding is the youth home at 22 Wann Road. We would like to have an update on this important part of the youth care initiative that was put in place

to help aging-out-of-care youth. The questions are many, but as we get into the department's budget, we will have those questions on the cost, the workings, and the programs of the facility.

The budget also speaks to lot availability and affordability as Whitehorse continues to need more affordable homes and lots and affordable rental units. In Porter Creek, the solution has been infilling and lot subdivision, which happens regularly. The impact on neighbourhoods is changing. Density is encouraged, but it is causing parking issues and crowding, and I can see this also happening in the new Whistle Bend. We will be asking questions in this budget about where these affordable, available lots and homes are in order to help our constituents.

The times that we get to speak to a budget can be limiting, and we hope to ensure that we can get the answers, as Yukoners deserve to know where the money that is allocated is actually spent. Big numbers look great on a budget; however, it has been very difficult to get an actual cost number for specific items and for what is actually spent where. There are fewer line items to show where dollars are allocated.

“Open and transparent” is a wonderful phrase; however, if it is not easy to follow in the budget documents, how is a typical Yukoner going to know the flow of revenue and expenses of this government?

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I am pleased to have this opportunity to respond to the 2020-21 budget presented by the Premier and Minister of Finance on behalf of our government on March 5.

First, I would like to reflect on the support that I receive from my family. I hold them up always. They are the reason I do anything. I have talked about this previously — when you are in these types of positions, you know they're going to be busy, and you know they're going to be demanding, but the time that is often given up first is the time that we have for our families and our friends, so trying to create balance within your political life is sometimes really challenging. I absolutely love and cherish each one of my family members, and I am so grateful for their support always and for my friends for continuing to invite me, even though oftentimes I have to decline and say that I have other duties or responsibilities that are really important to Yukoners. I just wanted to say that first.

I want to turn my attention next to my riding of Mountainview. I have such a diverse riding. There is often a lot of different, competing needs and issues that are happening within Mountainview, but it is an absolute pleasure to represent the citizens of Mountainview, to continue to have their voices heard, and to respond to the needs. I'm privileged to be that voice for Mountainview. I remain committed, and I take my duties very seriously.

Recently, I had an opportunity to meet some of the elders at Kwanlin Dün First Nation. They shared their feeling of feeling safer in the community.

I know that it is a direct result of the community safety officer program that we're partnering with, and I thank the Minister of Justice for continuing to hear the priorities of Mountainview. I reflect these conversations and direct reflections from our elders saying that they feel safer and that

they are grateful for the changes in the community. I just wanted to bring that to the floor of the Legislative Assembly today.

When you go through the Kwanlin Dün community, you realize that it has changed, and it's a direct result of community effort, partnership, and upholding our commitment to reconciliation with Yukon First Nations. It really shows when you go throughout our communities. I'll reflect a little bit more on a recent community tour that I've had, but I'm going on into other projects within my riding.

I'm really proud to have worked alongside the Minister of Highways and Public Works on the Hillcrest highway upgrades and to bring safer crossings for my constituents who live in Hillcrest and Valleyview and into Granger and Mountainview. A very extensive consultation happened throughout this project. It included a specialist panel. I'm eager to see the work continue.

I know that there are still some concerns. We're continuing to look into those and to respond to the requests for more information and to help folks understand the significance of this project and what it will bring to the residents within all of the areas within my riding. I'm hoping to see the work continue soon and to deliver on time.

Also, moving back into the Kwanlin Dün community, it's really working alongside my colleague from Community Services on a major infrastructure project that's happening right now in the Kwanlin Dün community around the building of a new community hub.

It is going to bring much-needed infrastructure into the community. Again, you only have to drive through the community to see all the changes that are happening there, and these infrastructure projects that we are helping to support are a very big part of that. They are very much hand in hand with and in the spirit of reconciliation, so I'm very proud to be part of a government that is supporting that type of work in our communities.

Recently, I was very pleased to see some of my constituents — Helene Dobrowolsky and Rob Ingram — receiving the history-makers award during the Annual Yukon Heritage Award ceremony organized by Heritage Yukon. I was really happy to see that and Yukoners contributing to preserving the history of our Yukon Territory. It is very heartwarming to see this recognition of folks who do things in their everyday lives to make Yukon the special place that it is.

I will move on to reflecting on the budget within my portfolio. It is truly a budget for all Yukoners. This is a budget that reflects our government's commitment to improve the lives of Yukoners, enhance infrastructure across the territory, protect the environment, and support small businesses, all while posting a surplus. Our government is proud to represent the diverse needs and wants of Yukoners to accomplish such a task. I am glad to say that our Cabinet caucus travelled to communities to meet with people to talk to them, listen to them, and partake in their communities in the forms of meetings, events, celebrations, and many other opportunities.

As a Liberal government, we have undertaken hundreds of visits to communities — hundreds. We are very proud of

having those direct conversations with Yukoners. Today, I am going to speak about my three portfolios: the Women's Directorate, the Department of Tourism and Culture, and the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board.

