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HANSARD

Wednesday, March 11, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2020 Spring Sitting

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DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Don Hutton, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
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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
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, March 11, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed with the Order Paper. Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. Frost: It is with great pleasure that I rise today to welcome Stephanie Muckenheim and Christine Cleghorn — both of whom have a long history in the Yukon — for a tribute today to Mr. Couture. He hired both of these beautiful ladies, so they have a long legacy to uphold. Stephen Mills is here also, the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Executive Council Office. Stephen has a lot of history with Gerry Couture. I am just very pleased to introduce him as a member of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, as well as John Bailey, Deputy Minister of Environment. I said that Stephen was an ADM and I apologize — the DM.

We have Stu Clarke here, the Yukon Conservation Society president. Welcome today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We have one more guest today. It is always a pleasure to have our elected municipal officials here and today we have with us His Worship Dan Curtis, Mayor of the City of Whitehorse.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of Gerry Couture

Hon. Ms. Frost: It is with honour that I rise today on behalf of the Liberal caucus to pay tribute to a very great man — Gerry Couture — a long-time advocate of Yukon's environment, a really great and dear friend, and a mentor of mine.

Gerry Couture first started working with Natural Resources at the age of 15 — his first job working in mining and logging camps during the summer. After obtaining the rank of captain in the Royal Regiment and serving in West Germany during the Cold War, Gerry came to the Yukon in the late 1960s to work for Trans North Air. Gerry's military temperament would later be noted as a benefit for his environmental advocacy work.

Throughout his life, Gerry showed exceptional personal and professional dedication to serving and protecting Yukon's vital and natural resources. Gerry's extensive career included 17 years as a Canadian delegate to the Yukon River salmon negotiations for the Pacific Salmon Treaty and 13 years with

the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board — of which it's noteworthy to say that he was essentially there from the very beginning. He helped to establish the board and was the first-ever chair. He also served 12 years with the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee.

Gerry also worked as a mining coordinator for the Yukon Conservation Society until he retired in 2009. Since 2009, Yukon Conservation Society have given out the annual Gerry Couture Stewardship Award. The purpose of this award is to foster public awareness of and appreciation for the personal dedication required to conserve and manage the Yukon's natural resources.

Mr. Speaker, the personal dedication piece is important. Gerry was a leader in resource management, not because the pay was good, but because he was passionate about the protection of our natural environment.

For example, while Gerry was a representative of the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee, increasing dissatisfaction with the Yukon placer authorization finally forced a full-scale review. The issue was highly volatile in Gerry's home town of Dawson City in 2002. A demonstration called Black Wednesday was held. Under intense scrutiny and local pressure, the average citizen might have withdrawn until the crisis had passed. Never one to hide from conflict, Gerry didn't back down despite becoming the target of industry pressures and the odd threatening phone call. This was a trying time for Gerry's family and his wife, Jan, who worked in the mining land use clerk's office at that time. Eventually, a new placer regime came to life and the salmon are better for it because of Gerry's tenacity and his drive to make things better, not worse, but to encourage collaboration.

Gerry truly had the drive to make a difference and was not afraid of standing up for what he believed in. He was the kind of man you might dislike, but you always had the utmost respect for him. Named among Yukon's colourful five percent, Gerry has been described as feisty, passionate, dedicated, courageous, tenacious, curious, and fearless. He was also incredibly modest and humble. He had a zest for knowledge, and curiosity drove him.

Outside of his work, Gerry was a competitive dog musher, avid hunter, fisher, trapper, placer miner, pilot, and much more. Gerry was not indigenous in heritage, but he was indigenous at heart. He shared and upheld Yukon First Nation stewardship values and standards and was at the forefront of conservation in the Yukon. It is hard to believe that this jack of all trades, self-made biologist, and passionate environmentalist held a degree from Royal Roads in history and literature. Gerry had many adventures in his life, but central to all of them was his love for Yukon and his love for his Jan and his family.

Gerry made a lasting contribution to Yukon and to our environment, and I will always remember him as a very dear friend. I ask everyone to help me in remembering and honouring a very great man today.

Applause

Ms. Hanson: I thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for that personal and moving tribute.

I rise on behalf of the New Democratic Party and the Yukon Party to also pay tribute to Gerry Couture. Unlike the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, I didn't know Gerry Couture personally but, like many Yukoners, I knew of him and admired him for many years. Back in the day, I recall hearing about this back-to-the-lander who lived on a farm on the Yukon River who had become a commercial fisher and, through that activity, became increasingly involved in the often contentious issues related to Yukon's environment, Yukon's water, fish, and wildlife habitat.

Then, a couple of weeks ago, I attended a screening of *Sovereign Soil*, directed by Dawson filmmaker David Curtis and produced by Andrew Connors. *Sovereign Soil* explores — and I quote: "... life, death, and time through the simple, rich day-to-day of people deeply tied to the wilds." There was Gerry Couture and Jan Couture, now in his old age — or, as he referred to it, as "anecdote" — telling anecdotes. Gerry had been a mentor to the director, and the film lovingly depicts the Coutures' 1970 homesteading experience as well as the environmental perspective from what has been referred to as the "duck and cover generation". That film was finished shortly before Gerry died in 2019.

As members have heard — well, actually, in 2009, an anonymous donor established the Gerry Couture Stewardship Medal and a \$1,000 annual prize to a preferably curmudgeonly individual chosen for outstanding personal dedication to natural resource conservation and management in Yukon.

The donor of the award was inspired by Gerry Couture's fearlessness and persistence in the face of adversity and his creativity, innovation, and curmudgeonliness. Mr. Speaker, I am advised by Karen Baltgailis, the former executive director of the Yukon Conservation Society, that the anonymous donor dubbed Gerry a "curmudgeon" with great affection and respect because, while Gerry was charming, generous, funny, knowledgeable about all things salmon, and so much more and he was delightfully amiable, when he was fighting for the environment and respect for the final agreements, he was a force to be reckoned with. He did not back down and he could be as surly and cantankerous as the situation required.

So, who was this man? The anonymous benefactor behind the Gerry Couture Stewardship Award put together a fascinating profile that detailed from being in born in Rossland, BC of French-Canadian heritage — a heritage that dates back in Canada to 1639. Not many people would have suspected that Gerry Couture was a graduate of the Royal Military College in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu or that he graduated from the Royal Military College in Kingston, going on to serve as a lieutenant with the Royale Veingt-Deuxieme Regiment in Canada and Germany.

After leaving the military, Gerry took commercial pilot training, and he then moved to the Yukon in 1969, where he met his future wife, Jan, at the Robert Service campground on his first day in town — a typical Yukon experience. They built a place on the Old Alaska Highway north of Whitehorse and Gerry worked for Trans North and for Northwestel and was for a time a school janitor — mainly, he said, to support his dog-driving habit.

In 1975, he and Jan moved to Thistle Creek on the Yukon River. There they lived pretty much off the land, hunting, fishing, and gardening while Gerry trapped in the winter, fished salmon commercially, and worked for the placer mining industry in the summer. Over the next 17 years, Gerry and Jan raised their three children at Thistle Creek.

As the member opposite has indicated, in 1985, Gerry joined the Canadian delegation to the Yukon River salmon negotiations under the Pacific Salmon Treaty. Little did he realize that this appointment would continue for 17 years until an agreement was finally reached in 2002.

The writer — the benefactor of the Gerry Couture Stewardship Award — noted that undoubtedly this is where Gerry cut his teeth as curmudgeon of bureaucracies, a role he refined and expanded over the ensuing decades. By 1992, the Coutures had moved to Dawson City and he was appointed to the pre-implementation Fish and Wildlife Management Board. Three years later, as chairman, he deftly steered the board through its first implementation year, a time of great enthusiasm and great tension. In 1995, he was also appointed to the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee, serving until 2007.

Gerry's contribution to the effective implementation of chapter 16 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* deserves special recognition. For upwards of a dozen years, he lived in his battered little blue truck, commuting between Dawson City, Whitehorse, and the communities, attending a myriad of regular and special meetings, grappling with the issues of the day, and, moreover, interpreting the spirit of the agreement as he believed that it had been conceived in the minds of First Nation elders.

I found this comment fascinating, Mr. Speaker. One time when he locked horns with a senior bureaucrat, an exasperated board member — and elder — came to his defense and said, "You don't understand; he looks like a white man, but he thinks like an Indian." Despite Gerry's prominent role in so many issues over the years, his unswerving dedication to salmon and their habitats stands out as an epic of personal commitment and sacrifice in the face of withering criticism. From salmon fisher to international negotiator to member of the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee, Gerry championed the future of the fish at every opportunity.

Not surprisingly, as the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin has mentioned, his most difficult challenge with salmon hit closest to home. Mounting dissatisfaction with the placer authorization — an outdated relic of a bygone era — finally forced a full-scale review in which Gerry, as representative of the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee, joined with those calling for substantial change. The issue was highly volatile in Dawson City.

Under such local pressure, the average citizen might withdraw until the crisis had passed, but Gerry had a military temperament and he never backed down, despite becoming the target of industry harassment and threatening phone calls, not to mention virtual ostracism by his home town. Eventually, a new placer regime rose from the ashes and salmon are certainly better for it.

Mr. Speaker, Yukon's natural resources will always be under siege of some kind or another and they can never have

too many friends. Gerry Couture was always one of their staunchest allies and an inspiration to all those who worked with him. The donor, the benefactor of the Gerry Couture award, indicated that the award was created to honour such people, to whom we in Yukon owe so much. The alumni of the award recipients — from the inaugural winner, Dave Mossop, to Jimmy Johnny, to the 10th anniversary recipient, Gerry Whitley — are an exemplary and ongoing tribute to Gerry Couture's legacy.

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. 8: *Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2020* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 8, entitled *Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2020*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 8, entitled *Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2020*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 8 agreed to

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House supports the expansion of the notification of class 1 mineral exploration activities across Yukon to provide a balanced approach to providing certainty for industry and addressing potential impacts on treaty rights.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce paid sick leave for all workers by amending the *Employment Standards Act*.

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Skateboard park

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise before the House today to highlight a project worth kick-flipping over. I am very pleased to announce the Government of Yukon's financial support for a new skateboard park in Whitehorse. The project, which includes planning, community engagement, design, and construction, is worth about \$3.5 million.

I want to use this time to talk about why this piece of recreational infrastructure is so important to the community.

The Whitehorse skate park has been a gathering place for young people and skateboarders from across the territory since it was built in 1995. For over 20 years, Bringing Youth Towards Equality — BYTE — Empowering Youth Society — and more recently, the Skate For Life Alliance have hosted the annual skateboarding competition at the park on Canada Day. This annual competition brings the skateboarding community together and is a way to showcase how the sport has evolved over the decades and continues to thrive today.

While the Whitehorse skate park is mostly used by the community here in Whitehorse, the annual skate competition regularly brings in skateboarders from other Yukon communities, like Dawson, Carcross, Teslin, and beyond. Past skate competitions have not only attracted skateboarders from across the territory but have also included a wide variety of competitors, from professional skateboarders to young, up-and-coming skaters.

In addition to the annual skate competition, the skateboard park serves as a hub for the community and is used by young people, skaters, BMX and scooter riders, and even some winter users. It supports a variety of accessible activities that encourage our youth to be active and develop their physical fitness and coordination. But, as you may know, the park in Whitehorse is in dire need of a revamp.

Skaters have been telling us that it's not safe for them to use, and the Yukon government and City of Whitehorse have been listening. In 2017, we started working with the City of Whitehorse and the skateboarding community to identify funding programs to help replace the park. In 2018, we asked the skateboarding community and experts like former professional skateboarder Kanten Russell to help design a skate park that best serves Yukon skateboarders.

Thanks to the input of the skateboarding community, funding from the federal government, and our partnership with the City of Whitehorse, we now have a design for a new skateboard park that will ensure that skate competitions and everyday enthusiasts have a place to be for years to come. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the Skate For Life Alliance and Whitehorse's beloved grandmother of the skateboard park, Amanda Rendell, for their contributions during the design charette.

A skateboard park is an accessible way for people to live healthy, active lifestyles and is just one of the pieces of recreational infrastructure that makes our community such a great place to live. This past Monday evening, Whitehorse City Council authorized a service agreement between Yukon government and the city for us to rebuild the park to current standards and for the city to take over ownership and responsibility of the skate park.

On Monday, the City of Whitehorse also introduced two bylaw processes regarding zoning for the land of the park. Following the City of Whitehorse decision, our next step will be to tender the project in the coming weeks. Our plan is to begin construction this spring with a one-year targeted completion. We look forward to putting shovels in the ground

this spring and to celebrating the opening of a new skate park with the community.

Mr. Hassard: I rise today to respond to this ministerial statement.

Firstly, I would like to thank the minister for this update and for re-announcing that the government is providing money for the new Whitehorse skate park. We in the opposition benches support investments in recreational infrastructure and this is good news. But, Mr. Speaker, as we mentioned yesterday, the government largely decides the business of the day and how we spend our time here in this Legislature and of course these decisions are based on their priorities.

We know that the World Health Organization just declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic. The head of the World Health Organization said this morning — and I'll quote: "This is not just a public health crisis, it is a crisis that will touch every sector."

So, we are seeing world markets decline. We're seeing the economy take a major hit. We are seeing bad news on the horizon for the tourism sector. We as MLAs are getting questions from constituents about what to do. Now, these are legitimate questions and they deserve answers. They want to know — if they feel sick, what should they do? If they need up-to-date and accurate information, where should they find it?

I'm not saying that this information doesn't exist, but at this time, Yukoners are looking to the Minister of Health and Social Services to provide an update and reassure them. So, why hasn't the government done a ministerial statement on Yukon's preparedness or what you should do in the event that you become sick?

The Prime Minister just announced \$1 billion for a COVID-19 response plan, with hundreds of millions going to the territories and provinces to assist with their preparedness. Why isn't the government doing a ministerial statement on this? How much money is coming to Yukon? What is Yukon doing to ensure a strong supply chain? These are pressing issues, Mr. Speaker, and we're hearing daily from constituents looking for information.

When there is a lack of information, that's when people get nervous. So, this government really needs to step up their game on communicating with the public on a response — things such as providing updates to First Nation and municipal governments, taking out radio ads, or beginning to advertise in local papers.

But, Mr. Speaker, we are glad to hear about this great announcement on the skate park. We look forward to more information about recreational infrastructure across the territory, and we absolutely support investments in recreational infrastructure, as I believe everyone in this House does.

So, yes, this is a good project. I know that the skate community, led by the Skate For Life Alliance Whitehorse, has been advocating for upgrades to the park for some time and were happy to see that dedication pay off. But, Mr. Speaker, it is time for this government to reconsider how it is prioritizing our time in this House.

Ms. White: So, I have been a supporter of the Second Heaven skateboard park for a long, long time, and my relationship is going to be a little bit different from that of others. My friends and I frequented it as teenagers, I rode my bike there with my friends there in my early 20s, and I still go there today, and often I take children with me to go to the skateboard park. In the last two years, I have had the pleasure of watching a nephew take to skateboarding like a duck to water.

So, skateboarding is accessible. It doesn't take a huge amount of money to get into, and you can skate any time of day, you can skate alone or with others, and once a park is built — especially if it's an all-concrete park — it requires very little maintenance.

In the last number of years, the ridership has changed and evolved, and that is a very cool thing indeed. At any point in time, you can see teenagers, adults, and children all recreating in the same space, using different tools — skateboards, scooters, bikes, and wheelchairs — and that's one of the things making this skate park so unique.

We appreciate that the government is supporting a recreational complex that isn't mainstream, and I know from personal experience that giving young folks a place to gather is better for their mental and physical health and well-being. I want to make sure that I offer a big thank you to the Skate For Life Alliance for encouraging individuals who may not always be interested in participating in a planning process to participate in a planning process.

This would be a missed opportunity to not mention Amanda, the unofficial official caretaker of the Second Heaven park, who, for the last two decades, has been a grandma to all. The users at the skate park hold a party for her birthday every year, and they did this, like they do most years, but this year was exceptional because Amanda just celebrated her 100th birthday.

So, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to being at the first Canada skate competition at the new park, and I look forward to the users over time adapting to the new space.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will start by saying thank you very much to the Third Party and the Member for Takhini-Kopper King. I appreciate her first-hand knowledge of the park and appreciate her comments.

I completely agree that COVID-19 is an important issue. We know that Yukon's medical system has been and remains well prepared to manage the suspected cases of COVID-19 that may arise, and we know that the risk of COVID-19 remains low in the Yukon. There are currently no cases of COVID-19 in the territory. I hope that we are able to do both: talk about important business for the territory and keep that business moving, and talk about how we are preparing for COVID-19.

Yesterday, when I stood here in the Legislature to talk about the community centre in Old Crow, I got asked a couple of questions. Let me give a couple of answers. I looked back to see when the project was first announced. It was announced in 2014. Although that was under the previous government and it sat for two years with no progress, it is now being built by

Johnston Builders, as the Member for Porter Creek North requested.

With respect to the skateboard park, it is very inclusive and the demographic is changing. One of the things I noted about the new design was that there is going to be some wheelchair- and kid-friendly rolling quarter pipe access to the flood bowl that includes a spine and extension. It is made to be more inclusive and it's made to be more sustainable with shotcrete, so there are some great features.