I want to thank, firstly, the staff of the Women's Directorate. They have done some really heavy lifting over the last year in terms of — and I'll get into more detail around this — the work around missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, the sexualized assault response team, LGBTQ2S+ — working toward an action plan for our fellow Yukoners within that community — absolutely contributing to the strong fabric of our Yukon Territory.

Tourism and Culture — I can say the same. They have worked very diligently and are very supportive. I'm happy to have such strong relationships within the department, within all of my departments. With the recent introduction of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* and all the work that has gone into that, and now we're working toward a creative and cultural industry strategy — I talk to my staff all the time just to say, you know, "How are things going?" They reflect that they feel great about coming to work every day and doing good work on behalf of Yukoners.

I just want to reflect that. Thank you to Valerie Royle for such good leadership of the Women's Directorate and Tourism and Culture — I congratulate her on her new role. I'm sharing her with the minister responsible for French in the territory. Valerie Royle is also moving on, into that portfolio. I'm happy to share.

Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board — I want to thank Kurt Dieckmann for his great leadership of the staff and all the hard work that they do on behalf of Yukoners each and every day. They are working hard on the review and modernization of our acts that govern employers and employees in our territory, and they're also working hard on regulations to address the prevention of psychological injury in all of our workplaces. Thank you to all of the staff in all of our departments.

Unlike previous years, I would like to start with the Women's Directorate. The department continues to work on all policies, programs, and services through a gender-inclusive and diversity lens. This supports the rest of government to carry out our work in a way that is supportive of Yukoners from diverse identities and backgrounds, such as culture, race, gender, age, class, and ability. We know that biases exist and that people from marginalized groups bear the brunt of inequalities in our society. This affects everything from our health and safety to their career and financial security. The final report on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls was released on June 3, 2019. This report exposed the truth about what it is like to be an indigenous woman in this country.

Last fall, after we all had time to review and digest the final report, the Yukon Advisory Council on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls came together to identify the next steps that we need to take to spark change. Together, the Yukon Advisory Council on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls developed a draft whole-of-Yukon strategy

on missing and murdered indigenous women, girls, and 2S+ people that identifies concrete areas of work under four main pillars: healing, community safety, economic empowerment, and community dialogue.

This remains a key priority for our government. We are working on finalizing this strategy, along with our partners. We recently met with partners and stakeholders throughout the territory to discuss initiatives being planned or that are already underway in each community and where we can work together.

We have extended the senior advisor position on the national inquiry at the Women's Directorate to continue the work and action plan and recommendations.

Last week, we had the honour of having former Chief Commissioner Marion Buller in the territory. She spoke as a keynote speaker at the CYFN justice conference and she said that the approach Yukon is taking with the inquiry is exactly what she had envisioned and wished for.

I had a chance to sit down with the former Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Senator Sinclair. He emphasized how missing and murdered indigenous women and girls was always the most crucial file coming out of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and he talked extensively to me about our approach in the Yukon and he thought it was a good one.

One related initiative is our recent partnership with the Government of Canada to enhance our indigenous women's equality fund to help build capacity within indigenous women's organizations and enable them to better meet the needs of their communities. The joint funding for all three indigenous women's organizations was \$426,500 for 2018-19 and \$600,000 per year for 2019 to 2021. That's continuing. We are working with our federal partners to continue that funding beyond 2021 to continue the capacity building for indigenous women's groups.

These women's organizations provide critical advocacy support and leadership that breaks down barriers and empowers Yukon indigenous women and girls. To ensure that the Government of Yukon is meeting the needs and priorities of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners, the Women's Directorate initiated a territory-wide public engagement process in the fall of 2018. QMUNITY hosted 12 focus groups and three larger community dialogues. The purpose was to identify ways to strengthen Yukon government legislation, policies, programs, and services.

The public engagement was designed and led by the non-profit organization QMUNITY. The public engagement was informed by findings from the pre-engagement work in the spring and summer of 2018. A survey represented the final stage of a public engagement designed to inform the development of an action plan to increase inclusiveness for LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners and government legislation, policies, programs, and services. The survey results highlighted key priorities, including the importance of education and training for educators, health care professionals, and public service employees in LGBTQ2S+ cultural competencies, as well as the need for increased funding for community groups, initiatives, and an LGBTQ2S+ resource community centre. In 2020-21,

our department is providing \$184,000 to Queer Yukon to lead us on the first steps to this goal.

We are continuing to take the time necessary to create a viable action plan and to work across government and with our LGBTQ2S+ partners to start the important work of updating our legislation, policies, and programs based on the feedback and priorities that we heard during the engagement.

Throughout the public engagement, Yukoners made it clear that banning conversion therapy is a top priority. The Government of Yukon does not support conversion therapy, and I'm very proud that we will be tabling legislation later on this week to ban conversion therapy.

I want to take a few moments to focus on how the LGBTQ2S+ initiative has identified improvements needed to workplaces, especially for trans individuals. We heard that a cultural shift toward more acceptance is needed, which will require systemic change and leadership. This action plan from the Government of Yukon could provide an opportunity to positively shift cultural acceptance for communities, families and parents, and other service providers. This work is so important and so vital to so many Yukoners, and I am so very personally committed to it.

With International Women's Day having taken place just over the weekend, I also want to mention the incredible work in the community to support women's economic empowerment and the strong community of women entrepreneurs that we have in the territory. There are several organizations supporting women in entrepreneurship and diverse industries, from SMRT Women to NorthLight Innovation hub, Yukon College, and Yukon Women in Trades and Technology, among many more.

Finally, I would like to talk briefly about the sexualized assault response team, which we publicly announced just the other day. Given the rates of sexualized violence against women and girls, particularly indigenous women and girls in Yukon, the sexualized assault response team has been a long time coming. It is something that we are all, as we said in our public statements last week, very committed to. I am proud of the dedication and effort that went into the implementation of SART. So many of our staff worked diligently. We did, as ministers, provide the political will for this to happen, working with all of our partners throughout the territory.

In 2019-20, the Women's Directorate added policy and project support to assist with the development of the protocol and policies necessary to ensure that SART services stay consistent. The Women's Directorate is also providing \$60,000 for a local NGO for the confidential, toll-free SART support line that victims of sexualized assault can access for support and information when they choose. This line is now available for victims of all genders, ages, and identities. This initiative is a priority for the Government of Yukon. We are working hard to provide services in the best way possible.

It takes a community to create systemic change and system change, and we are fortunate to have amazing local organizations, allies, and partners who are committed to seeing women and gender-diverse individuals reach their full potential. Our partners are keen to work together to change the

story for indigenous women and girls and LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners.

I would like to remind the House that the rates of sexualized violence in the north are three times higher than the national average, and it is again three times higher for indigenous women and girls. We need to end the gender-based violence against our women and girls. Yukon is now ready to take action to change that story.

Turning over to Tourism and Culture — you are probably tired of me saying this, but I will say it again — I always talk about just how important this industry is to Yukon. The tourism sector shares of all jobs in Yukon — the highest in Canada — 3,500 Yukoners are employed in the tourism sector. This represents 13.5 percent of the total jobs in Yukon, and 4.4 percent of the Yukon's domestic product is attributable to tourism, which is the second highest in the country. According to our most recent statistics, Yukon businesses attribute \$263 million of their gross revenue to tourism. That amount is expected, through the new tourism development strategy, to double over the next 10 years. Through the combined efforts of all of our partners, international border crossings were up 15 percent from 2017 and were 19 percent higher than the five-year average. Estimated overnight visitation was up almost five percent from 2017, with increases in domestic visitors, US visitors, and overseas visitors. Air arrivals in Whitehorse in 2018 were up six percent and were 24 percent higher than the five-year average.

Retail sales were up four percent — and 15 percent compared to the five-year average. Tourism sector revenues in Yukon are estimated to have increased almost five percent in 2018 over 2017. Winter visitation has grown by 43 percent, and summer visitation has grown by 21 percent over the past five years. We know all of this thanks to the Industry Services unit through statistics research and reporting.

I know we've had an extensive discussion today about COVID-19. We'll continue to monitor and work with our national, federal, and local partners to assess changes and adjust our projections as we go forward. Thanks to that same unit — the Industry Services unit — and the visit exit and resident perception surveys, we are now gaining even more insight into the sector. I'll speak more about these important new tools in a moment.

If I may now turn to the Tourism branch with a capital budget of \$500,000 and an operation and maintenance budget of \$12.6 million. The total budget for the Tourism branch in 2020-21 is \$13.1 million. You have already heard the great statistics and social economic benefits of this territory's growing tourism market, so I would like to now share the exciting steps ahead.

In 2019-20, Tourism and Culture received approval and funding to begin implementation of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*. Progress is being made on implementing key priorities and measurement tools.

I would like to take some time to focus on the review of the tourism governance in Yukon. A task force was convened to consider a Crown corporation model versus the existing model of a line department in government. The

recommendation was to stay as a line department but establish a new Yukon tourism advisory board to provide formal tourism sector advice to the minister regarding the implementation of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*. Recruitment for this new nine-member board will be finalized in the coming weeks and will be operational in April 2020. Board costs will be covered by the existing Tourism and Culture budget.

This is a unique and made-in-Yukon tourism governance model. I am looking forward to working with the new board members and advancing the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* through this innovative new approach.

Supporting indigenous tourism development — the government is committed to putting the support and partnership in place to make Yukon a premier destination for indigenous tourism experiences. Our role is to support the opportunities to grow indigenous tourism in a way that will increase the economic benefit and overall well-being of Yukon First Nation communities and indigenous entrepreneurs. Last year, my department contributed \$300,000 to the Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association to advance this initiative, and we have budgeted a further \$300,000 in 2020-21.

The department is also working to enhance experience development. The development of outstanding visitor experiences will help Yukon to become a premier year-round destination.

In our first year of implementing the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*, we have provided funding to advance experience development for sport, wilderness, and culinary tourism. Moving forward, we are looking to improve and enhance our funding programs to support our partners in the work that they are undertaking to advance the strategy.

The initiatives that I just mentioned will help generate revenue for Yukon businesses by attracting higher yielding visitors throughout our shoulder seasons and encouraging them to travel beyond Whitehorse.