I will also note that this park was first on my radar screen back in 2015 when the then-Minister of Education came in when I was a city councillor and approached the city to talk about the park. The minister arrived at city council and asked us to move the park without actually talking to us ahead of time. When we asked a few questions, the minister suggested that we shouldn't consult with the public. Here is a difference, Mr. Speaker. I think that it is important that we note those differences. Our approach is to try to work with the stakeholder community, with the Skate For Life Alliance, and to talk with the public. Our approach has been to work with the city. I am so happy that we got that agreement signed. It is why today is the day that I am announcing this — it's because we just signed the agreement. I thank the City of Whitehorse for their diligence on it and I thank them for being willing to take over the park once we get it up to current standards.

Again, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to update Yukoners on this important project.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Yukon Teachers' Association relations

Mr. Kent: The Minister of Education is earning an unfortunate reputation for picking fights with the Yukon Teachers' Association. Now we have another example. The *Yukon News* reported this morning that the YTA is taking the Yukon Liberal government to court over their alleged plan to lay off teachers and rehire without giving them priority. According to the story, the YTA is — and I quote: "... seeking an injunction, or legal order, to stop the government from posting vacant teaching positions for the 2020-21 school year without first offering them to teachers laid off, or given lay-off notice, during the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years."

The YTA believes that this is in violation of the collective bargaining agreement.

Can the minister confirm that she is moving forward with this new hiring plan and if it is indeed in violation of the CBA?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm pretty sure the member opposite knows better than that and I'm pretty sure he knows that Standing Order 19(f) prohibits us from discussing matters that are before the court. As he said in his preamble, the matter has been brought before the court by the Yukon Teachers' Association.

On March 6, 2020, the Yukon Teachers' Association filed a petition for an injunction in the Supreme Court of the Yukon Territory. They are entitled to do so. They have a dispute with

an interpretation of the collective agreement that they negotiated — that they agreed to, that they ratified, and that they signed last year — and I am certainly not going to discuss the details of either the government's position or the position being put forward by the Yukon Teachers' Association here in the Legislative Assembly. It wouldn't be appropriate to do that.

They have chosen that this dispute should be dealt with in the courts and that's the appropriate place. We look forward to the result.

Mr. Kent: So, this minister has quite a history of fighting with teachers.

Her government deliberately excluded the YTA from planning for the new Whistle Bend school. More recently, the YTA has called plans for a special education review a "snub" as they feel they weren't consulted on the ground floor as they should have been.

Why is the minister unable or unwilling to get along with Yukon's teachers?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question from the member opposite and he is certainly entitled to his opinion; I don't share it.

Our work with the Yukon Teachers' Association has been productive. We negotiated a three-year collective agreement just this time last year which dealt with a number of outstanding issues that were of concern to Yukon teachers. As I have said before, Yukon teachers are members of the Yukon Teachers' Association, but they are employees and very valued employees of the education system here in the territory.

Again, there are processes for resolving disputes or differences of opinion. Those processes are properly being used by the Yukon Teachers' Association and we look forward to the results.

Mr. Kent: So, Mr. Speaker, it appears that the minister thinks it's productive to exclude the Yukon Teachers' Association from planning for a new elementary school in Whistle Bend. The minister thinks it's productive that the YTA has called plans for a special education review a "snub". Now she thinks it's productive to be in court with our teachers.

In spite of this toxic environment that the minister has created, there is a chance to start rebuilding the relationship between her and our educators. So, will she abandon her plans for this new rehiring and lay-off policy and get out of court with our teachers?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Again, I am not permitted to discuss the details of the case, and frankly, neither is the member opposite, so I'm puzzled by his question.

Nonetheless, he has characterized my relationship — or personalized my relationship — with the Teachers' Association as one that is not correct. We work very closely with the Teachers' Association. On occasion, parties that have the best interest of children in mind do disagree. There are processes for the resolution of those disagreements. We continue to work closely and productively with the Yukon Teachers' Association. They have not been excluded from the work on Whistle Bend school; they have not been excluded from the review on inclusive and special education, and as a result, our work will continue. We look forward to the results.

Question re: COVID-19 coronavirus preparedness

Ms. McLeod: This morning, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic. The Prime Minister also announced that the Government of Canada was establishing a \$1-billion COVID-19 response fund. As part of this, \$500 million is being allocated to provinces and territories for critical health care system needs.

Is the minister able to tell us how much of the \$500 million will be provided to the Yukon? If not, can she tell us if we have made a request to Canada for funding?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Of course, the health and safety concerns of Yukoners are absolutely our top priority. We recognize the economic impacts and the health impacts the coronavirus is having globally and are very actively monitoring this issue. We are paying attention to what's happening federally. The Prime Minister announced today a very encouraging message. Measures that have been announced today will address the concerns that have been heard from the Yukon business community, and we're very pleased with the federal government's response.

Our government is working very closely with our partners inside and outside of the territory to mitigate potential economic impacts in Yukon, and we continue to gather information as the situation develops.

Ms. McLeod: Yesterday, during Question Period, it was pointed out that the hospital is often operating at or beyond capacity. We asked what steps are being taken to ensure that, in the event of a COVID-19 case appearing in the territory, our hospitals are not overwhelmed. We did not get an answer to this yesterday and are hoping that the minister has had time to reflect and can provide one today.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am just going to take an opportunity to expand a bit on some of the federal announcements that the members opposite didn't add. The member opposite did mention the half-billion dollars to provinces and territories for critical health care system needs to support mitigation efforts as needed. Of course, Health Canada is expected to take the lead there.

It is interesting to note that this funding would also affect the territories and is Yukon-specific. It is interesting to see \$100 million for ongoing support for enhancing surveillance, increasing testing at the national microbiology lab, and preparedness in First Nation and Inuit communities, on top of the initial \$50 million that was announced for that.

I think that one of the most important pieces too is possible future support for businesses that will be provided should the economy experience tightening credit conditions.

Mr. Speaker, I want to quote the chief medical officer of health as well. The acting chief medical officer of health said: "Fear can be more dangerous than the virus itself." We need to be mindful of that. You have a government that is working nationally and locally to make sure that we are as prepared as possible for this or for any other issues — medically or economically — that can happen in the Yukon.

Ms. McLeod: As a result of COVID-19, the Public Health Agency of Canada has just released new guidelines for large gatherings of people to inform provincial and territorial

governments on when they should be cancelled or allowed to go ahead. The federal minister made it clear that, despite this guidance, the final decision on whether or not to cancel an event still rests with the provinces and territories.

With a number of major events coming up in Yukon over the next couple of weeks and months, can the minister tell us if her department is reviewing this guidance, and will the government be working with event organizers to determine if events should be allowed to proceed, and when Yukoners can expect to hear when decisions are made?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I'm happy to rise to respond to the question. Certainly, as elected officials, we have an obligation to look at this issue as it is presented and to remain as calm as we possibly can and look at finding solutions and working with our partners.

Mr. Speaker, the chief medical officer of health has given some statements and we will continue to rely on her, Dr. Elliott, or him, Dr. Hanley, to advise us, as we are working closely with the Yukon Hospital Corporation. We are looking at risk assessments. We are looking at various events that are happening, and the decision and recommendations will certainly be considered as we work with our chief medical officer.

I just want to take a moment to acknowledge both of them for their leadership and their guidance in providing us the good advice that they have so far and we will continue to lean on them as the days evolve. As we know, COVID-19 — although it's not a huge pressure here for us, we are also certainly not going to say that we're immune to it. We have to be as vigilant as we can to ensure that we are prepared to address the issues before us.

Question re: Alaska Highway corridor upgrades

Ms. Hanson: The Liberals initially opposed the previous government's \$200-million plan to twin the Alaska Highway, which had little consideration for active modes of transportation. Now it looks like they just took that plan, divided it into smaller projects, and are running with it. The problem is that Yukoners still don't support it.

YESAB received over 60 submissions in response to the government's plan for the Alaska Highway by Hillcrest, with almost everyone speaking against the government's plan. YESAB has now put forward questions that merit a response. Yukoners deserve to feel safe, they deserve to feel heard, and they deserve answers.

When will the minister answer the questions put forward by YESAB? When will the government start considering opinions outside of its own?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the opportunity to address this issue on the floor of the Legislature this afternoon.

The government has done extensive assessment, planning, and consultation along the Alaska Highway through Whitehorse and has prioritized segments of the highway for improvements to safety. So far, we've completed projects such as the intersection improvements at the Carcross Cut-off and

improvements to the new Range Road intersection, including traffic lights and a paved multi-purpose trail.

We're focusing on intersection safety that considers all users, from cyclists and pedestrians to trucks and personal vehicles. We have heard the community safety concerns about pedestrians and cyclists, which is why we are installing pedestrian-controlled traffic signal crossings to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety.

Mr. Speaker, we have gone through the YESAA process with the Alaska Highway improvements. We have heard the community on that process. That process is well-established and the Department of Highways and Public Works is currently working on answers to all the questions provided through that process.

Ms. Hanson: It's interesting. The Minister of Highways and Public Works has acknowledged that the stretch of Alaska Highway adjacent to Hillcrest is — and I quote: "... not the safest stretch of road."

Yukoners are asking for their safety to be prioritized over the need for speed for vehicles and large trucks through this residential area. The government's own expert panel, convened in 2019, recommended that the highway be made safer by keeping lanes narrower and fewer to encourage slower driving speeds and that an underpass be constructed to allow cyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities to safely cross the highway.

Can the minister explain why safety improvements requested by the community and its own panel of experts aren't implemented in the highway design?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have to disagree with the member opposite on this point. At the conceptual planning stage, the government did consider an underpass. After analysis, we determined there were more disadvantages to that plan than advantages. We have told the community this. We have gone through this at many stages, Mr. Speaker.

Given the grade of the large backslope on the west side of the highway, a long approach ramp would be needed. That would require significant excavation or the construction of a retaining wall. Cost and mitigations to manage ground and surface water would be required due to the high groundwater levels in the area. There is also of course the issue of safety concerns for vulnerable users during the non-daylight hours. Pedestrian and cyclist data show, Mr. Speaker, that there is approximately one commuter every 12 minutes during peak commuting time, which is very low. The estimated conceptual cost of above \$2 million cannot be justified given the current usage rates. So, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Highways and Public Works has elected to go with proven technology — it's called a traffic light. Those traffic lights will stop traffic, slow down traffic through that region, and provide a safe way for pedestrians and cyclists to cross the highway. There will now be several traffic lights along that stretch of highway, highway speeds will decrease, and there will be lots of opportunity for pedestrians to cross safely — as they do on Hamilton Boulevard and as they do at the Alaska Highway. They are proven technology — traffic lights work.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, the minister should talk to his own experts. The engineer at a meeting said, "I would not allow my eight-year-old to cross at that light. It would not be safe."

Mr. Speaker, time and time again, this government has expressed its concerns about climate change, but in this time of climate emergency, Yukoners expect their government to do more than just talk; they expect action on climate change. Yet the government is planning to spend millions of dollars on an infrastructure project that would lead to an increase in greenhouse emissions by enabling more vehicles to drive at faster speeds on the Alaska Highway and also by discouraging Yukoners to walk or bike, given the lack of suitable safety measures in the proposed design.

Will the minister commit to redesigning the Alaska Highway corridor to encourage drivers to travel at slower speeds and in reduced numbers, as well as supporting Yukoners to use active transportation by building critical infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: In a word, Mr. Speaker: Yes. We are imposing traffic lights along the Alaska Highway that will slow traffic. We are taking measures to promote cyclists and pedestrians throughout the City of Whitehorse and along the highway corridor.

Mr. Speaker, this government is investing hundreds of millions of dollars over the next four years to reduce greenhouse gases. We have a green plan that we have tabled and we have put out to public consultation that lays out this government's massive effort to change and change the trajectory of the territory and to actually cut our greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent. That is what this government is doing. I am very proud of the work that we are undertaking here, and we will continue that work on behalf of the citizens of the Yukon who know how important this effort is.

Question re: Dempster Highway maintenance

Mr. Hassard: So, the 2018-19 budget allocated \$3.1 million in capital expenditures for the Dempster Highway. Last year, the Liberal government cut that amount to just \$50,000. Then, just when we thought it couldn't get any worse, in this year's budget, the Liberals cut any line item for the Dempster Highway completely, so now it appears that there is no money for capital expenditures for the Dempster Highway for this season.

Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell us exactly how much money is allocated in this budget for capital expenditures on that Dempster Highway?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I have to object and disagree with the member opposite's assertions in the lead-up to his question.

So, the Government of Yukon is making a number of investments to ensure that Canada's first all-weather road to cross the Arctic Circle remains safe and open for business. The Dempster Highway is a 740-kilometre gravel road that connects the north Klondike Highway with Fort McPherson, Inuvik, and the Mackenzie Delta, passing through both Yukon and the

Northwest Territories, with 465 kilometres of that highway in the Yukon.

The Yukon government maintains 5,000 kilometres of highway throughout the territory. In 2019-20, we allocated approximately \$9.5 million for the Dempster Highway. We spent \$5.4 million for operation and maintenance and vegetation control. Mr. Speaker, we spent \$2.9 million to rehabilitate the Klondike River bridge.

We did spend \$50,000 for capital improvements at Chapman Lake. That was part of the whole thing, but only one small part of the work that we did on the Dempster last year.

\$1.2 million was spent on production of aggregates. We are focusing our investments on the southern section of the Dempster Highway up to the northern boundary of Tombstone Territorial Park. This section of highway receives moderate traffic volumes — about 80 vehicles a day — compared to the northern part of the highway, which receives very little traffic — about 50 vehicles a day.

Mr. Hassard: It's great that the minister knows where the Dempster is and he knows how long it is, but he doesn't appear to know if there is any money in his own budget for it.

Mr. Speaker, we heard that the Mayor of Inuvik has weighed in and is criticizing this government and their lack of action. According to one media report — and I quote: "Inuvik's mayor says conditions on the Yukon side of the Dempster Highway are worsening and action is needed to improve the 'lifecycle' for Beaufort Delta residents."

In a January 10, 2020, letter to the NWT's infrastructure minister, Mayor Natasha Kulikowski said that the Yukon's Dempster south of Eagle Plain, in the Rock River area, was "terrible".

The minister was copied on this letter, so did he respond to the Inuvik mayor? Will he provide the House with a copy of that response?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I take the issue of our roads throughout the territory very seriously, Mr. Speaker. Actually, I am familiar with the letter to which the member opposite is referring and the sole opinion that was backing up the letter that the road is bad. I have actually spoken to the NWT government. I have reached out to my colleague in the Northwest Territories — the Transportation minister — and I have spoken to the deputy minister of transport for the NWT at a federal-provincial-territorial ministers' meeting in Toronto recently. We had a very cordial and good conversation. They, too, are working with us to improve the Dempster Highway. They know the work that we're doing; they know the traffic volumes. We are working very closely together to make sure that road remains a good conduit to Inuvik and the Northwest Territories and serves the needs of the territory as well.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, you know, we have heard from the Member for Whitehorse Centre on numerous occasions asking that the government put more information back into the budget like it used to be, so maybe the Minister of Highways and Public Works could ask for that to happen too. Then maybe he will be able to understand his own budget a little better.

We know from comments in this House that the minister doesn't value roads that have US-citizen traffic on them. His refusal to ask Canada to support spending on Shakwak — in fact, last year, the minister even made the bizarre claim that no Yukoners even use or benefit from Shakwak. Apparently, the minister thinks that Yukoners north of Haines Junction are actually American citizens.

Is this why the Liberals are drastically cutting spending on the Dempster Highway? Is it because the minister thinks that this road only benefits people in the Northwest Territories?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Having opportunities in opposition and also in government, I have to say it's pretty rich for the Yukon Party to talk about Shakwak funding here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly and to take a look at any of the money for that road that goes into America, which the previous government really didn't do much on at all.

At the same time, the members opposite should know that this current minister has added on one of the largest single capital projects in Yukon history in Highways and Public Works of \$157 million extra for budgeting for roads in Yukon. So, as the members opposite will pick and choose between budget numbers here and there and statistically use numbers to their advantage, we will give the dollar-value numbers. The minister spent the first two supplementaries giving dollar-value numbers and talking about the budget that he knows about, and the members opposite refused to listen to the reality, which is that we're putting more into highways than they ever have.

Question re: Tourism projections

Ms. Van Bibber: The Minister of Tourism and Culture has claimed that, despite the global economic downturn and the expected decline of tourism, that everything is business as usual in Yukon. In the fiscal and economic outlook tabled six days ago with the budget documents, we see annual border crossings near 500,000 for 2019. The minister said that it's business as usual for the tourism industry in 2020, in spite of global economic concerns. Given that, can she tell us if there are any early estimates for border crossings in 2020?

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. We are currently dealing with a very fluid situation, Mr. Speaker. We have had a lot of discussion in this House over the last several days about the changes that are occurring on a moment-by-moment basis sometimes.

We know that folks are really concerned for their loved ones, they are concerned for the well-being of their elderly, they are concerned for their businesses, and they are concerned for their livelihood — and we are too — we absolutely are too. We are working very closely with our partners. We talked this week about meetings that happened with our business community, our chambers, and our associations. We are gathering information as we speak. I have data in front of me that was provided. We are reviewing it. I have a meeting tomorrow with the federal minister for tourism and economic development. My colleagues will be sitting in with me on that meeting.

This is an important industry to the Yukon territory — the second largest — and we are absolutely taking this seriously.

We are monitoring border crossings, and as we have more information, we will provide it to Yukoners.

I just want to reassure Yukoners: We have this.

Ms. Van Bibber: Yesterday, the minister said that our tourism sector shouldn't be worried about the expected hit to tourism. She claimed that because we have a diverse basket when it comes to where our visitors originate from, we are protected from the expected decline in tourism. However, the budget documents say that 70 percent of our annual international visitors are from the United States.

The document goes on to say — and I quote: “Several factors bode well for US visitation to Yukon going forward.” Clearly, this is not the case now. Does the minister agree that the fiscal and economic projections in this year's budget should be revised, considering the state of the global economy and warnings about travelling on cruise ships, which would bring in many of those US visitors?

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Again, we are monitoring the situation. Of course, this will have impacts on our projections going forward.

I want to just remind and talk to Yukoners about the resiliency of our industry. The coronavirus outbreak is certainly of great concern to us, but governments and industry are coming together to respond in a coordinated way to tackle this issue together. It is very important to remind everyone that tourism is a robust industry that periodically does experience issues and rebounds from downturns.

We've seen Yukon's tourism industry confront events like 9/11, the SARS outbreak, the financial crisis of 2008-09, and high oil prices. We have survived difficult times like this in the past and have grown to experience record years of growth. We can and will do it again.

Yukon truly is a marvellous world-class tourism destination. Yes, coronavirus is a threat and we need to take it very seriously. Mr. Speaker, we are doing just that and we're doing it together.

Question re: French immersion enrolment

Mr. Kent: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. French immersion continues to be a very popular program choice for Yukon families. Last year, kindergarten enrolment resulted in a lottery being held for 11 families and their students. We've heard a lottery was held again for families choosing French immersion kindergarten for the 2020-21 school year. It seems a rather unfortunate approach for the minister to essentially make families enter a raffle when trying to determine the education for their children.

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

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I can confirm that early registration for kindergarten for next year in the schools here in Whitehorse has taken place and that, as part of that, there was a lottery held for French immersion spots of which there are a limited number at Whitehorse Elementary School as well as at Selkirk Elementary. I can produce the numbers for the member opposite in short notice and will do so pursuant to his request.

Mr. Kent: I'll look forward to getting those numbers from the minister.

The Selkirk school council has stated on many occasions that they want to maintain their school as a dual track, meaning both French immersion and English stream students. There are concerns that continuing with two French immersion kindergarten classes each year will soon mean that they no longer have the space to accommodate English students at the school.

According to the March 5, 2019, Selkirk school council minutes — a meeting that was attended by the minister — and I'll quote: “The goal of the Department is to have only one kindergarten class in the 2020-2021 school year.” Obviously, that didn't work out, as we've heard that there are two classes slated for Selkirk for this fall.

Can the minister tell us what work was done in the last year to meet this goal identified for the school council and why they were unsuccessful in accomplishing that goal?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As luck would have it — or maybe not — I was at the Selkirk school council meeting two nights ago where we had a lengthy discussion about this particular issue.

It was in fact the goal to have only one French immersion kindergarten at Selkirk, but the numbers that produced themselves this year indicated to us that there were more than 20 siblings of already French immersion students in Selkirk, so that made the discussion change slightly, because priority is given, as the member opposite will know, to siblings of students already.

We had a great conversation the other night at school council. We are working with school councils all over, but certainly with respect to the question on Selkirk, I think it was a productive and cordial conversation. We had the superintendent for that school present, and the assistant deputy minister, the deputy minister, and I were there, showing that not only are we concerned — as is the school council at Selkirk — with the issues that they brought forward but that we are responding to them immediately and are working together to make all schools better — but, in particular with respect to this question, to achieve the goals of the Selkirk school council and their administration.

Mr. Kent: So, the minister has stated in this House on a number of occasions that there are 700 empty spaces in Whitehorse schools. This number will, of course, rise when the Whistle Bend school is completed.

So, will the minister commit to expanding French immersion elementary beyond École Whitehorse Elementary School and Selkirk Elementary School in the coming years so that Selkirk no longer has to accept two French immersion kindergarten classes per year?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don't think it would be responsible of me to unilaterally make that decision. We have committees. We work with Canadian Parents for French, we work with the French immersion school community, and we work with all of our school councils and our partners in education, and certainly the conversations are ongoing. I won't make the commitment that the member opposite has asked me to make here. That

wouldn't be responsible. We will work with our partners. We will watch enrolments as the years come forward, and we will make those decisions responsibly and in conjunction with our partners.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Prior to proceeding with Orders of the Day, I would like to take time to make a brief statement.

Yesterday, during the vote on second reading of Bill No. 202, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2020-21*, the Member for Whitehorse Centre expressed her vote initially as "with a prejudice", as appears in the Blues from yesterday. Then, when asked by the Chair to clarify, as the Chair did not initially hear exactly what the member had said, the Member for Whitehorse Centre then stated "agree".

The Chair has previously ruled on this matter on November 9, 2017, and I will remind members again that the time for debate and comment is during debate on bills or other matters before the House, not during division.

Once division is called, there is no further opportunity for debate and comments. Members should confine their remarks to whether they agree or disagree with the motion that they are voting on.

The Chair thanks members for their attention to this matter. We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 191

Clerk: Motion No. 191, standing in the name of Mr. Cathers.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Lake Laberge: THAT this House urges the Minister of Finance to revise the fiscal and economic outlook tabled as part of the 2020-21 main budget estimates to reflect recent world events including the global spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus, travel advisories, and stock market volatility prior to the end of the 2020 Spring Sitting.

Mr. Cathers: In rising to speak to this motion, I would note, first of all, that the Premier and the Liberal government seem to have been caught unaware and unprepared with regard particularly to the potential economic fallout of the worldwide spread of COVID-19. It is notable that, on the first day of this Spring Sitting, the Premier, in his budget speech and in the fiscal and economic outlook tabled as part of the budget, both the budget speech and the fiscal and economic outlook were predicting strong growth for this fiscal year, with GDP growth projected to be 6.2 percent, according to the Premier's numbers from the opening day of this Spring Sitting.

What is concerning is the lack of recognition that those events were having an impact. This motion, of course, asks the Minister of Finance to revise the fiscal and economic outlook

that was included in the budget to reflect what is occurring in the world.

I would note, just in beginning my remarks, as well that you might say the theme of my remarks is emphasizing the importance of keeping calm, planning, preparing, communicating, and taking the right actions in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. This includes government working with the business community and working with other levels of government and within government to ensure that the right steps are taken to minimize both the health and economic consequences of the situation.

To date, the Premier and his ministers have largely pointed to the chief medical officer of health or the acting chief medical officer of health but have been failing to recognize that the two key parts of an effective response to this situation are the health response and the economic aspect of it. It is up to government to show leadership on the economic aspect of the response to COVID-19.

So far, we have seen a lack of leadership on the economic part, and that is something where government — the Premier and his colleagues — really does need to step up now and recognize that leadership on the economic response has to include government stepping forward and working with the business community to understand what impacts are likely to occur to determine what potential responses can be taken not just by government but also by the business community and by society as a whole. It is important to get working on that now.

As I mentioned, we appear to see a budget speech that mentioned numerous times in glowing terms economic growth and that predicted a very sunny time this fiscal year. It is quite concerning that the Premier and his colleagues do not appear to have been paying attention to what was occurring on the world stage. This problem has been developing over the last number of months. Tabling a fiscal and economic outlook that claimed the territory was looking at a growing diversified economic — and the strength of the economy on almost every page of the budget speech was unrealistic in light of what was transpiring around the world, and it is unrealistic today.

The lessons learned from the SARS outbreak in Ontario a number of years ago and through discussions by provinces, territories, and the federal government include the importance of communicating and working together in responding to an outbreak of a virus.

Both overreacting or failing to act decisively enough can cause problems, both economic and health-related.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, there has been a fair bit of attention on social media of the fact that many Whitehorse stores are sold out of toilet paper. I would ask the question: Why? I think the answer is quite simple. It's a needless overreaction to the situation, but people who are doing that, in some cases, were genuinely thinking that it was something they needed to do. So, it's important for government to remember that, in the absence of clear communication and a clear understanding of citizens, businesses, and others about what the risks actually are and what steps they can take to minimize them — in the absence of having a good understanding of what they are dealing with — the messages coming out over social media

and the rumours that spread around through the community at a time like this start to write their own story, and people respond in a way that is ultimately not in the best interest of the territory as a whole.

Again, what I want to emphasize in this speech is the importance of government taking the right actions, doing so in a calm and thoughtful manner, but also recognizing that, while the chief medical officer of health may have the leadership role on the health part of the situation, the government still has obligations on minimizing the health impacts of this in dealing with responding to them appropriately. It is government that needs to take the leadership role on dealing with the economic aspect of the Yukon's response to COVID-19.

It's important in this to consider such aspects as ensuring that there is clear communication with Yukoners about what the symptoms are of COVID-19, what steps should be taken by citizens, business owners, and others with regard to sanitation, including cleaning, handwashing, and so on. It's important to recognize that both the health and the economic consequences can be mitigated, but it needs to be well-thought-out and actions need to be coordinated.

It's important to have communication with other levels of government, including First Nations and municipalities, with Yukon government unions — and by that, I mean, of course, the Yukon Employees' Union as well as the Yukon Teachers' Association and, as well, the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

It is important to recognize as well that there needs to be information shared with individual staff within government about these matters, because I have heard concerns — and I believe some of my colleagues have as well — both from people in the private sector and people in the public sector who are, at this point, concerned about the health aspects of this and concerned about the economic impacts of this. They are finding that they are not getting the information that they need at this point in time.

The economic impacts, of course — we heard the government touting the tourism sector, as I mentioned. The budget speech and the economic forecast make the unrealistic prediction that GDP growth is projected to be 6.2 percent, which would be the highest since 2016 — 7.2 percent. As a side note, I can't resist pointing out that the Premier repeatedly predicted that 2016 would be a recession year. In fact, it was the strongest growth year in recent history.

Back to the main thrust of this, predicting that the Yukon's GDP is forecasted to perform better in 2020 than in previous years — as it did on page 7 of the fiscal and economic outlook — at a time when we were already seeing the ripple effects worldwide of the outbreak of the coronavirus in China — it has spread to other countries, such as Iran. As mentioned when we were debating earlier this Sitting a motion on the potential establishment of an all-party committee — which, of course, was negated by this House due to the government not being willing to support it — during the speech itself, we received the news that Italy had put the entire country on lockdown and under quarantine.

Meanwhile, at that time — when the House just recently resumed sitting and the budget speech was delivered just six days ago, Mr. Speaker — already the worldwide impacts, including the impact on the stock markets, were rippling across the world. In that context, the government strangely, in its fiscal and economic outlook, did not choose to revise it. They did not choose to make mention in the budget speech that revisions were needed to the fiscal and economic outlook because of events that had transpired.

There is a mention of risks regarding mining projects, but not a single word there about coronavirus or COVID-19, and both the budget speech and the *Fiscal and Economic Outlook* are silent on the topic. Neither contain a single word about coronavirus or COVID-19. In that context, on page 14 of the *Fiscal and Economic Outlook*, the government talked about the growth of the tourism sector under a heading: "The tourism sector continues to impress".

Earlier today, in Question Period, in response to questions from my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, the minister talked about the resilience of the tourism industry and talked about record growth in tourism and strangely predicted that they can and will do it again. In this current year, predicting that record growth in tourism will still happen is looking at the world through very, very rose-coloured glasses. It is not a realistic or responsible prediction.

It appears that the Premier and his Liberal Cabinet are still not understanding what is happening worldwide and understanding the likely effects on the economy, both in the Yukon and elsewhere.

Again, what I want to emphasize is the importance of a coordinated, effective response to both the health and the economic impacts, because, as I noted earlier, both the health and the economic impacts can be mitigated, but it requires well-thought-out, coordinated actions by all levels of government, as well as by citizens in society themselves. Communication is a very key part of that, both internal to government, with other governments, with unions, with individual staff, with small businesses, other employers, and with individual citizens.

The impact of medical officers of health recommending not travelling on cruise ships is going to have a negative effect on the tourism sector this summer. There is no realistic scenario for this summer in which we don't see a major hit to tourist travel in the cruise ship market, based on the current recommendations of several medical officers of health.

I should also note that, when it comes to the private sector, it is important for government to both work with and listen to them and also provide leadership during this time. Political leadership here in the Yukon — and of course, by this I am referring to the Premier and his colleagues — seem to have not learned or forgotten the lessons that were learned by federal, provincial, and territorial governments in the wake of the SARS epidemic in Ontario, and that includes the importance of both political leaders and the medical officer of health communicating, updating the public, and doing work internally and with other levels of government.

Government cannot simply sit on the sidelines and defer everything to the chief medical officer of health. They need to

recognize the important role that government has in the health response and need to recognize that, on the economic response to this situation, it is government itself that needs to take the leadership role.

Mr. Speaker, among the people who have contacted me about this issue just within the last day is someone who called me and asked how we are supposed to know what the symptoms of COVID-19 are and hadn't been finding information about that. I know that information has been put out through some venues, but my point with that is that the reliance so far on the websites, social media, et cetera has not resulted in the information getting in the hands of everyone who should have it. More needs to be done, including advertising to communicate to individual citizens what they should do, what the symptoms of COVID-19 are, what steps they should take if they think they may have it, and what steps they should and should not take generally within their lives in response to COVID-19 and to minimize the risk of them getting the virus or experiencing negative effects.

That, again, includes the example — we have already seen the response of people buying up all the toilet paper at a number of stores. While that response so far has been relatively harmless, it is an example of the type of needless overreaction that can occur in the situation if there is not a clear, coordinated, and well-understood message around the outbreak of a virus such as COVID-19, and it leaves people, again, relying on rumours, speculation, and what they hear on social media or elsewhere instead of understanding a solid source of information and taking actions based upon that.

Another question that I received — again, within the last 24 hours — someone within the government was wondering if people are going to work from home and, if so, who, when people are required or allowed to do that — especially whether employees with health issues may be more at risk of picking up a virus if it were to become transmitted within an office. What steps will be taken for them?

I realize there are many parts to it. But if employees are not hearing that internally from managers and senior managers or hearing it directly from government via a global note, they are left looking for answers and worrying, and that is not necessary. Action must be taken to ensure that the response to this is thoughtful, coordinated, and measured.

Mr. Speaker, I would also note — just in talking about the reasons again — emphasizing the reasons for this motion asking the Minister of Finance to revise the fiscal and economic outlook tabled as part of the 2020-21 main budget estimates to reflect the recent world events including the global spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus, travel advisories, and stock market volatility that, as every member of this House knows, the Yukon has already felt the economic impact of COVID-19 and the response to it with the cancellation of the Arctic Winter Games. That has impacted athletes of course who were looking forward to it but it also had a significant economic impact on a number of local businesses.

Predictions nationally — just citing briefly — some of the news stories that have been reported in recent days here in the Yukon and nationally include the report in *The Globe and Mail*

yesterday noting that the Canadian economy braces for downturn. This is from the morning update from *The Globe and Mail* — “Canadian economy braces for downturn on oil crash, coronavirus fears”.

It notes that, in the top stories, the “Canadian economy braces for downturn on plunging oil prices, coronavirus fears” and that “A potent mix of sharply lower oil prices and the coronavirus outbreak has left the Canadian economy bracing for a downturn. Benchmark oil prices tumbled about 25 percent on Monday after OPEC failed to agree on production cuts, leading Saudi Arabia to slash its crude prices. Markets were thrown into turmoil, with Canada’s benchmark stock index plummeting by 10 percent, its steepest one-day loss since 1987. Some Canadian oil producers saw their values erode by more than 50 percent in an instant.”

“Italy in lockdown

“All of Italy was placed in lockdown after a surge in COVID-19 infections and fatalities eliminated any hope that the virus outside China was on the verge of being contained. The national lockdown was imposed less than two days after Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte signed a decree that sealed off much of wealthy northern Italy, including Milan. The lockdown will severely restrict the movements and office life of 60 million Italian citizens.

“Canadian cruise passengers

“Hundreds of Canadians left stranded on a California cruise ship were set to return home as the federal Public Health Agency warned all Canadians to avoid cruise travel amid a growing global outbreak of COVID-19. Those who cleared medical screenings were expecting to be bused to an airport hangar in Oakland and then board a plane for Canadian Forces Base Trenton, an air base in Eastern Ontario, at 5:15 a.m. Tuesday to start a 14-day quarantine. Passengers who failed medical screenings would be treated in U.S. health-care facilities before they would be allowed to return home, Canadian officials said. The Grand Princess finally docked in Oakland on Monday afternoon after nearly five days spent sitting in the waters off the Northern California coast.”

Again, that was from *The Globe and Mail* online, and it is just a reflection of the economic aspect of this — which does require an update to the fiscal and economic outlook contained along with this year’s budget and tabled by the Premier just last week.