In partnership with the Yukon Bureau of Statistics, we will continue to use the Yukon business survey to measure Yukon businesses' revenue attributable to tourism. The survey concluded in the summer of 2019. We are eagerly awaiting the results. As you are aware, the survey is conducted every two years, which will help us measure the progress over time.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take some time to speak specifically about the Yukon resident perception of tourism. One of the three goals of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* is to ensure that at least 80 percent of Yukoners have a positive attitude about tourism. Again, working with our partners at the Bureau of Statistics, we conducted the first-ever Yukon resident perceptions of tourism survey report this past fall. The results show that 94 percent of Yukoners feel that tourism is good for the territory, and 89 percent feel that tourism is good for their community specifically. With the new baseline to work from, we will continue to conduct this survey to ensure that we understand Yukoners' attitudes toward tourism and make certain that the development of tourism continues to reflect Yukoners' expectations and values.

In order to develop tourism sustainably, we committed to establishing a framework that will help us monitor and manage

tourism development in the territory. We're currently developing an application to make Yukon the second Canadian member of the United Nations International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories. By adopting the observatory framework, we hope to establish new relationships and measurement tools to help us improve our efforts in monitoring the economic, environmental, social, and cultural impacts of tourism in Yukon.

The Industry Services unit works closely with tourism businesses, individual communities, and various organizations to identify programming priorities, facilitate education and training opportunities, and develop marketing and capacity. Industry Services also represents the tourism sector in land, resource, and development planning and leads research and statistical data initiatives to support informed decision-making for the sector. Current research and performance reporting initiatives include the Yukon visitor exit survey, the Yukon tourism visitation report, the resident perceptions of tourism survey, and establishing a framework to measure the sustainability of tourism in Yukon.

For 2021, the unit has been allocated an O&M budget of \$1.8 million to provide industry and entrepreneurs with the education and training they need to make good business decisions and to meet today's visitors' needs and expectations. This includes \$700,000 for the tourism cooperative marketing fund, which assists Yukon tourism businesses and organizations with carrying out marketing and attending trade shows to attract clients and visitors, gain international exposure, and strengthen the territory's overall tourism brand.

It also includes \$164,000 in funding for the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon and \$50,000 toward the product development partnership program, which assists organizations undertaking tourism initiatives that support capacity development. The Tourism Marketing unit develops and manages marketing campaigns for Yukon's consumer travel trade and media relations marketing programs. Through their collaboration with local and international partners, Tourism Marketing unit staff promote Yukon as a year-round tourism and events destination through the development of global marketing strategies and plans.

The department invests approximately \$6.9 million annually to market Yukon as a tourism destination in 11 countries around the world. As the numbers continue to prove, these strategies are showing their worth in positioning the territory as a spectacular and unique travel destination. I take note of the member opposite's comments around redirecting marketing dollars. Those are all considerations that we'll be looking at as we go forward.

Also, contained within the Tourism Marketing unit's operation and maintenance funding is over \$900,000 in support to Yukon NGOs such as the Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon, the Yukon Convention Bureau, Association franco-yukonnaise, and Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association.

On the capital side of things, the Tourism Marketing unit is budgeted \$500,000 for the 2020-21 fiscal year. A total of \$2.2 million in operational funding is allocated to Visitor

Services, which includes Yukon government's photography unit as well as six visitor information centres.

Visitor information centres promote all areas of Yukon and work in partnership with Parks Canada and First Nations in all communities. A total of 366,078 people visited five of our Yukon visitor information centres around the territory in 2019. The Whitehorse visitor information centre operates year-round and has extended holiday hours to match winter tour operations of our tourism partners. The remainder of the centres are open seasonally, May to September.

The Dawson visitor information centre was opened selectively during 2018-19 and in 2019-20 to support and promote a number of special events in response to a request from the Klondike Visitors Association.

The past year has been a busy and successful one for the Cultural Services branch. Our palaeontology and archaeology teams had another exceptional field season on the ice patches and around the territory.

In September, the Watson Lake air terminal was officially designated as Yukon's 10th historic site. We are making excellent headway in the ongoing development of heritage management plans and co-management sites of significance throughout the territory, including Conrad, Fort Selkirk, Rampart House, and Lapierre House.

From arts — a proposal is right now before the Canadian Council for the Arts to host the prestigious Arctic Art Summit in Yukon in early 2021. This is the first time it will be hosted in Canada. The arts unit has also commissioned six new community tourism banners by six Yukon artists, with themes inspired by the tourism marketing strategy, which include "natural wonders", "transformational experiences", and "only in the Yukon". The six successful banners — two per theme — will be unveiled in early summer of 2020.

Perhaps our most ambitious initiative in the Cultural Services branch is the creative and cultural industries strategy. In 2019-20, the departments of Tourism and Culture, Economic Development, Education, and Community Services worked together to conduct public engagement on a creative and cultural industries strategy. The purpose of the strategy is to create a solid economic foundation from which cultural activities in the territory can flourish. During the engagement phase, we held 35 engagement sessions and received over 130 online surveys. The document summarizing what we heard from these engagements is presently being shared with stakeholders and the public. This document will inform the preparation of a draft strategy that will be released in the spring for stakeholder and public review and input.