We do recognize, of course, that the government is not immediately in a position to revise those forecasts today, but they do need to work on it expeditiously, in our view, and take the steps to respond to the situation, including revising their predictions for the fiscal year.

In Italy, we’ve seen one of the stronger responses — and more draconian, for lack of a better term — to the situation, also, they believed, made necessary by the serious health impacts that we’re seeing and the spread of the coronavirus in Italy.

In reviewing a story from CNN, it talks about nation-wide restrictions and the fact that Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte announced at a news conference on Monday evening that the red zone was expanding from northern Italy to the entire

country. The worst hit northern region of Lombardy was already struggling to function, with intensive care coordinator Antonio Pesenti warning that the region's normally robust health care system was one step from collapse.

What I do want to note from that, without being alarmist at this point, is that it is important to recognize that if we were to have a case or more of coronavirus occur in the territory or, worse, if there were to be a community-level spread of coronavirus here in the Yukon — our hospital and our community nursing stations are already running very close to maximum capacity, and it would not take many patients to strain the system to the point where it was no longer able to function effectively.

That is something that is entirely within the responsibility of the Yukon government. It is not an area where they can defer to the chief medical officer of health. They need to look at those resources. They need to understand that they are already strained close to the breaking point, and government needs to prepare for what additional actions it can take to address that part of the response and prepare for the possibility that we could, at some point, have a problem right here on the ground in the Yukon. It is far better to be prepared and find out that you are prepared for a problem that didn't occur than to be caught flat-footed if a serious problem does occur.

Mr. Speaker, as well, we have seen that the TSX and the Dow Jones, according to reports this morning on CBC, are having another down day, with the TSX and Dow Jones down by 20 percent since sell-off began last week. Also, Mr. Speaker, one thing recorded in the story on CBC posted this morning on *CBC News* mentions the fact — quoting Invesco's chief global market strategist: “Every day that passes makes the economic impact of coronavirus that much worse,” said Kristina Hooper, Invesco's chief global market strategist. “The government probably should have been thinking about stimulus last month.”

Now that, of course, was in reference to the United States government, but my point is that the information being shared with governments across the world, including the US government and the Yukon government — that information was coming out at about the same time, and as noted by the person quoted in that story on CBC, there was the reference to the fact that the US government should have responded a month ago, and I would suggest that the same would apply —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Quorum count

Speaker: Leader of the Official Opposition, on a point of order.

Mr. Hassard: I don't believe we have quorum in the House.

Speaker: I'll do a quick count for the record.

We appear to have 10 members present. Quorum includes the Speaker. So, I think, just for the record, Leader of the Official Opposition, we have — quorum is section 3(2). Attention has been drawn to the Speaker that there may not be quorum, but for the record, there appear to be 10 members present. Quorum is a majority of members.

The Member for Lake Laberge can continue.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also note, citing other reputable news publications, that *Forbes* is predicting, on March 10: “Rolling Recessions Are The Likely Economic Impact Of New Coronavirus And COVID-19”. In the article by Bill Conerly, senior contributor, he notes — and I quote: “The new coronavirus, which causes the new disease COVID-19, is the major uncertainty in the global economy, with the potential to trigger a worldwide recession. The path of the disease and its economic consequences are highly uncertain.”

I will not speak for much longer on this topic, but I do want to emphasize the fact that it was unrealistically rosy for the Minister of Finance to make the predictions he did just last week about the economy for this fiscal year, both in his budget speech and in the fiscal and economic outlook. The fact that the budget speech extols the strength of the economy, predicts growth on multiple pages and further in the fiscal and economic outlook, and predicts almost record-high growth compared to recent years of 6.2 percent for the territory as a whole and talks about the growth of the tourism sector was unrealistic and not something, in my view, that the government should have done.

I believe that they should have revised those forecasts and speech to acknowledge the unknown risks, and at this point in time — since we have seen significant world events within the past couple of weeks — that it is an appropriate time for government to recognize that the *Fiscal and Economic Outlook* that was tabled last week was out of date the day it was tabled and to revise that forecast prior to the end of the 2020 Spring Sitting — and also, as I noted, to recognize the importance of working with the private sector, with other levels of government, and with Yukon citizens to respond to both the health consequences of this virus and to mitigate the economic impacts of it occurring — because I know that there are retailers, tourism operators, hotel owners, and many others within the Yukon private sector who are worried about what this summer will bring, and they need to see leadership from government in terms of the economic response to this problem here in the Yukon.

Government, again, needs to show leadership in developing the territory-wide response to the economic impacts of COVID-19 — not just to the health impacts, but government also needs to take a serious look at what it is doing in terms of issues related to business continuity. Should it face issues such as a case of coronavirus or suspected case either within government or a facility run by government, government needs to have the appropriate plans in place to minimize the risk, to respond to it appropriately, and to ensure that its staff, as well as all Yukon citizens and the private sector, are working together in a well-thought-out, coordinated, and integrated response to dealing with both the health and the economic aspects of the COVID-19 situation.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I want to thank the opposition for bringing this motion before this House this afternoon, allowing us a chance to discuss this on the floor of the Legislative

Assembly. This motion is, at its core, a request for information. The opposition is asking for an in-time update to the Yukon's fiscal picture to reflect the effects of a global health crisis that began just 71 days ago.

The first confirmed death from this new virus happened just 61 days ago. Just 50 days ago, the first cases were reported in Japan, Thailand, and South Korea. The first case in the United States of America came the very next day, 49 days ago. The World Health Organization declared a global health emergency 40 days ago. The first death outside China happened just 37 days ago.

In the last 48 days, Mr. Speaker, we have seen China quarantine entire multi-million-person cities and enforce the orders with drones, police, and military personnel. We have seen the US cancel flights to China. We have seen the quarantining of thousands of people on cruise ships.

Less than one month ago, China discovered 14,000 new cases in Hubei province. It was just 21 days ago that Iran logged its very first case — three weeks. Seventeen days ago, Italy locked down 10 towns in the Lombardy region, and the first death in the US happened just 11 days ago.

Today, the US has recorded more than 19 deaths, and there have been more than 4,500 deaths worldwide — that in 71 days.

The stock market has dropped 20 percent, as the member opposite noted, in the last three days from record highs posted in February. The US State Department urged Americans to avoid cruise ships just three days ago.

So, things are happening very, very quickly, Mr. Speaker. This is an evolving issue. Our budget was tabled just last week, so we are more than happy to provide the opposition and Yukoners with information on this emerging crisis, which is happening in real time.

Mr. Speaker, the pandemic was declared just 4.5 hours ago, not that many of us had held out hope that we wouldn't be forced into this situation. It is now clear that efforts to contain this virus have not been successful and it is now something that the world and people around the world are going to be having to cope with for years and possibly decades to come. There is no vaccine for this virus, Mr. Speaker, although we know that medical authorities are working very hard to try to pin something down.

We have to ask ourselves — we have an economic outlook here that we tabled as part of our budget. The opposition is asking us for more information. We are doing our very best throughout this government to assess the situation.

The opposition would like to know what the effects are going to be on shops and restaurants in Carcross, Whitehorse, and across the territory — and on hotels, Mr. Speaker. These are all very good questions. They are essential and they are questions being asked by the business community and people throughout the territory. In broad terms, I would hasten to say that the business people serving tourists in the hospitality industry might want to start planning for a leaner year this year. I think that would be prudent.

Of course, as the price of oil plummets due to the price war between Russia and Saudi Arabia which began five days ago, perhaps people might be able to afford more drives, so maybe

we will see more road traffic. We will see. Again, we don't know what the effects of these ever-changing and very fast-changing situations are in the globe right now. The pace has been frenetic. That contributes to media interest and public nervousness — in some cases, fear. Fear is the absolute worst instinct that we can fall prey to. The Member for Lake Laberge has noted that we should remain calm, and I am glad that he is espousing that publicly. I hope he continues — because remaining calm and level-headed in the midst of a crisis is essential for all of us to keep a presence of mind.

Mr. Speaker, we have to look after ourselves, our families, and our elders, who are particularly vulnerable to this new virus. Caring for ourselves, our families, and our elders and those with conditions that make them particularly susceptible to this virus is absolutely essential. We — as a society and as individuals — have to take precautions. We have to be aware of the symptoms of coronavirus. They are: fever, cough, and shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.

I think it is important to ask ourselves: What do we know about this virus? Around the world, we have seen both mild and severe illness reported. Many of the virus characteristics are still unknown and health agencies are working around the clock to get a handle on what we are facing here. There are many questions and not many answers yet, although the data is being amassed in real time, as we speak, around the globe. China and the international community are at the forefront of those investigations to better understand the coronavirus, to understand where it came from initially, how it's transmitted, and the severity of the illness.

Canada and its partners are closely watching and quickly responding to this outbreak. The work is being done by public health agencies at all levels — in Canada and around the world — and by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Both Yukon's acting chief medical officer and the chief medical officer himself have been at the forefront of our efforts to deal with this pandemic and they too are working with the Public Health Agency of Canada. We will continue to make sure that we work very closely with both our medical health officers, our federal counterparts, and our provincial counterparts to take effective measures to protect all Yukoners.

It is important to discuss what Yukon is doing. Yukon health care providers are keeping up to date with coronavirus. They are updating themselves on a daily basis, sometimes hourly, about what they are facing. They know how to recognize the virus in a person who may be infected and how best to care for them.

The Yukon medical officer of health and Yukon communicable disease control units are closely following this outbreak. They're working with our counterparts across the country and leading all preparations to protect Yukoners against this outbreak.

I have mentioned individuals who have a huge role to play in curbing the spread of this outbreak. There are many things we can do every day to curb the spread of respiratory viruses, including coronavirus, COVID-19. We've been talking about it. It bears repeating that we have to wash our hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, frequently. We should use

alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol if we don't have access to soap and water. We should avoid touching our eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands and avoid close contact with people who are sick. We can clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are touched a lot, cover our mouths and nose with tissue when we cough or sneeze, and use your elbow if you have no access to a tissue.

Stay home when you're sick, Mr. Speaker. If you have any symptoms, make sure that you go home and then phone the appropriate number — 811 — and I believe that online we have a new number that we can now access.

It is also important to note that Canada is still at fairly low risk in this pandemic. We are working very hard nationally to slow the spread and curb the growth of this illness throughout the country, and Yukon, because of our location, is at very low risk of this virus at the moment, but we are in a world that has transportation and airports, and we are going to face this illness sooner probably, rather than later.

At the airport, we are taking advice from the federal government and from our provincial counterparts. They are the gates of entry. We have no international flights coming into Whitehorse at the moment — other provinces do have this — so we are not at high risk of international incidents here, but we are taking precautions. We are sterilizing surfaces throughout the airport with renewed vigor to make sure that users of the airport are somewhat protected from exposure within the airport, and we are working to take all measures necessary to make sure that users of that one port of entry are kept safe.

So, again, the economic outlook is really the point of this whole motion this afternoon. I have gone into some of the health matters, and I think they work hand in glove with this pandemic. We really do have to get a handle on our own personal protections to curb this outbreak and that will have an impact on the economic side.

The economic outlook itself that we tabled — and which we will have every intention of updating within the next six months — goes into the Yukon finances using the best information that we had at the time the budget was prepared just three months ago. It lays out that our expenditures and revenues are rising.

Our revenue for this year is going to be \$1.3 billion. We're going to post a \$4-million surplus. This is important to note, because it suggests that we are in good shape after several years of deficit spending, as we found from our Financial Advisory Panel report — that the Government of Yukon was spending \$1.50 for every dollar we collected. It was unsustainable, and we had to take measures to change that trajectory. We have worked very hard to balance our spending priorities and deal with some of the expenses that we faced when we took office.

Now, after three years, we have managed to curb that growth in spending to the point where we now have a surplus of \$4 million. We are in better shape. We managed to deliver that surplus alongside one of the largest capital budgets in the territory's history. That, too, is good news for the territory, because it means that we have a stimulus budget at a time when the global economy is starting to falter. It is a time when the Yukon Territory needs some strong economic growth. The

territory is, right now — because of the work of the government and the citizens of the territory — in a unique position to weather this fast-evolving and very turbulent time, both in terms of health and the economy.

We have also implemented new tax measures. The 2020-21 budget contains several new tax measures to ensure that Yukon has a competitive business environment, fostering entrepreneurship and innovation. It builds on efforts made over the last few years to reduce the burden on Yukon businesses and improve the competitiveness of Yukon's corporate tax regime.

Small businesses in the Yukon will benefit from the lowest taxes in Canada. Effective January 1, 2021, the Yukon small business tax rate will be lowered from two percent to zero, Mr. Speaker. This is estimated to save Yukon businesses more than \$2 million a year that can be put toward growing their business. So, at a time when the economy nationally and internationally is starting to falter and the stock market is falling, Yukon small businesses will be exempt from taxes. This is a good thing.

To offset the revenue shortfall, the insurance premium tax will increase to four percent, bringing it in line with tax rates in other jurisdictions. This is estimated to raise an additional \$3 million by 2021-22. This is something that has been long-standing.

We are happy to have found this source of revenue for the territory and we have managed to implement it in a way that protects the Yukon Territory's finances, brings in more revenue at a time when we are offering local businesses a bit of relief — relief that came not a moment too soon, right on the cusp of an international crisis.

The small business investment tax credit is something else that we are working with, Mr. Speaker. That program has been in place since 1999, and it has helped Yukon's small businesses raise almost \$10 million by giving investors an income tax credit on their investments. Starting in 2020, the program will be expanded to allow not just small but also medium-sized businesses to apply. The re-named business investment tax credit will also increase the amount of money a business can raise in a particular year.

It is not just about business, though. Individuals will also face a lighter tax regime in the Yukon, as we are increasing the basic personal amount to mirror changes at the federal level. The basic personal amount is the amount of income a person may earn tax free. The increase will be phased in over four years, and when fully phased in, individual tax filers will save about \$125 per year on their Yukon income taxes, and couples will save \$250.

This comes alongside the carbon tax rebate, which is also providing money to Yukon families and individuals, and my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, just announced that the minimum wage is also going up in the Yukon — again, helping those at the lowest income scale earn an extra dollar an hour on the cusp of this health and economic crisis.

The 2020-21 budget will also take advantage of federal funding to invest more than \$2 billion over the coming years to improve public infrastructure. Roughly one-third of these

investments are recoverable from the federal government and the capital plan leverages \$655 million in federal funding and will see Yukon partner with multiple levels of government to actually expand and improve our infrastructure throughout the territory.

This investment on behalf of the federal government, on behalf of the Yukon government, municipalities, and First Nations is absolutely essential to improving sewer and water and also roads, airports, and bridges throughout the territory. This investment is going to improve transportation and the lives of people throughout the Yukon. It is also going to reduce the cost of running the Yukon government and managing the Yukon government infrastructure.

These investments will meet the challenges of a growing economy and an aging population. Investments in transportation infrastructure and health facilities are going to go a long way toward improving the lives of Yukon citizens.

We are also taking action on climate change by implementing *Our Clean Future*, our strategy that is currently in draft form to address climate change, and it is expected to be finalized in the coming months. This year's budget focuses on six categories to better illustrate how government investments are impacting Yukoners.

I was talking about climate change and the green economy. \$134 million will be spent over the coming five years to help the Government of Yukon meet its target of a 30-percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. This money will help improve the energy efficiency of government buildings and help First Nation communities develop renewable energy.

The Yukon has a long history of turning to and tackling the grave problems the world faces. During the First World War, the Yukon contributed more than any other jurisdiction in the country toward that effort per capita. It could be argued, Mr. Acting Speaker, that the Yukon had no significant role to play in a global conflict, but that didn't stop our forbears from actually moving forward and embracing the challenge they faced, giving their lives and their money to a cause that they believed in.

There are some in the territory who would say climate change — we have nothing to play. We have hardly contributed anything to this, so we shouldn't do anything. That's the wrong approach. Yukoners don't sit on their hands when faced with a challenge. Yukoners have distinguished themselves by actually stepping up and doing their very best beyond their small size — their diminutive size — to actually tackle the problems that afflict the globe. This is an important thing to remember as we face climate change, global economic downturn, and a global health crisis.

So, this government, reflecting the wishes of the people of the territory, is investing in measures to change the direction and actually curb our greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent. That's something the people of the territory expect us to do, and it's something that we take very seriously on this side of the House and that we are going to make happen.

We have \$397 million allocated over the next five years for land development, social development, education, and

health. This includes continued expansion of the Whistle Bend subdivision new health facilities and new schools.

We've been talking about the schools on the floor of the Legislature today and over the last couple of days. The new school in Whistle Bend will be the first elementary school the territory has built in more than 20 years. It's something that has been put on the backburner. We are bringing it to a boil.

Mr. Acting Speaker, \$523 million — these are big numbers — will be spent over five years for community and First Nation infrastructure. This includes clean water infrastructure, it includes new RCMP detachments, a new arena for Carmacks, and the Whitehorse air tanker base that my colleague the Minister of Community Services has been advocating for. It is an important piece of infrastructure for the territory, especially in the face of the climate crisis we face.

We're seeing forests up and down the western seaboard and around the world and in Australia burning — sometimes uncontrollably — and having new facilities and the proper equipment — a tanker base — to actually help with our efforts to fight fires in our boreal forest is essential.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we will spend \$246 million over the next five years for real property and asset management, including upgrades to government buildings and maintenance for campgrounds and historic sites. We will be spending \$558 million over the next five years for transportation infrastructure, road maintenance, and bridge replacement and refurbishment. Extensive federal funding has been leveraged to further develop the Yukon Resource Gateway program and the north Klondike Highway reconstruction. The Yukon Resource Gateway program — we have been working with our federal counterparts, and we have now managed to strike some really progressive deals with the Ross River Dena Council, the Liard First Nation, and the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. We will be —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Quorum count

Acting Speaker (Mr. Adel): Order. Member for Kluane.

Mr. Istchenko: I would like to call quorum.

Acting Speaker: According to Standing Order 3(2), "If, at any time during a sitting of the Assembly, the Speaker's attention is drawn to the fact that there does not appear to be a quorum, the Speaker shall cause the bells to ring for four minutes and then do a count."

Bells

Acting Speaker: Mr. Clerk, will you please count the House.

Clerk: There are 14 members present.

Acting Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. We appear to have quorum.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I believe, just moments ago, I was talking about the Yukon Resource Gateway program and the north Klondike Highway. Again, we worked very hard to

improve our transportation infrastructure and to work with our federal partners to improve our territory's transportation infrastructure. One of the benefits of the work that we have been doing as a government — with my colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, and my colleague from Community Services and indeed the Premier and others — is to land one of the largest, single capital projects in Yukon history, the reconstruction of the north Klondike Highway.

When I was up in Dawson City in 2017 and meeting with residents up there, some of the businesses and miners there mentioned the weight restrictions on the north Klondike Highway and how frustrating it was for them to cope with the soft roadbeds in the spring when the snow had melted, and they had to bring less freight north at a time when they really did need to supply their town.

We worked very hard with our federal counterparts to come up with a solution for this and, through the northern transportation fund, managed to secure \$130-odd million from the federal government, which we are matching with some money of our own, to rebuild that highway. For anybody who has driven it at any time over the last 20 years, it has been, I would say, woefully neglected. We recognized that lack of funding on that fairly busy road.

So, working with Ottawa, we managed to secure some money that, over the next eight years, will rebuild the roadbed, widen the road, and reduce — it won't eliminate, unfortunately, but it will reduce and change the weight restrictions on that road to allow heavier loads to make it to the Klondike when they are needed in the spring.

We are also spending \$157 million over five years for information technology, including the Dempster fibre line and IT upgrades in Yukon schools. Again, another area of woeful neglect. When we came into office, we inherited a government living and working in the 21st century and operating with tools that were last used in the 19th century. We're talking about filing cabinets and paper — which is great, Mr. Acting Speaker — I have nothing against paper. I have a long history with it, but really today, if you're going to be making evidence-based decisions with data, you need a modern government that can actually get at the data that it has. We didn't have that capability and it has been a long process in changing the way that we obtain and disseminate information within the government.

We're not 100-percent there yet, but we're on the road and we're making those investments, and the \$157 million that is indicated in our five-year capital plan for information and technology will go some way toward improving the information that Yukoners have at their fingertips. We're talking about YuDriv — being able to register your vehicles online. We're talking about having a Yukon ID so that you don't have to walk around to 14 different locations around town to change your address when you move. You will be able to do it online. You will be able to get camping permits and other things through an online presence and be able to manage your personal data in a way that matters to Yukoners — very, very important. Part of this whole *Fiscal and Economic Outlook* that we're talking about this afternoon — because this information

is contained in this document, and it is very important for Yukoners.

We are uniquely positioned and well-positioned to weather this global economic downturn that we seem to be on the cusp of — although, as I've noted earlier, this is very new information. We are seeing the signs, but really, the price war between Russia and the Saudi government has just been — it's literally less than a week old.

We're seeing trends in the stock market that are days old and they come after record times in the stock market. We don't know where this is going to land, but we know that, with the global health crisis — the pandemic which is now five hours old — that we are going to be facing some challenges.

As a territory, I think it is incumbent on us to remain calm and to do our utmost to safeguard our fellow citizens, our families, and the elders in our communities. That's a personal responsibility we must do. We must keep our heads about us and not let fear guide our actions but reason, common sense, and calm. Safeguard ourselves; safeguard our families; safeguard our elders. Use the evidence we have around us and the measures we have: handwashing, keeping personal space, being considerate of others and actually staying home from work when we exhibit signs of the flu, and getting tested.

The Yukon government has enough testing equipment to actually test the citizens of the territory. We're confident we can do that. The Health minister has her team — the medical officer of health — working with the Hospital Corporation so that we have good measures in place to deal with the crisis that is on our doorstep. We will, as Yukoners, handle this with guts, courage, and aplomb.

With that, I'm going to wrap up my remarks this afternoon. Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to address the issue on the floor of the Legislature.

Mr. Istchenko: I'm pleased to rise to speak to this motion that was brought forward by my colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge. I'm going to read the motion in full and then I'm going to read it at the end for the benefit of the Minister of Highways and Public Works. I don't think he read it.

It says: "THAT this House urges the Minister of Finance to revise the fiscal and economic outlook tabled as part of the 2020-21 main budget estimates to reflect recent world events including the global spread of COVID-19 coronavirus, travel advisories, and stock market volatility prior to the end of the 2020 Spring Sitting."

What I would like to talk about a little bit here is — we have asked a number of questions related to the global spread of COVID-19 to this government. We have spoken about how this global spread has affected us here in the Yukon to date and asked questions about how this government is prepared to handle efforts when it comes to tourism, when it comes to the economy, and when it comes to personal finances for all Yukoners. We just have to look worldwide to see what other jurisdictions are doing to help.

I want to specifically focus on the tourism aspect in my riding. I am actively working right now on the health-related portion of this in my riding with the local First Nations and

municipalities, but I want to focus on the tourism aspect. I have been contacted by many businesses throughout my riding. As soon as the Italian government quarantined everyone there, there was a local business owner that had multiple bookings cancelled. As soon as that happened, other bookings cancelled. The real concerns were travel and numbers in the community — whether hotels or tour bookings. For some of our major events, a lot of members on both sides of the House travel back and forth to Haines, Alaska. They go to Beer Fest and they come over for the bluegrass festival. If that stuff isn't happening, there is going to be a huge hit to the economy. It is funny across the way; on this side, it's serious.

We heard in QP today that US visitors make up 70 percent of total visitor traffic to the Yukon. Of course, the majority of these visitors flow through the territory on our highway system. My riding and other ridings exist along the portion of two of these major highways. Tourists heading west to Alaska travel through each of the communities in my riding, providing a majority of the revenue to business. It is that local traffic — the traffic that we spoke about earlier today.

The Alaska marine ferry system is also a pivotal port of entry to the Yukon. We have yet to hear what might transpire in terms of border control should the effects of this global spread worsen. This is a global issue. We have to be prepared. We need to revise the fiscal and economic outlook to better portray the current prospective economic situation.

I am going to read the motion again for the Minister of Highways and Public Works. It is:

“THAT this House urges the Minister of Finance to revise the fiscal and economic outlook tabled as part of the 2020-21 main budget estimates to reflect recent world events including the global spread of coronavirus COVID-19 coronavirus, travel advisories, and stock market volatility prior to the end of the 2020 Spring Sitting.”

I'll highlight this portion here that says, “... revise the fiscal and economic outlook...”

The Minister of Highways and Public Works just gave us, I guess, another version of his Speech from the Throne on how great this budget is. That's great — you have to budget. They budgeted, but where in the budget does it talk about a world issue? Nowhere.

In talking about some of your budget items like large projects, highway projects or schools or upgrades to things in schools — we need that. Absolutely we do, but we also need to take this event seriously, and we might have to tweak some of those budgets to help Yukoners — help those Yukon businesses that are worried.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'm very happy to rise today to speak to Motion No. 191, and I appreciate the motion here on private members' day for the opposition. I'm very proud of this government's work in tabling a balanced budget, and I am always grateful for an opportunity to discuss the fiscal and economic outlook.

The 2020-21 fiscal and economic outlook explores expectations for Yukon's finances and the economy. The Yukon finances remain on track to return to a surplus position

in this year of 2020-21, which, again, is a year ahead of schedule, followed by further surpluses in the following years.

Our Liberal government must ensure long-term financial responsibility and sustainability to keep paying for the services and programs that Yukoners depend on. It is absolutely essential to maximize every tax dollar from every source and to work with other governments and the private sector to keep building a stronger future for all Yukoners.

This careful consideration and responsible approach is very crucial to Yukon's success. I do have some questions for the member opposite, and I'm sure he'll be able to respond to them in his final summation, but I do want to reflect on economic preparedness when it comes to other diseases and other situations that we have seen historically. While there may be an impact of the coronavirus on Yukon, however, it is very much too early to determine the nature, the magnitude, and the duration of this impact. Past experiences from previous epidemics, such as SARS or H1N1, indicate that much of the economic activity impacted by these epidemics, such as consumer prices, is deferred and not cancelled.

Consequently, in response to these epidemics, most economists revise their forecasts to a short-term reduction of GDP growth rates, followed by higher GDP growth rates when epidemics are contained. It is extremely important to make that prevalent, Mr. Acting Speaker. Some of the comments from the opposition, talking about not being prepared — completely not true. This government is prepared for the current situation, and we are planning for the future conditions as well.

“Keep calm” is what I heard from the members opposite. That is great to hear, because that is exactly what we are doing. We are showing leadership by working nationally, working with other governments here in Yukon, and working with the medical office. It makes it seem as if the opposition thinks we are somehow using the chief medical officer of health in a poor way or in an inappropriate way. Again, as the chief medical officer of health — I would assume that we would probably want to use that advice to guide our decisions when it comes to things like coronavirus, and that is exactly what we are doing. We are taking leadership for our decisions that we make based upon the best medical advice that anybody can get right across this country — dare I say internationally — with either our acting chief medical officer or our resident chief medical officer. I want to thank both of them for their time over the last — my goodness — few weeks for their time in their positions as well.

Again, the health and safety of Yukoners is absolutely a priority.

The Member for Lake Laberge has asked that we quickly revise the fiscal and economic outlook to reflect the effects of COVID-19. As I mentioned, the effects of this virus are unfolding daily. I want to assure Yukoners that our government is monitoring this situation extremely closely, working very hard, whole-of-government, taking the necessary precautions and working with our partners to respond, as required.

I want to be very clear: Yukon's medical system has been and remains well prepared to manage suspected cases of COVID-19 that may arise in the Yukon. The risk of COVID-19

remains low in Yukon, and there are currently no cases of COVID-19 in the territory. The health and safety of Yukoners is absolutely our top priority, and we are approaching the situation with an abundance of caution.

Our government is working closely with our partners inside and outside of the territory to ensure that we are prepared to deal with any suspected cases of the coronavirus in Yukon. The federal government just announced several measures and financial commitments this morning. Members opposite are not mentioning that — as if it didn't happen and as if it doesn't affect the overall economy and health of our communities.

So, we want to make sure that Yukoners hear the results of the announcement today from the federal government, including the \$500 million to provinces and territories for critical health care system needs to support mitigation as needed — I think that's extremely important — and doubling the length of time that employers and workers are eligible to use work-sharing programs and streamlining processes so that they can be accessed as soon as possible to help support employers and their workers experiencing a downturn in business due to COVID-19, and work-sharing programs helping to keep workers employed and able to receive income supports when their hours of work may be reduced.

As I mentioned earlier today as well, possible future support for businesses will be provided should the economy experience tightening credit conditions. The government will strengthen investment in Canada in the federal lending agencies, such as the Business Development Bank of Canada and Export Development Canada.

In addition, flexible agreement arrangements could be made for businesses trying to meet payment obligations to the Canada Revenue Agency — all extremely important as we look toward supporting the private sector here in Yukon.

Also, there is the amount of money — I think \$100 million — for ongoing support for enhancing surveillance, increased testing at the national microbiology lab, and preparedness in First Nation and Inuit communities, on top of: an additional \$50 million that was provided to support the immediate public health response; \$275 million in additional funding for research and development, on top of \$27 million that was previously announced; \$50 million to the Public Health Agency of Canada to ensure adequate supplies of personal protective equipment for provinces and territories to address federal needs; and \$50 million to support the efforts of the World Health Organization and other partners.

Those are among some of the announcements that were made today by the federal government in light of this situation.

Again, I do want to thank the office of the chief medical officer of health and their teams for all of their work. They continue to ensure that Yukon is well prepared to manage this situation as it develops.

Again — getting back to the fiscal and economic outlook — it is developed by analyzing information that we have and making careful predictions. We recognize that this is work that is always ongoing. The next outlook will be released this fall, at which time even more detailed information about the impacts of COVID-19 will be available as well.

Outlooks are a snapshot in time as an assessment of current and anticipated circumstances. We could release one every week, but we are not going to do that. It is interesting that the members opposite are suggesting that our government quickly update the outlook and release a new one in short order given that, with the Yukon Party, when they were in government, such documents were very few and very far between. Sometimes, the Yukon Party government would release an outlook — often not — and Yukoners could not rely on the Yukon Party for regular, reliable information. Interestingly, in that context, during that time in the last five years when I was in opposition, we saw Wolverine leaving the Yukon, which had a massive effect on the GDP, but we didn't see an outlook come out of that. I do remember travelling up to the Yukon and floods happened. Major highways were cut off because of flooding down in southern provinces. I don't remember a quick fiscal and economic outlook update due to those types of situations in the past. It's interesting now as we speculate on maybe some more work happening in future — we don't know how big this is going to get or if it will get any bigger, yet we want to see this as a new outlook today.

The Official Opposition recently criticized our budget for being too large. Now they are arguing that we should find additional funds to combat a situation that has not been fully understood.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am hearing from the opposition that they didn't say that, but they should really listen to their members on the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

We have heard no specifics whatsoever from the Yukon Party other than some hand-wringing on this particular situation. I will give the Third Party some credit. They have provided concrete examples of what they would like to see in response to the COVID-19 situation. We have also received criticism from the Official Opposition regarding the number of our FTEs in government. Is the member opposite proposing that we grow government to accommodate regular updates to our fiscal and economic outlook document or spend unnecessary time and taxpayers' dollars on updating this substantial document more often than necessary?

In uncertain times, it is always good to put money back in people's pockets. That is exactly what we are doing with the cut to the small business tax. I just tabled that bill today. That will help stimulate Yukon's economy by reducing taxes in the Yukon by \$2 million a year to small businesses.

Following estimated growth of one percent in 2019, real GDP is expected to grow by 6.2 percent in 2020, with a substantial increase in mineral production and a higher level of public sector capital spending supporting much of the growth. Further growth is expected beyond 2020 with annual growth forecasts to average 3.3 percent out to 2024.

This is the opposite of what we did see under the Yukon Party government, when Yukon's GDP dropped significantly. Surely, the members opposite will remember this, because it wasn't that long ago. Again, we on this side of the Legislature believe that tabling our budget with a surplus a year in advance definitely helps to stimulate the economy. Getting out the door

a record number of capital projects this year is also working to stimulate the economy, reducing income tax to Yukoners by \$3 million a year, adding on to that the already \$7 million of income tax savings from the federal government's mirrored reductions — that's \$10 million less in taxes that, as of now, Yukoners will not be burdened with — so again, balancing budgets, reducing the number of FTEs, increasing incentives through the business investment tax credit to help businesses, like Air North — we believe this budget and the fiscal outlook that came with it shows that the Yukon, other than certain provinces, has a strong economy, which is one of the things that is the envy of other jurisdictions when it comes to how we deal with emerging issues, such as COVID-19.

With that being said, we appreciate the opportunity today to talk about our fiscal and economic outlook, and I look forward to more debate on this motion on the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

Ms. Van Bibber: As I mentioned yesterday, we are in interesting times. As opposition MLAs — as mentioned by my colleague from Whitehorse Centre — it is our job to hold the government to account and question their budget statements and dollar allocations.

It has been difficult to get answers to simple questions, and I believe, in the last few days, along with colleagues on this side, that I have made the point that it is very difficult to find how dollars are spent and exactly where those dollars are being spent.

The line items specifying exactly how a block of dollars is broken down is impossible to access, and we are basically being told not to worry, that every minister is on top of their departments, and the Liberals are open and transparent. For us, it is difficult to see if we are in better shape, because we can't follow the money.

As daily concerns of normal issues continue in various communities, the new global pandemic that has been claiming lives causes much angst. For many, it is not the health issue that is concerning — and we definitely are not in panic mode on this side — but it is the financial and economic impact on businesses and Yukoners' livelihoods. This is not bizarre at all.

We understand that it is a fluid situation, and we understand things are changing daily. We also understand that the travel advisories and tourism issues will affect our territory, and some of the issues might be totally out of our hands, but our summer tourism industry is vibrant, and we have a growing winter tourism industry as well. Our territory should be preparing for the possibility of a major hit to the industry due to the global spread of COVID-19.

We have less than a few months to consider the impacts that our economy will suffer. Today, I understand the Premier is heading to the First Ministers' meeting —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Ms. Van Bibber: Oh, he's not? I was just updated. Apparently, he is not — but the premiers who will be there will discuss next steps and each of their respective plans for the regions of Canada. We see a billion dollars of financial aid package announced by the Prime Minister and the federal

Finance minister this morning, but we are unsure how many dollars are slotted for Yukon.