I'll wrap up. I have lots more, but I'll just end — because we have talked a lot about — and we'll have lots of opportunity to talk about the Tourism and Culture budget going forward — I want to just talk a little bit about what we're doing with Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board.

We're working hard to finish the review and work toward new modern legislation. Again, I've talked a little bit about that in terms of holding my hands up to the department for all their hard work — and working also toward the regulations on the

prevention of psychological injury, which is really focusing quite a lot on violence and harassment in workplaces.

So, I will wrap it up there. Thank you very much for the opportunity to respond to our budget.

Ms. White: I just wanted to take this opportunity to also talk a bit about the Arctic Winter Games, which my colleagues took earlier in the day.

I want to thank the 2020 Arctic Winter Games staff, who for the last two years gave it their all. I want to thank those who turned the spotlight on reconciliation in all their planning. I want say thank you to the coaches and to the athletes for their dedication to working, training, and playing hard. I also want to say thank you to all those who made sure that those athletes made it to their practices. Some were very early in the morning and some quite late at night. I also want to make sure that I say thank you to the thousands of volunteers who signed up in droves.

So, although the news of the cancellation was — and is — tough, I know that our community will be stronger for it. It's okay to take the time to be sad, but I know that they'll represent in force at the 2022 Wood Buffalo Arctic Winter Games. It's terrible and it's hard, and everyone worked hard, but we'll get through this.

I especially want to thank the residents of Takhini-Kopper King for their confidence. It's always an honour to represent them in this Chamber. I also want to say hello to my senior friends who are possibly listening at this point in time and who will tell me what I have forgotten in my speech.

Mr. Speaker, a budget is about priorities. It's about choices that government makes to respond to the needs of Yukoners. While this budget contains funding for valuable projects, what it lacks is a clear vision and a clear direction to address the challenges of our time. It won't be a surprise to many that the Yukon NDP believes that two of those critical challenges are growing inequalities and the climate crisis.

This budget contains a few announcements about the environment and climate change, but unfortunately, many of the amounts promoted in this budget are in already existing programs, like the appliance replacement credits.

There is no clearer example of this government's shortcomings on climate change than the announcement of \$1.5 million on renewable energy projects. I just want to highlight that this in the budget highlights — \$1.5 million for renewable energy projects — all of this just a few months after declaring a climate emergency. All this government could find for renewable energy is \$1.5 million. This is less than a 10th of one percent of the budget. It is less than the previous government had allocated to a study of a hydro project. This in no way addresses the climate emergency.

It's not like this government doesn't have the ability to lead. We saw that leadership this weekend in how this government dealt with public health and the Arctic Winter Games. It was a surreal moment to learn about the cancellation of the 2020 Arctic Winter Games when I was leaving my first aid course on Saturday afternoon, and my thoughts were with all those who had the weight of such a tough decision resting

on their shoulders. I know it wasn't easy. I know that they tried to figure out every scenario and were left with only one — the toughest one possible.

Mr. Speaker, this is how you deal with an emergency. You make decisions, even if they aren't easy, and you follow them up with concrete actions. So, do we think that Yukoners feel like this government is addressing climate in the same decisive manner after having declared a climate emergency?

As far as addressing growing inequalities — once again, there are a few good standalone projects here, and they are throughout the budget, but nothing that will allow us to turn the tide. This budget will not do much for the minimum wage worker who is struggling to pay rent and feed their family, and it won't do much for most of the hundreds of people on the Yukon Housing Corporation waitlist. It won't do much for the seniors struggling to live on their pension with ever-increasing electrical bills or drug costs. These are the people who are left behind in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, there was a 2012 movie about politics called *The Campaign*, and in it, Will Ferrell's character, Cam Brady, is the incumbent campaigning across North Carolina. During the opening credits, we follow Cam on the campaign trail as he delivers speeches that end with points like this: "... because troops and veterans are this nation's backbone." His speeches, taken one at a time, could maybe sound hopeful, but as the audience, you see them pile up one right after the other — "... because farmers are this nation's backbone", "Schools..." are "... this nation's backbone", "Audio installation specialists and window tinters are this nation's backbone", "Filipino tilt-a-whirl operators are this nation's backbone".

I was asked why I was fixated on this scene and why it bothered me so much. But first, I need to be clear — I have only seen this movie once, and the only part I can remember happens within the first two minutes. So why does it bother me so much? Because it's cringeworthy? It's definitely cringeworthy. But the reason it bothers me is because of the cynicism and the discomfort that I — and I hope others — feel in seeing politicians portrayed in such a way. I need to believe that we're all here because we care about the people around us. I need to believe that we are here — that what we do here in this Chamber matters.

When I look at the budgets that get put forward here, we, the Yukon NDP, look at them through the eyes of community. Ten years from now, will Yukoners look back at the 2020-21 budget just tabled by the Liberal government and say to themselves: "This was a turning point. This was when the Yukon truly tackled inequality and climate change. This is when what matters most to me was the primary focus of the government."

Mr. Speaker, these are the sorts of question that I ask myself when going through the budget. Maybe you have asked yourself why I care so much about minimum wage — I certainly am not making minimum wage anymore — and why I won't drop it and be satisfied with where we are now, because I mean, after all, it is more than a \$3 increase since I was first elected. It has gone up; it has gone up since 2011.