Their budget is to be given by month's end so they can react quickly. This motion asks for change prior to the end of the 2020 Spring Sitting. The stock market fears, the travel advisories, and the COVID-19 uncertainty — we are not immune, and it is anything but what the minister referred to as "business as usual".

The idea that we buy local, eat out more, and participate in local events are all good ideas, and we are all for this. But, in the short term, it will not replace the influx of visitors, along with employment, purchasing, and sales that we usually expect.

We have heard of many cancellations already, and I am sure that there will be more coming as we get closer to travel dates. Once a risk assessment is done on large gatherings, we will see the impact of that as well.

When the chief medical officer of Canada recommends that Canadians avoid cruise ship travel, that says it all. I have heard that the Americans — who are our largest percentage of cruise travellers — will also be having second and third thoughts of getting on large crowded ships.

Yes, capital projects are also good for the economy, but that doesn't assist those in the hospitality and tourism industry with the immediate fallout of all travel warnings.

I would also like to thank the acting chief medical officer for her briefing this morning and her assurances, but I hope that you can support this motion brought forward by the Member for Lake Laberge and ensure that a valid plan is done and readjust the budget estimates to help our economy when it will be hit hardest this summer.

Mr. Kent: Initially, I wasn't going to speak today to this motion, but I just wanted to add a few brief comments. Hopefully, it is taken in the spirit of collaboration and cooperation, which, I believe, is why we put this motion forward.

Of course, members will remember a couple of days ago when we put forward a motion for urgent debate. I thank members again for allowing us to have that debate. We made an offer of an all-party committee to study some of the economic impacts, and as is their right, the government used their majority and voted against that motion to set that up.

The Premier assured everyone that everything was under control, but when you look at what is happening in the world today, I would suggest that, from an economic standpoint, everything is anything but under control.

We certainly agree with members opposite and we are pleased that Yukon is a jurisdiction that doesn't have any current cases of COVID-19. That is a good thing. We want to make sure that the questions that we ask in Question Period and questions that we ask of the chief medical officer of health are designed to ensure that we are prepared and that plans are in place on the medical side to deal with what is happening. But when it comes to the economic side, those impacts are being felt here in the Yukon.

Obviously, as we mentioned yesterday — when we rescinded our motion to adjourn for next week, that was done

because the Arctic Winter Games were cancelled. At the time, we recognized that this was done for the health and safety of those involved with the games. It was done based on medical advice. We can appreciate that, but of course there are some economic pieces to pick up from that. That work has started.

What I think we would like to see is some work done to the fiscal and economic outlook to take into account what is going to be happening here over the summer — over the next number of months. The Premier and his colleagues have said that there will be another fiscal and economic update in the fall. For some businesses, that is going to be too late. They are not going to be able to adjust their marketing; they are not going to be able to adjust their client bases; they are not going to be able to look at things in a six-month cycle. For some of the businesses that operate here, those summer months are when they make their money. That is the time when they are able to make money. They rely on not just the government, but they rely on a number of agencies for information with respect to what the economy is going to look like — if it's a tourism business, what the visitor numbers are going to look like and where those visitors are coming from.

I would be interested in the work of the Minister of Economic Development and the Minister of Tourism — whether they have reached out to the motorhome rental companies to see what their summer bookings are looking like. Have they been cancelled? Are they seeing a downturn? What about the rental car companies? Are they seeing similar? What about hotels for bookings going on into the summer? Are they seeing cancellations with respect to their summer travel? That would give them a better understanding — perhaps adjusting some of their marketing to our gateway cities like Calgary, Edmonton, and Vancouver, as well as Kelowna and Victoria and some of the other places that Air North, Yukon's airline, is bringing in tourists from on a daily basis.

I think having the economists in the Department of Finance revise this document would give us a better understanding. As I've mentioned, when you look at the tourism aspects, it mentions that border crossings were approximately 500,000 in 2019 and US visitation historically accounts for 70 percent of Yukon's annual international border crossings. Several factors boded well for US visitation to Yukon going forward. Obviously, we know that's no longer the case. There are factors that are working against US visitation, especially as my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, mentioned with respect to the cruise industry and what the impacts of that would be.

So, having an updated tourism sector piece for this economic outlook would be helpful to all those who work in that industry and depend on significant summer tourism. Maybe this gives us a chance, as well, to redirect some of our winter tourism marketing ideas and opportunities to different markets as well if this were updated and we as members were provided with different updated information and updated outlooks when it comes to this.

When it comes to effects on the mining industry — and the motion I think was structured so that it just didn't talk about the effects of COVID-19. Obviously, we've seen some changes in

the stock markets. For many of the companies active up here, they rely on those markets to get funding to either advance their projects through exploration or into permitting and into development.

About 20 minutes ago or so, I just pulled up some of the stock market numbers for today alone. So, the Dow Jones is down 1,465 points for the day. The Toronto Stock Exchange is off 688 points. The Canadian dollar is now at around 72.60 cents US.

So, the price of gold and precious metals — obviously, those sometimes go the other way when there is a global economic crisis, and we have gold sitting at \$1,640 US — \$1,637.52 US — and that's down on the day. Silver is sitting at \$16.79. So, those are two precious metals. We have a number of companies that are involved in the precious metals side of things. Perhaps, with an economic update, we would see some additional opportunities for projects that are either primarily gold or primarily silver, given what's happening in the markets. Again, they have to raise money from those markets.

When you look at 60-day charts on kitco.com for copper, for instance — these are the base metals. These are the ones that some of the bigger economies, like China, are using. Over the last 60 days, copper has dropped from \$2.82 to \$2.50; zinc had dropped from about \$1.10 to \$0.90; and lead has dropped from \$0.90 to \$0.85. Again, those are the base metals that we have an endowment of here in the Yukon Territory. Some of these projects would be suffering, so it would be nice to get a sense of what these revised prices — of what we're seeing here as a result of some of the more recent economic challenges and what it might mean for the mining sector.

When you look at Appendix A of this report — the key economic indicators — it talks about copper at — this is the forecast for 2020 — at \$2.76 — but as I mentioned, it's trading today at \$2.50; zinc at \$1.09; it's trading down from that at \$0.90. It talks about oil — US per barrel at \$58.39. We all know what has happened as a result of COVID-19 and the production war — I guess, for lack of a better term — between Russia and Saudi Arabia and the OPEC countries with respect to oil, so it's way off that \$58.39 number.

Again, I recognize that this document would have been prepared prior to the tabling last Thursday, but our first look at it was last Thursday, so obviously things are changing rapidly, and it would be good to get an update within what we think is a reasonable amount of time — two months. It would be into April, but it would allow for businesses in the mining and tourism sector to adjust what they're doing, if they need to adjust, based on some of these challenges. We would perhaps get a better sense from the economists of where the tourism industry was heading this summer — because as we've talked about, that's going to see significant impacts.

Retail sales, as forecasted for 2020 in this document, are looking to be \$910 million, up from \$870 million in 2019. Does that number still hold? That would be interesting for us to know — but not just us — it would be interesting for those who are involved in the retail business to know so that they can get a sense of what this season and what this year will bear out for them.

I know that the Premier talked about the federal announcements this morning and he reiterated what those announcements are. Obviously, we are appreciative — I understand that there will not be a territorial ask on the \$500 million. The MLA for Takhini-Kopper King and I found that out during the media scrum after Question Period today. There is not an ask from the Yukon. Apparently, we have enough supplies, according to the Minister of Health and Social Services — so that part is good, but what are the effects going to be of the other announcements that the Prime Minister made today? So, if that billion-dollar package could somehow be reflected here — because we talk about the labour market; we talk about a number of things in this economic and fiscal update that are important.

Wholesale sales — again, another indicator — we would like to get a sense from the government economists on what we can expect with respect to wholesale sales this summer. There are so many aspects in this document that would be helpful for Yukoners and Yukon businesses before the summer tourism season, before the substantive exploration season starts in the mining industry, and before what we hope to have of a cruise industry season, with many visitors coming up to Alaska and then inland tours to the Yukon from those cruise ships.

It doesn't sound to me like the government is going to task officials with providing an update on these numbers. It is not a total revision that is needed; it is targeted updates that are needed with respect to what is happening on the economic and fiscal side. Again, it is disappointing, but not surprising — I guess that was the word I used the other day — when the government voted against allowing all members of the Legislature to participate in a review of the economic situation in the Yukon, because all of us bring different backgrounds and different perspectives.

Feeding those in through a caucus representative would, I think, have been a good way to supplement the work that the private sector is doing and the work that the government officials are doing to cushion the blow from what is going to happen. Again, it sounds like another proposal in which we have to exhibit some non-partisanship here in the House and work together will be defeated here today. Again, as I said, I am disappointed but not surprised by the government response to this.

Like all Yukoners, I hope that we will weather this storm. Well, I don't hope; I know that we will be able to weather this storm and come out of it on the other side. It's just that it would have been nice to update what is in front of us and get a better sense for what the economy is going to look like here in the short term so that Yukon businesses can be informed in the decisions that they make. Again, it doesn't look like this will pass today either, so, with that, I will take my seat and thank members of the House for listening to me this afternoon.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard on Motion No. 191?

Mr. Cathers: While we are not overly surprised by the dismissive attitude of the Premier on this issue, it is disappointing.

For the Premier to state, as I believe he did during his remarks, that it is too early to see the impact or to take action, he is failing to understand the lessons that have been learned from other situations involving a virus, including the SARS outbreak in Ontario. There was excellent work done across the country by the federal government, provinces, and territories working together in the wake of SARS and when the H1N1 flu was thought to become a pandemic. The work that was done and the work that was refreshed had some excellent lessons in it that the government is failing to recognize and failing to act on. That includes the importance of communicating with all levels of government, communicating internally, and working together with not only government partners but the private sector and providing information as well to citizens so that there is a coordinated, integrated response to mitigate both the health and economic impacts of the potential outbreak of a virus.

So, since we are now at the stage that COVID-19 has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization — and we've seen the advisories from medical officers of health recommending against travelling on cruise ships, and the chief medical officer of health in Alberta just advised everyone in the province over 65 to not travel outside of Canada — these are very unusual times, and they require a response.

The Premier flippantly dismissed the idea of revising the economic outlook, stating that they could release a new outlook every week. Then he made reference to times during the previous government and to his views on when fiscal and economic outlooks were issued and when they weren't, but doing that was really comparing apples to grapes. The situation that we're dealing with now is much larger than past economic disruptions.

We do not know the worldwide impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, but we know that it has already had a serious health effect and that the economic effects are already serious across the globe. The Yukon has already seen the economic impact, but our economic impact due to the cancellation of the Arctic Winter Games, while serious, in comparison to the effects being seen in some economies and in global markets is small, but we have not yet fully seen the economic impacts of COVID-19.

To be clear, as my colleagues and I have stated this afternoon — I would like to thank them for speaking as well on this — this is a situation that requires calm, thoughtful, and coordinated actions, but it is not the time for the government to sit on their hands and to fail to act on the economic issues and the health issues associated with this pandemic.

As I mentioned in my introductory speech, there are two major parts to the response to a pandemic of this type. One is the health response, and the second is the economic response.

Recognizing that medical health officers lead the public health response as I do, the government is failing to recognize in their comments that, while the chief medical officer of health may be the lead spokesperson, government is a very key and critical part of ensuring that the health system is able to respond

to a potential increase in known or suspected cases of a virus of this type being contracted.

The second part is the economic part, and government needs to take the lead on the economic aspects of the response to a pandemic. We are seeing a lack of leadership by the government and a very dismissive attitude by the Premier, suggesting that it's far too early to take action. This is after last week, with the Premier seeming to be blissfully unaware of the worldwide effects already being seen from what is now declared as a pandemic.

The Premier's budget speech and the fiscal and economic outlook suggested that times were good, growth in domestic product was going to be 6.2 percent, according to page 7 of the fiscal and economic outlook — the highest since 2016 — but by the time the Premier tabled that here in this Assembly, there was already substantial information available in the public domain that worldwide markets were seeing a very serious effect and downturn, that the stock market had already taken a hit, and, as you're aware, Mr. Speaker, quarantines had begun. Now, this week, we see that they've been expanded, in the case of Italy, to put an entire country effectively under quarantine and lockdown.

For the Minister of Tourism and Culture to suggest that it's business as usual and for the Premier to flippantly dismiss the idea of an economic outlook and try to suggest that this is just another minor bump in the road is failing to recognize the simple fact that this is now a pandemic, and there will be economic and health effects as a result. Early action and coordination in planning to mitigate those effects is an important part of government ensuring that they strike the right balance — that society strikes the right balance — because, as I noted in my introductory remarks, it's important to recognize, as we have seen from past outbreaks such as SARS, that there are consequences to overreacting, and there are consequences to failing to act decisively enough.

The best recipe for avoiding overreacting when a problem occurs is to be ready, to be prepared, and to be talking to all of the key partners, which include the business community and other levels of government. It includes, as well, ensuring that government employees are fully informed of what is going on as well as what steps may occur in their workplace regarding whether, at some point, there will be steps taken to have some work from home — especially those with weakened immune systems.

Government is really dismissing the need to do anything. We heard the Minister of Highways and Public Works — worse, the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission — suggest that this is really nothing to be concerned about — don't worry; they will update the fiscal and economic outlook in six months. Well, half a year from now will be after the tourism season. Based on what is occurring right now in the world, it looks like the downturn in the tourism market as a result of the decline in cruise ship travel and the decline in other people travelling may be the biggest or one of the biggest hits to the tourism sector in decades. Government needs to recognize that this is serious and that they need to work

thoughtfully with the business community to come up with solutions to that.

The Premier was tritely dismissing it and suggesting that this came down to a question of whether to spend more money or hire more employees, but other suggestions that I have heard from people in the tourism sector include suggestions such as potentially refocusing marketing funding for this year to be more focused on encouraging the Canadian and perhaps American market more than the overseas market. That may not be a view shared by everyone, but that is just one example of the kinds of ideas that may come from the tourism sector and from the business community. There are potential actions that government can do to lead the economic response of the territory to this pandemic. What we are seeing to date is a lack of leadership, a refusal to work with the Official Opposition and the Third Party in a collaborative manner as we proposed, and the government not doing its job in terms of the economic response to this.

We see a lack of leadership by the Premier and a lack of leadership by this government on the economic response to this pandemic and a dismissive attitude toward the very serious fact that the fiscal and economic outlook and the budget were completely out of step with what is going on in the world economy. The Premier's rosy predictions, made last Thursday, of a growing economy do not reflect what is occurring either in the Yukon or around the globe and are simply demonstrating a government that is badly out of touch with Yukoners and badly out of touch with reality.

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. Ms. Dendys: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Disagree.

Mr. Gallina: Disagree.

Mr. Adel: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

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

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

Motion No. 191 negatived

Speaker: Further motions other than government motions.

Motion No. 123

Clerk: Motion No. 123, standing in the name of Ms. White.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Leader of the Third Party:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide the Legislative Assembly details on when the following legislation will be enacted and accompanying regulations completed:

- (1) *Condominium Act, 2015*;
 - (2) *Pharmacy and Drug Act*;
 - (3) *Societies Act*;
 - (4) *Lobbyists Registration Act*;
 - (5) *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*;
- and
- (6) *Coroners Act*.

Ms. White: It's important to note that we tabled this motion in the last sitting and that the reason why it was tabled was that we are concerned about some critical pieces of legislation that were passed in this Assembly but remain idle and not enacted.

I am pleased to say that since this was tabled and since last fall, the *Pharmacy and Drug Act* can be taken off this list, so let's view that as a success. In the meantime, more needs to be done with the remaining legislation.

One of the reasons why this is such a big deal is that, when we talk about priorities and we talk about transparency, no one — well, that's not true. Most people in this Assembly would agree that when we passed the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* in 2012, it should have been enacted before January 1, 2016. Four years is a very long time to develop regulations. It was four years that people lived with uncertainty; it was four years that tenants had very few rights. I think that most of us in this House can agree that four years is too long for regulations to be enacted. This means that legislation that was much stronger than the previous legislation was not the law. Although that act was passed here in 2012, when people came to me, to my colleague, and to others, they couldn't look to the new legislation for help because that legislation was not yet in effect.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there are priorities within departments and we know that the creation of regulations, if needed, can happen in a timely manner. One only has to look at legislation that we have passed that has been enacted.

The example I will use is — I will look to the Minister of Community Services — even a piece as large as the *Cannabis Control and Regulation Act*. It was brought forward, debated and passed this House, and then it was fully enacted in a relatively short period of time. This is a shining light; it is a good example. I am not suggesting that the public servants hadn't been working hard on that legislation and the accompanying regulations long before we saw it in this Chamber. I imagine that they had been; it was huge. Maybe one

of the reasons why it was ready to go was that it had to meet the federal requirement.

I just want to point out that regulations can be developed in a timely manner when given the resources and maybe when given that priority. The acts that are included in this motion are all important. They are important to the citizens of Yukon, they are important to the public service in performing their jobs, and they are important to organizations often providing important services and supports for Yukoners that aren't provided by government.

Mr. Speaker, the *Condominium Act, 2015* was assented to in this Chamber in 2015. That was a separate government. Here we are in 2020. There have been many consultations. As a matter of fact, the Clerk, at one point in time, was at one of those consultations in a previous life.

So, reports have been produced, but as of yet, no regulations have been put in place so that this piece of legislation can do the work that it was designed to do to protect both condominium owners and the boards that operate them.

So, this is from the government's own website. This is touting the success of what the *Condominium Act, 2015* would do. It says that the new act would ensure the efficient development of land and housing in Yukon, introduce modern consumer protection provisions, and provide modern governance provisions for condominium corporations. That all sounds great — this new act that we passed in this House in 2015. To be fair, some of us passed it in 2015. I was part of passing it in 2015, because a lot of the issues that were being addressed were things that I had brought forward as concerns with condominium owners.

So, since this legislation was passed, we have seen an explosion in the numbers of condominiums, not just the multi-storey buildings going up but row houses, duplexes — duplexes, under the old law, can still be considered condominiums whereas duplexes in the new law would not be considered condominiums, so that is an important point to point out — and the conversion of apartments to condominiums. I can tell you that, in my neighbourhood in Takhini north, some of the newer duplexes that were built are indeed condominiums. I can tell you how challenging that is for one side of that duplex when they are looking for house insurance, because they can't get house insurance unless their neighbour also pays at the same time, and that would be addressed under the new condominium act that was passed in this House in 2015.

Here we are in 2020 — different government, no regulations. Across the country, we are seeing impacts of huge increases in the condo strata insurance and home insurance for condo owners. It is interesting, because I think that unfortunately the Yukon is going to get wrapped up in what we see in other jurisdictions. In Vancouver, there are buildings that are 50 storeys tall with hundreds, if not thousands, of units within them that are condominiums. So, if there is a water issue at the top of that building that then goes down floors and floors and floors, of course it is going to be expensive. Unfortunately, the condominium owners here and the condo boards here are being wrapped up in that same basket. We are seeing insurance rates here skyrocket.

So, condo strata boards have been waiting because they were consulted. We even saw a “what we heard” document, but we are still now waiting on the regulations. So, from that document, Yukoners want to see legislation that provides clear guidance and accountability to developers and unit owners — it is true; it walks through it all — and legislation that provides clear guidance to condominium corporations on how condominiums should be created and managed.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is important legislation and the regulations that should be developed will both support and protect Yukoners’ largest investment, and that would be that of their home.

So, I ask: When will this be enacted? When will the *Condominium Act, 2015* that was passed in this Assembly in 2015 become law? Because there are really good questions, and there are really good things in the one that was put forward in 2015 — for example, being able to build with certainty, because money was put down and it had timelines for when that money could be retracted.

What about the *Societies Act* amendments that were passed in 2018? This is this Assembly. This is within the 34th Legislative Assembly. So, the *Societies Act* is an important piece of legislation and the amendments were there to make it clearer to the over 800 individual societies from across the Yukon. They are big; they are small; they are all sorts.

In October 2018, the minister introduced the bill by saying — and I’m quoting here: “This bill will provide major improvements in governance and operational framework, making it clearer for societies. It supports this government’s priorities to reduce red tape and to enhance the availability of online services.”

Agreed — I agree. It sounds great, and we saw what happens when legislation or regulations are not clear, when they are outdated and, frankly, not easy for societies to understand or for volunteers of those societies to understand. We saw the back and forth when *Many Rivers* was in the headlines and the confusion over who was responsible or what needed to happen according to the *Societies Act*.

So, with over 800 individual societies in this territory, from the very small organizations that involve less than a dozen individuals to very large ones, this legislation and these changes, and the accompanying regulations, are critical, but they are not done yet.

So, then, this one is a pet favourite of ours here in the Yukon NDP, and that would be the *Lobbyists Registration Act*. This act passed this House in 2018. We, the Yukon NDP, were pleased to see the passage of this piece of legislation. This is near and dear to our hearts.

A previous Premier in this Assembly told us that, you know, we couldn’t pass lobbying legislation because how could you have a conversation with the cashier at Superstore, because would you be lobbying, and how would you go about that? So, we were so pleased when this came forward.

So, I would remind those here — and especially those who weren’t here — that the Yukon NDP introduced a lobbyist bill in the 33rd Legislative Assembly because we believed it was so important. We’ve also tabled motions, and we debated the need

for a lobbyist legislation more than once. As you can imagine, during the 33rd, we were not successful. We were told: How would you register the cashier at Superstore if we had a lobbyist registry?

Lobbyist legislation pertains to all here, and it’s how we work to achieve open and accountable government. When we had this debate, we had good points on all sides, so we were pleased to see this pass. We were the first territory in Canada to pass lobbying legislation. Canada has had lobbying legislation for over 30 years, and at least five provinces have put lobbying legislation in place.

During the second reading of this bill on November 1, 2018, the Premier is on record as saying — and I quote: “We committed to creating a public disclosure lobbyist registry over the course of the last election...” — and he goes on to say — “... we are aiming to improve transparency regarding who has access to decision-makers by requiring lobbyists to identify themselves. It is every Yukoner’s right to know who is lobbying public officials in an attempt to influence the decisions that are made by government.”

I agree — absolutely. Lobbyist registration is critical. I believe it was last fall when we were debating the tobacco and vaping legislation that I pointed out in this Assembly that I had been lobbied by a vaping company, and I imagine others here were as well. I’m not sure how they targeted certain e-mails, but I can tell you that I got e-mails from a lobbyist saying that we shouldn’t be talking about flavoured tobacco products, because that wasn’t the problem — that it was a cessation tool.

I mentioned here that I wished the lobbyist registry was open, because I could ask them to register, and then I could say that I had been emailed, and instead, I just said it here.

This is important. Since 2018, we have asked about it, but we haven’t heard about when those regulations will come in place and when this act will become reality. It’s one thing to talk, but we want to know when we don’t have to talk about it anymore, because this government has done the walk of getting these regulations in place.

That brings me to the *Coroners Act* from 2018, passed here in this House. The *Coroners Act* — and this is also a pet project of the NDP, because we brought it forward in the 33rd Legislative Assembly. Again, it didn’t go far, but here we are — it was a new government, and that’s fantastic. There was a willingness. We thanked the Minister of Justice for that. So, the *Coroners Act* that is currently still in place, despite the one that we passed here in 2018, is old, it’s dated, and it’s very narrow in what directions and permissions it gives.

On October 16, 2018, the Minister of Justice spoke to the bill in second reading by saying — and I quote: “We have looked for the best possible result for Yukoners to make what is such an important service for all of us respectful of Yukoners’ wishes, and developed the legislation to protect them and serve Yukon citizens and Yukoners across the territory.”

Mr. Speaker, I agree. I agree that the *Coroners Act* is vital to families and to communities. It is through the *Coroners Act* that the chief coroner is able to make recommendations in coroner reports or recommendations made from an inquest.

These are important to the safety and protection of Yukoners. The chief coroner and all the coroners throughout the Yukon will have this document as a guiding document for doing their work; but instead, currently, they are following a piece of legislation from the 1950s. Where are the regulations? When are we going to make this law? I can't wait until the *Coroners Act* is law — 2018.

Then we have the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Mr. Speaker, here is a piece of legislation that impacts every person in the Yukon. It's about protecting our personal information and about us having the ability to access the information about ourselves that exists within Yukon government. This act has been amended more than once, and yet the regulations have not kept up. The Information and Privacy Commissioner has appeared as a witness in this Assembly. That same Information and Privacy Commissioner has made recommendations to the government of the day on changes, improvements, and ways to make this legislation work better. If a person was to go look at what has yet to be enacted, the list continues to be long.

Mr. Speaker, this motion speaks to six pieces of legislation that were passed in this Assembly during our time here — this current Assembly. Well, that's not true — I read the notes — but it doesn't matter, because Yukon government is Yukon government and here we are, the Yukon government. So, it has passed in this Assembly. I have been involved and my colleagues have been involved, some more willingly than others. The point is that the Yukon government has passed these laws, but until we have the regulations, they are not law.

To be clear, this is not a criticism of the public servants. This is not a criticism of public servants, as they work very, very hard. They work incredibly hard. But this is about ministerial accountability. Ministers are responsible for these acts and this legislation. It's about setting the priorities.

This is just information. We talk about transparency and we talk about sharing information, and this is what it is. We're looking for information. When will these pieces of legislation be enacted? When will the regulations be created so that these laws, which are really important to Yukoners, become law?

It's really important to note that none of these acts are trivial housekeeping. These pieces of legislation are all important. They are here to protect the privacy of Yukoners; they are here to provide guidance to the over 800 societies across Yukon — again, many which play critical roles in providing services to Yukoners that are not provided by government. These pieces of legislation are here to ensure that government and all members of this Legislative Assembly are open and accountable in their dealings with lobbyists. They are here to ensure that families have answers on the death of a family member or friend, and they are here to ensure that Yukoners' largest investment — their home — is protected and that the strata or board that represents them is able to operate and protect those homes.

We on this side of the House have a job to do on behalf of Yukoners. We have said it before: We are here to hold this government to account in all they do. This government — as I said, I'm an expert in the opposition — and the previous

government — who knows what will happen after the next election — but our job as opposition members is to hold the government to account.

When we see legislation sitting on the books that has not become law because the regulations are not done or they haven't been amended, it is our job to ask why. It is our job to ask when Yukoners will see important legislation that affects them come into force.

We look forward to the updates from the ministers who are responsible for those pieces of legislation because, really, all we want to know is when. When will we see these regulations, and when will these pieces of legislation that have passed this House become enacted?

With that, I look forward to the information that I hope will be shared from the ministers across the way.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Introduction of visitors outside of the time usually provided for introduction.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'm wondering if we could please welcome to the Legislature today Mr. Ken de la Barre, who is a lovely fellow. He has many claims to fame, but one I'll just acknowledge here today is as past author in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. If we could just welcome him, please.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: There are many things noted by the mover of this motion today that I agree with. That won't surprise anybody. We've talked about this before.

I am really pleased to rise today to speak to the motion. It will be a bit unusual because most of my remarks will in fact be the information that's requested in the body of the motion, and I will provide as much information as I possibly can. My colleagues may join in because regulations are decisions of Cabinet, of course, so I won't be breaching any confidences in my submission today or my comments today to the Members of the Legislative Assembly, but I'm really pleased to be able to support this motion and, through that, provide as many details as I can with respect to certain pieces of legislation that are noted within it. It's important to do that for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that I don't disagree at all.

I think our entire government has the political will and the interest in not only enacting pieces of legislation that mean something to Yukoners and that affect their lives in a positive way — and we've done so. We've done so some 49 times. Twelve of those might have been budget bills, but other than that, some 37 times we've brought substantive pieces of legislation before this Legislature. As I've said here before, they are not finished until the regulations are finished.

I'm just going to speak for a second about the importance of regulations. As I've said before in this House — and I've used the same analogy — in my view, strong, comprehensive, solid laws or pieces of legislation are in fact the foundation or a framework of a building — in my analogy — but the walls and the finishing and the furnishings of a building are in fact the regulations — the policies, the procedures that give life and, in the end, are the key to a complete legislative regime. They

don't work one without the other, and there's no rational argument that it is the case or that delaying that for any reason is valid. It's not the case.

Regulations come in several forms. As you know, some are required to bring a piece of legislation into force and effect to give an act or law its life. Some are required to be done or amended by some outside force. There may be a court case, a court decision, or perhaps changes in federal legislation or other entities' or organizations' decisions, such as a building code or something like that. Those are critical opportunities. Maybe there are situations in which some priorities get changed in relation to what work is being done.

I am going to take just a second to say that we really have a small, dedicated, extremely talented group of legislative drafters in the Yukon government, but they are just that — small. They are responsible for every piece of legislation, including regulations, that come either before this Legislative Assembly or to Cabinet for the purposes of giving life to these laws for Yukoners. These documents are extremely complex. Sometimes they are quite simple, but more often they are extremely complex. Every piece of work that is done by the Government of Yukon is funneled through this small, dedicated, talented group of people. That is an important piece of information for everyone to understand — Yukoners, members of this House, and others. It is not about a lack of resource for that to happen; it is about all of the work that the government does being funneled to one small place where the drafting is actually done.

Yes, there are opportunities for us, on occasion, to have contractors work on that work, but really, the core group of individuals responsible for this enormous amount of work — I don't hesitate to say that it is an enormous amount of work, which may not always have been the case in the past. I know, just looking at numbers — and the complexity of legislation is a piece of the puzzle, of course, but I really want to emphasize how important that team of people is and how hard they work. While I hear the member opposite saying that this isn't a criticism of the public service, it could be construed as a criticism by them. I don't want that to be the case. I am sure that the member opposite doesn't want that to be the case, but unless I take the opportunity to really point out how small — and the herculean task that we require of them on a daily basis, and it doesn't all stop when the House sits and, all of a sudden, the bills are introduced. That work just continues on and on. It is important to do that and you may hear me say it again or many, many times because I want their work to be recognized. It is critical.

No matter the form of the regulations that are required by any particular task, they are necessary to give life to laws that we make for and on behalf of Yukoners. If that work is not done — we have heard some of the comments in the opening part of this debate — it is an enormous problem. If the work is not done, those laws don't have meaning. They don't protect the rights of Yukoners, by one example. They don't encourage business or they truly just don't achieve whatever purpose they were designed to address, and that is just not acceptable.

The motion asked about six particular pieces — or maybe five now — particular pieces of legislation. Two of those acts, as was noted, were passed by the previous government back in 2015. As I understand it, no work was done or prioritized at that time on the development of regulations for the *Condominium Act, 2015*, or the *Pharmacy and Drug Act*. None of that work was done prior to the election that was called prior to the fall 2016. One of the problems with not completing regulations in a timely manner, aside from the few that have been noted already, is that momentum or corporate knowledge or subject matter expertise sometimes is lost.

We, of course, are living in a period of time when many people — perhaps older than some of us in this Legislative Assembly, perhaps younger than some — are moving on, changing careers, or retiring. That is simply the demographic that we have. We have lost some actual individuals who were attached to some of these projects, which, of course, isn't the only deciding factor in prioritizing work or in a possible delay but it is important to note that those are incredibly important — corporate knowledge and subject matter expertise — when individuals are attached to projects. Again, not an excuse, simply a point of fact.

Our government has worked extremely hard to set legislative agendas over the past three and a half years that have been what I would describe as ambitious. We have passed, as I've noted, some 49 pieces of legislation, some 37 substantive pieces of legislation, 12 being budget bills. Some of those are of course in force and effect already. I note that the motion here looks at five individual ones and I'm happy to address those in a moment.

The pieces that have already come into force and effect are having their desired effect of a positive effect on the lives of Yukoners. As the member opposite has mentioned, they provide certainty, which is a primary goal of a good piece of legislation. We come here — a huge part of our work is to develop laws to introduce legislation that will in fact have a positive impact on the lives of Yukoners — to make things better, to do better when we know how to do better. But that is not good enough, Mr. Speaker. Our government is dedicated to bringing all of the legislation that we passed in this House to completion for the benefit of Yukoners.

The individuals whom I work with — my colleagues here in the Legislative Assembly, my colleagues at the Department of Justice — might be sick of hearing this from me, but I feel that passing the legislation is only one part of what occurs in this kind of work and that the additional piece, of course, is regulation.

Our government is also dedicated to listening to Yukoners. One of the ways in which we work on the development of regulation, which is what we're talking about here today, is to engage with Yukoners. Engage Yukon — the actual website and the promotion of engagement — and reaching out to Yukoners for their opinions on many, many topics was recently described — the Engage Yukon process was recently described by Greg Oates, who is a world leader in tourism. When he was speaking recently at the tourism sustainability conference in Victoria, he described Engage Yukon as best practice for how

government can and should engage with citizens. It's an important piece of information in our discussion here today because it is an important piece of the puzzle which ultimately results in regulations. I point this out because it is just one of the ways in which regulations come to life.

I can turn now to the acts, Mr. Speaker, note some of the details that have been sought in this motion, and proceed in that way with some of the detailed information that I can share.

I will start with the *Condominium Act, 2015* and regulations. This is one that has confounded me to a certain extent for all the reasons that have been set out in this motion, but I think it's incredibly important to know that some of the delays with respect to the adoption of the regulations for the *Condominium Act, 2015*, which was passed back in 2015, have been led by industry.

I was smiling to myself when the member opposite was noting a 50-storey condo building and all the impacts that the act would have on all those individual owners, as well as how enormous that thought is — a 50-storey building — and the reason I was smiling to myself about it was because I thought that all of those folks and all of those owners haven't been involved in the contemplation of condo act regulations. In the Yukon, individuals have the luxury of being involved in those conversations — rightly so, that is the way we do business here — but in larger governments, they may not have that opportunity. That's not always a good thing, but that does slow a process when everyone has an opinion about how, ultimately, regulations and the law will affect them.

We have engaged with industry. As has been noted, we have engaged with owners, residents, potential owners of condominiums, organizers of condominium corporations, and others through this process. One of the messages we have heard emphatically from those individuals and from industry in particular was to make sure that the coming into force of these regulations does not adversely affect building, potential building, development, or owner's rights — all of the things that are importantly involved in this piece of legislation.