Mr. Speaker, it is because there are faces behind this debate for me, and there is one face in particular. In 2016 during the last election campaign, I met two seniors at their home — two seniors who, if not at retirement age, were very close to it. One worked full-time at a large box store where they received just over \$13 an hour. They broached the subject of a raise previously with their employer only to be told that, if they didn't like it, they could quit. The problem is that, if they quit, they couldn't afford to pay for their bills, their housing, or their food bills. I was told that the only reason they could afford their modest home was because one of them worked for Yukon government, but as it was, with two full-time workers including one Yukon government worker, they walked the tightrope of poverty. So, how is this even possible? What chance do others have if this is the case?

I will let you in on our conversation that the NDP had about minimum wage. Like I imagine it around the Cabinet table occasionally, they are hard conversations. It was me who initially thought that they could have a sliding scale for minimum wage — first-time workers versus those with experience. I am sure you get the idea. Then someone else spoke up and said, "What about older workers?" Some employers would want to save the money by hiring young people, and those older workers would lose their jobs because they cost more. It was a lightbulb moment for me, because the action of creating a tiered system for minimum wage would be disastrous.

You might remember that, when we initially started to push for a review of minimum wage — before there was the forced review — we didn't do it with a dollar amount, because I was trying really hard to leave it up to the Employment Standards Board. You might remember that what they recommended was not accepted by government. So, keeping that in mind, with the April 1 increase, there is still going to be more than a \$5 gap between the minimum wage and the living wage that was presented by the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition.

If government wants to get in the weeds, then let's do it, because I would be willing to bet that, as a single person living alone in Yukon, you would need to earn more than the calculated \$19.07 an hour that was put forward for the living wage.

Mr. Speaker, leadership is closing the gap of inequality. Today the Minister of Community Services told me that sick employees could work from home. What a glorious thing to be allowed to work from home — but how does he imagine that a cashier could work from home and still earn a paycheque? What about a person who works retail? How could they work from home and still earn that paycheque? I would suggest that a way to close the inequality gap would be paid sick leave for all Yukon citizens, regardless of the job that they worked.

I know from recent road trips that housing is an issue in every community. I was told that Dawson City has grown 22 percent in the last 10 years, but it has been a quarter of a century since Dawson City had new lots piped in. So, they are hopeful that they will get the water and sewer extension that they have been planning for so they can develop lots in an area that currently looks like a willow nursery near the ferry.

Carmacks wants to see the work done on the proposed bypass road sooner than later because both Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation and the village want to be able to develop a residential subdivision nearby, because there's a critical housing shortage in the community, and without places to live, it doesn't matter how great the changes to the nominee program will be for the community, there's no place for people to live. There's no available housing.

During the celebration for the opening of the footbridge, the community of Ross River challenged the Minister of Community Services — he was there for that — and the MP to a hand-games game. The community said that, if the community lost, the Yukon government could forget about them for five years, but if they won, they wanted the road done right away. They told me that they considered this a binding agreement. It should come as no surprise that the minister did not win, even with help from the community; he didn't win. So, like many, I was happy to hear about the money for the road between Faro and Ross River, but I have concerns. I'm concerned that the Minister of Highways and Public Works called it money for resurfacing and then that Chief Caesar said that it was money for paving, because resurfacing and paving can be very different things. The reason I highlight that is that you can resurface a gravel road without bitumen and without putting anything down. I can tell you that driving to Ross River in the winter was a heck of a lot smoother and safer than it is driving there in the summertime.

What does that even say? It was safer to drive to Ross River in the wintertime than it was in the summertime. I heard that from people who drive there for work. So the road surface matters. It's interesting because I talk to people in Faro, and the people in Faro said that one of the things that they've seen now is the rise of work traffic between Carmacks and Faro, and although that would be a good thing, they're concerned about road safety.

The example that was used for me is that a couple were leaving Faro on their way to Carmacks and they got passed by a work truck and that was okay, and they got passed by another work truck and that was okay, and the third work truck took out their side mirror. Imagine the terror of a vehicle taking out your side mirror. I have to say he was — well, he wasn't calm telling me the story, but he talked about how he was able to pull the vehicle over and he turned around and he went backwards because he wanted to find them and say, "Look, you just took off my mirror. You were driving too fast. It wasn't safe. You took off my mirror." They acknowledged, when they caught up — because they were pulled over — because I can only imagine how startling it would have been for the driver of that vehicle to hit another vehicle and pull off a mirror. They all acknowledged that they weren't driving safely. That's a concern along that stretch of road.

Mr. Speaker, housing in Ross River is bleak. I was told that there were elders without homes and that there are trailers with mold issues, and because the community was built on permafrost, most of their budget is spent on levelling the homes that they have. I don't know if anyone has sat — and I'm sure people in this Chamber have sat — with the community of Ross

River and heard the story, but I was floored because I was told that, in the 1960s when the community had gone out for the spring hunt, they came home and all their houses had been dragged across the river to where the townsite now sits. That wasn't in conversation or agreement. If we're going to talk about reconciliation, then let's listen to the community who says that they are sitting in the shadows. Let's hear what they say when they say that they want their school to be built up in the sun. They don't want it to be in the existing spot.

The one thing that I can say right now is that, when we look at the budget and we look at the highlights — I mean, the budget document is great and it's colourful and it has great pictures. I do appreciate that there's the graph and there's the one image that says how much Yukon paid and how much Canada paid. In a lot of the programs and in a lot of the things that are being touted as wins, the majority of the payment is coming from Canada — which I appreciate. We do get more than \$1 billion transferred. But then sometimes I wonder how come the priorities haven't been put in other things.

I had a conversation last fall with two folks who are looking at building 81 rental units in Whistle Bend this summer. It is all dependent on whether or not they can get a 50-year loan from CMHC for rental housing. But if they build those 81 units in Whistle Bend, that will be more than the housing the government has built on their own. So, with hundreds of people on wait-lists, that would be the answer.

You know, in Dawson City — the Premier's riding — I mean, there are lots of reasons to be proud there, but a lot of the housing that has been developed has been developed by the community — of course, with the support of the Yukon government, but not led by Yukon government.

Then again, we look at the wait-list. It is interesting because my colleagues from the Yukon Party will use that as a hammer toward government, but I actually think that we should really be celebrating that there are so many housing navigators and that is how we know how many people are in need of social housing — right? We know that when we created housing navigators and people who could help fill out applications, that wait-list went up. I think that is something that we should celebrate — now that we know how many people are so close to the edge. But similar to the folks who I mentioned, people are walking the tightrope of poverty. They are just on that edge. So, how does this budget address those inequalities?

This is going to sound like a process question — well, it is a process issue that I have. The amount of information contained in this year's budget is less than last year's budget, and that was less than the year before. That might not sound like it means anything, but it means an awful lot when you're trying to figure out why the decision was made. We have talked often here about how a majority government is allowed to make decisions. Absolutely — they have won the majority. I have said this before. They have won the majority and they can make the decisions.

But the job of the opposition is to ask why those decisions were made. Sometimes, how you get to those questions is by looking at the information — and not just this year's information, but previous year's information, so that you can

put it side by side and figure it out. I mean, it's as simple as saying, "How many rural births were there? How many babies have been born to communities?" Because — guess what — in the community of Carmacks, there were so many babies born in a year that they have had to put back the age for the kindergarten program because they are just not ready to have an entire influx of as many babies as are going to come. So, they have put it back. So instead of going in at a year, they are going to go in at 18 months, because that is how Carmacks is going to deal with that issue.

But I can't say how many babies were born and then will live in the City of Whitehorse based on the budget — but I could have before. I can't tell you how many kids under five live in Ross River because that information isn't in the budget anymore. Then I can also say the same thing — in the community of Ross River, there is no daycare. But of course, people in communities are resilient and quite clever, so guess what — they've created a drop-in program because it has different requirements. It doesn't mean that people in the community don't need a place to take their children; it just means that they found a workaround.

When we talk about the information in budgets and the lack of that information in budgets, what it means is that, when we're trying to figure how the decision was made — for example, how are we deciding where the money goes for Yukon Housing? It's interesting because we've had lots of language change around what different things mean, but there's no ability for us to see that. As you may remember, for an entire year, I asked for the cost of an emergency room visit. I still don't know, and that would be great to find out. Also, in the budget speech, it talks about the reduction of emergency room visits because of the emergency shelter. I really do imagine, at this point in time, that the emergency shelter is starting to work out some of the challenges that they had. That totally makes sense. They needed time to figure that out. Again, they can't be all things to all people.

There was another change last year that I wasn't happy about — but it won't be talked about in the budget document. That's when the chief medical officer of health was putting out warnings about street drugs and overdoses. There were concerns of street drugs. Again, street drugs are never going to be safe; there's always a concern for street drugs. But when you see a rash of overdoses, it's important to know that something right now is particularly unsafe. So I hope that we're going to start having the conversation about safe injection sites. I've mentioned it before — what about managed alcohol programs? A lot of the petty crime that we experience in the City of Whitehorse often has to do with people trying to support their habits. Maybe this is the time. Maybe this is the time we can look toward other jurisdictions — like the facilities that the minister has told us that she has visited. It would be great if we started looking at that here.

When we look at the budget as a whole, what I see is a budget that still leaves people behind and doesn't address base concerns. I invite my colleagues — on March 13 at noon, there's going to be a climate rally out front — the same kids who have been organizing climate rallies for the last year will

be outside this building. Maybe government could ask them if they believe that they've dealt with the climate emergency well in this budget with \$1.5 million toward renewable energy projects.

There are some things to celebrate. I mean, I went to the electric vehicle symposium yesterday at the transportation museum, and it was great, but the first electric vehicle wasn't owned by Yukon government in this recent thing. It was a private citizen who bought the first Tesla. It's great. It's great to know that there are rebates for electric vehicles, but does that really answer the question of poverty? If you can afford a \$50,000 vehicle, you get a \$5,000 rebate. That's great, but what if you can't afford a \$50,000 vehicle?