So, some of the delay has been as a result of making sure that the engagement and the guidance that has been coming from citizens, no matter their role in the condominium world, have been taken into account.

As noted, in 2015, the *Condominium Act, 2015* received assent. At that time, it was the result of years of consultation, so anybody who has been watching a condominium act and the regulations to come has been very patient.

The regulations were required to bring the act into force and effect. Efforts in the area of stakeholder and public engagement on draft regulations — which is also a bit of an unusual situation, but draft regulations have been circulated so that we could get input. They have made it clear in that public engagement that operationalizing the regulations will result in some amendments to the act from 2015, and they will be necessary.

That was disappointing news, but we're determined to ensure that the proposed amendments to the condominium act will enable and continue development and growth of the condominium market here in the territory, while also providing

appropriate consumer protection — so, there is a balance to be struck there, and that is what we are achieving or trying to achieve.

Based on the research and analysis of the engagement feedback, the following areas are identified as requiring amendments to the condominium act: There are issues about security for completion, developer reserve fund contribution, condominium frameworks, phased bare land, converted leasehold land, or mixed-use condominiums. It was described by the member opposite — issues around what might not be described as condominiums in other jurisdictions — like townhouses with a wall or a duplex with a shared wall — can be affected by this piece of legislation and the regulations. Proxy voters and voting entitlement is an issue. Reserve funds and smaller condominium corporations, condominium liens, insurance requirements — I think that was noted earlier — and coming into force and transition provisions for pre-existing condominiums.

Those are issues that have not been easily resolved but are worked on extensively and identified through work and cooperative work with the condominium world, if I can call it that, to be properly identified as outstanding issues that were not properly resolved in the legislation and must be in the regulation.

The Department of Justice is working diligently to bring both legislative amendments and the regulations forward in a timely manner. In order to do so, work is ongoing to delineate the amendments and to ensure that the new legislative regime will meet the needs and interest of Yukoners — because they have waited so long, it must be well-enacted and address all of the problems that have been identified since 2015. Again, too long coming by all accounts.

Changing to the condominium law will affect many Yukoners and the amendments and the new regulations will take time to complete. We expect that they — I just want to confirm, if I can. In the summer and spring of last year, I should note that there was an extensive engagement period. We have, at the Department of Justice, contracted a local individual who works with the condominium corporations on a regular basis to try to facilitate the conversations and the work being done and work together with our partners in this way.

Over the course of the engagement period, four public meetings were held in the early part of 2019, with approximately 100 people in attendance. This included one specific meeting for condominium owners. We received approximately 117 responses on the online survey and there were some written submissions. Seven meetings were held with developers, property managers, and condominium owners. The outcome of the draft regulation engagement — “what we heard” — was shared with the stakeholder advisory committee, which was also developed for the purpose of working on these particular regulations going forward, and a drafting advisory group also considered the “what we heard” document.

Since last spring, about a year ago, an internal drafting committee consisting of departmental officials has been reviewing and editing the draft condominium regulations that were released for public engagement. This work included edits

for errors or omissions and also addressed consistency issues and beginning work on developing recommendations for responding to some of the concerns that were addressed or brought up during that period of time from the public consultation.

One of the setbacks, I will say, has been that the act does require amendments in order to achieve the regulations as they are being proposed — I don't think necessarily extensive ones, but of course, it is a process that requires a piece of work that wasn't initially anticipated.

None of the revised drafts of the regulations, the proposed responses to the concerns raised during the engagement, or the proposed act amendments have yet been reviewed with the existing drafting advisory group or the stakeholder advisory committee, so that's where we are. Again, this is the updated information — that we expect to have that happening in the very near future. It was due in part to the need to meet with the members of the Canadian Bar Association Real Property section to obtain their input on the draft regulations, so that step has also been taken.

Department officials met with the CBA and are aware of some of their issues. That process all concluded in November of last year. Based on the feedback that we received during the engagement and our analysis, we will be proposing changes to what was laid out in the draft regulations as well as the act itself. The department is working toward a fall 2020 tabling of the act amendments. Again, it is being guided by input from the industry folks because we don't want to adversely affect any of the development or owners' purchase dates — that sort of thing.

From now until August of 2020, the plan is to complete the final drafts of regulations and act amendments and then to proceed in the very late summer or early fall with the reviews that have to take place through the Cabinet process, with the idea of tabling the amending bill. If the amending bill is adopted in October of 2020, then the regulations will be ready to come into force and effect at that time. Again, the force and effect date — we are looking at the industry to guide us and we are listening to them about that. There may be agreement on that or there might be issues. We just need to make sure that we discuss that with them. That has been told to them all along for the purposes of making sure — this, in fact, is one of their primary concerns and is, in fact, one of the commitments made to them.

I will move on to the *Societies Act* and regulations. As noted by the member opposite, this is certainly something that we are keen to present to the Legislative Assembly, and we're very pleased with the passing of this act in 2018 — again, because it has been a long time coming and really affects the lives of individual Yukoners throughout the territory.

We have an enormous number of societies and organizations that avail themselves of their structure under the *Societies Act* and, as a result, make sure that the *Societies Act* is being responsive to their needs.

The Yukon continues to work on developing regulations that are required to support the implementation of this new law. In the months ahead, the department will engage on specific policy issues required for the regulations. The Yukon's act is modelled after the BC societies laws, and we are also reviewing

recent changes that came into force in British Columbia that may be beneficial for the Yukon. It's always important to make sure that we have the most up-to-date and responsive pieces of legislation, and if we can learn from other jurisdictions on their needs and specific changes that they have made, we try to do that. It's important to make sure that it is a Yukon benefit.

Our goal is to complete the regulations and any additional amendments to the *Societies Act* that may be needed by the end of 2020, and we are ready to implement within the year ahead. We will further ensure that the feedback received from the Human Rights Commission regarding guardianship orders are addressed before implementation. That has certainly been one of the messages that has been sent to us through engagement and work with our partners regarding those changes.

I recall that a small change to the *Societies Act* itself will be necessary for that to be implemented to the interest of the Human Rights Commission and their submissions to government, I will say, as a result of their point of view and taking that into account.

Since the 1980s when the existing legislation was last significantly updated, societies have evolved, and many small organizations — primarily serving members by providing services — or small groups or bodies have availed themselves of the structures under the *Societies Act*, and that has been a positive thing. Canada's provinces and territories have been shifting from a regulatory interventionist model to a simpler registry model, which is something that the act contemplates, and we're proud to move that in a modern way.

Regulations are under development, and drafting instructions are being prepared. Approximately 50 regulatory issues are under consideration with online consultation on some of the issues that are being planned. Issues identified for consultation include: term limits for directors; whether there should be a sunshine list for income of individuals employed by societies, directors, employees or contractors, et cetera. The other topic is information required by the registrar if a society fails to hold an AGM. The targeted consultation for all of those items and others is the spring of this year and hopefully with the plan for regulations to be enacted by the fall of 2020. Again, that could go into October 2020 if act requirements are required by virtue of those regulations so that we can make sure those two things align.

Next, I will note some information regarding the lobbyist registration. Lobbying is a legitimate part of the decision-making process. Our aim is that Yukoners are informed of who is communicating with the government and on what topics. The *Lobbyists Registration Act* won't come into effect until the registration system is available. Work on the online system is currently underway and is expected to be completed this spring. This is not a situation where we are waiting on regulations to enact the lobbyist act but the actual registry itself, the physical opportunity to give life to the act, and the structure required for the lobbyist to in fact register.

When the act comes into force, registration is mandatory, ensuring that lobbyists are accountable for disclosing their activities. We are aiming to make registration and reporting very straightforward. Unlike some jurisdictions that require

lobbyists to report after each meeting or phone call, our approach requires fewer check-ins because it focuses on lobbying over a period of time.

As I've said, the purpose of the registry itself is to make information about who is lobbying government available to the public. This is all new for the Yukon Territory, and we are developing the first online registry system for lobbyists here in the territory. Regulations aren't, as I have said, needed to bring the act into force, but the actual registry is — the plan being in the spring of this year.

I think that probably answers the questions about that — I hope.

I will go to the *Coroners Act* regulation, one that is near and dear to me. Others have heard about this in this Legislative Assembly, but I think that it is such an important piece of legislation. After a thorough review of the existing act and regulations, the new act was tabled and updated. The laws with respect to how the coroner operates, the authority for her to operate, and, in particular, the ways in which families are affected by this are such important pieces. That, as was noted earlier, was late in 2018 — a little more than a year and a half ago, or a year ago. The Yukon Coroner's Service — you may recall that a number of the Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly were concerned about this and how much consultation would be done with respect to regulations on this. There were a number of suggestions about a wide-reaching net and who should have something to say about the Coroner's Service. We have taken that to heart. The Yukon Coroner's Service needs the support of modern legislation, as we know. The updated law will ensure that the correct professional resource oversees each stage of the coroner's case. You may recall that this was a bit of a change — and a Yukon focus — and that the independence and impartiality of the Coroner's Service is protected in that law.

Further engagement activities to support the drafting of the accompanying regulations, including those with Yukon's medical community, will be necessary before the regulations can be brought into force. When the regulations are brought into force, the act will be proclaimed.

Engagement activities with the Coroner's Service, with Yukon's medical and legal communities, and other stakeholders are planned for the late spring/early summer of 2020. Drafting activities on the necessary regulations will commence once stakeholder engagement activities are complete, with the goal of bringing the *Coroners Act* from 2018 into force as soon as possible. It may be, again, in the summer of this year.

I just want to make sure I have answered all of those questions. I can certainly note that the Department of Justice is targeting the following timeline for completion of engagement, which was scheduled for late April — public engagement — late April to the end of May 2020. Finalizing policy and drafting of the regulations would be in the summer into the fall — with notes here — enactment in the late fall of 2020.

I may have to speak to somebody about that being a bit sooner, but I appreciate that there's a timeline and that takes into account resources. One of the things that has been done by

our government that I understand has not been done before is a list of all of the legislative work that must be done, charting through the process of when individual documents or policy work has to go to Cabinet, taking into account drafting resources and taking into account time for drafting, which is incredibly important for the departments to be communicating with one another, for the government to be communicating with the Executive Council Office, and for everyone to be on the same page with respect to the way in which scheduling of these types of projects and these important pieces of work can be done in a way that's knowable to everyone. It's not my understanding that was done in the past.

It has taken us a bit of time to get there, but nonetheless, I think it is a way in which departments can communicate with one another in a way that's real and meaningful — it is priority-setting as a group, which is incredibly important.

With respect to the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* — something that I am a bit familiar with — the new act was passed again in late fall of 2018. It will come into force and effect as regulations are done. This is one of the situations where corporate history and subject matter expertise are incredibly important. We have managed to have individuals with expertise working on the act initially and now, more so, the regulations, but there have been a few bumps in that road.

I can indicate that there has been extensive work with the ATIPP office — with the Information and Privacy Commissioner's office — and the fact that this is a priority not only for the Government of Yukon, for the member opposite bringing forward this motion, and for the Information and Privacy Commissioner but, most importantly, for Yukoners themselves to have their personal information protected in a system that is modern for the purposes of accessing information when they need to do so.

The anticipated implementation date is again the spring of this year for the approval to draft the regulations to go forward. It is, of course, included in the mandate letter of the minister and is a top priority for our government with respect to proceeding with these pieces of legislation — none of which are simple.

I appreciate the opportunity to be able to speak to these particular ones. I want to note that all pieces of legislation are incredibly important, in my view. It is not just because of my background and personal education, but because I have so been drawn to the work that I do here in this Legislative Assembly. The work that I get to do with departments is incredible. If somebody says to me, "What is the foundation — what is the backbone — of what you are doing?" A big piece of it — not all — is the opportunity to modernize and change laws and to build a structure and foundation of laws to the benefit of Yukoners. As I have said many times, until the regulations are done, in my view, that work isn't completed.

I will again note the incredible hard work of the legislative drafting team as part of the Department of Justice. I am pleased to bring this information to the House today. I think it's a fundamental misunderstanding — I am not saying that it is here, but I want to make sure that it is not here — that drafting regulations is just an easy thing and that the act is the tough

stuff. The truth is that, depending on the situation, they are equally as complex, one as the other. Sometimes regulations are more complex than the structure of an act because they really do fill in the blanks.

I appreciate and thank, on behalf of Yukoners — every chance I get — the legislative drafting team in the Department of Justice and the work that they do — again, because all of that funnels through them. Every piece of work that comes from government goes there.

I think I will stop talking at this point. I have appreciated the opportunity to address not only the substance — the concept of the motion itself, but I hope I have addressed the substance of the motion for the most part. Thank you.

Mr. Cathers: I'm going to be very brief in speaking to this motion brought forward by the Leader of the Third Party. She cites a number of pieces of legislation that are not enforced due to the regulations being delayed.

I do have to point out to the minister that in fact resources had been targeted toward the drafting of regulations under a number of these areas, but the current government — which of course she is a minister in — made their own choices about legislative drafting priorities.

Contrary to her suggestion otherwise, the Liberals are not the first government to actually have a legislative agenda with an understanding of the requirement for legislative drafting capacity and timelines associated with it. I'm sorry to disappoint her; they didn't invent that.

We are concerned though that the timelines for this completion of regulations under these areas seem to keep getting pushed out further and further and further, including the condominium act regulations which had originally been scheduled for drafting work to be done and to have it in effect in 2017. Now we're looking at the condo regulations again about five years after the enactment and two years past the original timelines for completion and they are still getting pushed out further and further.

Similarly, under the *Pharmacy and Drug Act*, I know there has been frustration by some within the health community involved in this on how long it's taking to develop it and we're hearing complaints from Yukoners who are being affected by some of the challenging provisions in the current *Societies Act* and regulations.

In the case of the *Lobbyists Registration Act*, the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, and the *Coroners Act*, those of course were all initiatives delivered by the Liberal government with great fanfare, but they haven't actually followed through and finished the job to enact what they did after the initial press release and process here in the Assembly.

We look forward to hoping that we'll see more details and actually see action — particularly on the ones that are of most effect to Yukoners directly and hope that the government will begin setting realistic timelines for the delivery of its initiatives, which has not been the case to date.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'm going to try to move quickly as well, because I'm hoping we do get to see the resolution of this

motion today. I thank the member opposite for raising it. The one thing I wanted to add is around the *Pharmacy and Drug Act*, because I know that she sort of said, okay, we got there, but I still want to add one more piece of information for everybody here.

I looked through our legislation to see pieces that I think we have done and are significant, and here's what I pulled off: the *National Aboriginal Day Act*; we amended the *Human Rights Act* and the *Vital Statistics Act*, the *Public Airports Act*, *Dental Profession Act*, *Workers' Compensation Act*, *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, the *Pounds Act*, *Missing Persons Act*, *Legal Profession Act*, and *Cannabis Control and Regulation Act*, which really was a big piece of legislation — I thank the member opposite for mentioning that — *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act*, *Order of Yukon Act*, *Societies Act*, *Equality of Spouses Statute Law Amendment Act (2018)*, *Forest Resources Act*, *Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act*, *Lobbyists Registration Act*, *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, *Coroners Act*, *Education Labour Relations Act*, *Employment Standards Act* — not once, but now twice — *Securities Act*, *Carbon Price Rebate Act*, *Yukon University Act*, *Tobacco and Vaping Products Control and Regulation Act*, *Liquor Act*, and the *Corrections Act* — and, you know, we have a few more on the table today — land titles, wills, budget measures and, coming, conversion therapy.

It's a big list, and I appreciate that there are ones that we're still working on. The thing I wanted to say about pharmacy and drugs is that, in working with the department, we decided to split off those regulations that pertain to pharmacists so that we could bring those into force this past summer. We are currently working on the part of the act that deals with pharmacies. That was done in consultation with the pharmacists, who identified that their priority was the pharmacists, and we were able to make that difference.

I just wanted to get it on the record today that there still is work ongoing. Our target for that work is this fall. We also have several other pieces of regulatory work that are ongoing, but my understanding from talking to the department is that the work is moving ahead.

I just wanted to add all of that. I agree with those who have spoken who talk about the importance of having regulations, and I thank everybody for the opportunity to try to put it on the record about timing.

The one thing I will say — because she probably wouldn't mention it herself, but the Minister of Justice, I will note, has been very explicit on the importance of regulations at all of the tables that I sit at. I work with her fairly closely because, of course, Community Services — I have affectionately called it the "kitchen sink department" — has a lot of legislation and regulations. She has championed — for example, the *Condominium Act* from day one and has been working hard to realize that for all of us as Yukoners.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard on Motion No. 123?

Ms. White: I would like to thank the Minister of Justice and Education for sharing details that we have been asking for — for awhile. I appreciate that the information was shared, and that's what the motion was.

There is always going to be a difference of opinion here, and I thank my colleague for Lake Laberge for his comments weighing into the conversation because I struggled to get information out of him back in the day.

I appreciate what the Minister of Community Services just said — National Indigenous People's Day — when the NDP brought that forward initially, it was when it was referred to as National Aboriginal Day. I do appreciate how quickly that went; I do, but I was highlighting things that have gone less quickly and that was the concern.

What I was looking for was information and sharing of information, which I received. With that, I just say thank you and we'll leave it for another day.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Speaker: In my usually humble opinion, the yeas have it.

Motion No. 123 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:24 p.m.