Is Yukon government having the conversation with the City of Whitehorse, for example, about making the transfer to make city buses free? Is that a conversation that is happening? That's a way to deal with inequality. Maybe with that conversation we could also encourage the City of Whitehorse to run buses on Sundays, because no buses on Sundays makes it challenging to get to places like work if you have to work on Sunday. The budget, to me, is missing some of those important points.

Again, I'm going to put it out again that there is less information than there was last year, and last year there was less information than the year before, and then there was less information than the year before that. I can only imagine where we're going to whittle down to. It's bleak. It is bleak.

We're hoping that, when we get our budget and when we go into our budget briefings, we're handed additional information that builds up to what we have had in the past, because having an informed opposition makes for better questions in budget debate, I would suggest. Having those conversations in budget debate, I think, is one of the most valuable things we can do, because then that's how government can tell us why they have made these decisions of where to put the money. That's the important part. Again, it's a majority government. They're able to make those decisions, but for us, it's about having the explanation.

I look forward to budget season and the briefings that I'm going to get. They are my favorite. It's because I get to ask most of the questions in the briefings and get them answered, which is really exciting.

One last pitch — there has been talk about species at risk legislation. When I asked in the supplementary briefing, there was a long pause to be told that there was no timeline on that at all, so I look forward to having a conversation with the Minister of Environment about species at risk legislation and when I can expect to see that. Maybe we can talk about wetlands, the importance of wetlands, and biodiversity.

So, really, I guess I'm saying I'm looking forward to budget debate.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon, everyone.

I'm going to begin today with a recognition of the citizens of Whitehorse West, my constituents, who are always in my mind as this government — their government — makes

decisions about the future of the territory. I always enjoy the conversations that I have with them on their doorsteps, in their living rooms, and on the streets and trails around the neighbourhood. We talk about a lot of things in Whitehorse West. We talk about climate change, and we talk about the environment, the Peel watershed, carbon pricing, and our efforts to curb global warming. We talk about the economy, about procurement, support for families, health care, reconciliation and First Nation relations, midwifery, mental health, schools and education, autism, the state of our roads, the state of mobility issues and how to get around in a wheelchair, traffic safety, speeding, and the need for more housing and affordable housing. We also discuss the latest sporting events, the weather, and, of course, our dogs. My constituents are very gracious with their time and always thoughtful in their views. I am profoundly grateful for their support. It is my honour to represent their interests in this House.

The list that I have recounted touches on the issues that matter to my constituents. They are the territory's issues, Mr. Speaker. They are issues that we identified in our platform and promised to tackle if we were honoured with government. I am happy to report that we have delivered on most of those early promises and more.

In broad terms, Mr. Speaker, this budget continues that good work to safeguard the territory's environment, strengthen and diversify its economy, and improve its communities and its citizens' health and well-being.

This afternoon and in the future, I'm going to speak in more detail about that vitally important work. However, before I do, I will take one last detour to thank the civil servants in Highways and Public Works, Finance, Community Services, Health and Social Services, the Public Service Commission, and in all the departments throughout the Yukon government who spent so much time, energy, and thoughtfulness preparing this budget and five-year capital plan.

Until you are involved in the preparation of an annual budget surpassing \$1.5 billion, it is difficult to comprehend how much effort goes into matching the revenues and recoveries, accounting rules, urgent public needs and priorities, and squaring it all. It is truly a massive task that involves much collaboration, compromise, and hair-pulling.

The territory owes a debt of gratitude to the professional civil servants who spend so much time painstakingly crafting this document under very tight deadlines — so thank you.

This year's budget lands in tumultuous times. The world is in the grips of a hitherto unknown disease. COVID-19 is sweeping the world's nations and altering the way we greet each other, how we gather, how we travel, and when we travel. As a result of that, the stock market is being hammered, dropping as precipitously as it did in 2008. China's factory output is a shadow of what it was just a few months ago. International travel is being discouraged. Cruise ships are docked, the season delayed.

The Yukon is not isolated any longer. These unforeseen events will affect our lives and our economy. Yukoners understand this. They are resourceful and innovative by nature.

I have little doubt that they will keep calm and I know that they will carry on.

We understand that we are also in a strong position to weather this international crisis. Our fiscal and economic outlook on the cusp of this globe-sweeping illness is strong. We have a surplus of \$4 million and this turnaround in the territory's fortunes wasn't easy. It comes a year earlier than expected. It comes a little more than three years after discovering that a former government had started building a 150-bed continuing care project without planning to pay for nursing staff — at a cost of millions; after discovering that a former government had built an emergency shelter without a contract to pay for services within it — again, cost of millions; and after discovering a former government that had hired dozens of teachers without budgeting for their salaries — again, cost of millions.

After taking on these hidden costs, and others besides, your government has absorbed those costs and worked diligently to improve and simplify the delivery of government services to curb the growth of government and turn a year-long decline to deficit into a surplus —

Speaker: Order, please.

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

Debate on second reading of Bill No. 203 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

**Written notice was given of the following motion
March 9, 2020:**

Motion No. 191

Re: revising the 2020-21 fiscal and economic outlook to reflect the spread of COVID-19 coronavirus (Cathars)