



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 38

3rd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, March 18, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2020 Spring Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Terry Grabowski
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, March 18, 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 at this time with the Order Paper.

Introduction of visitors.
 Are there any tributes?
 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?
 Notices of motions.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to expand testing capacity to reduce the wait time and backlog of testing samples to ensure that people exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 are able to be tested in a timely manner.

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

THAT this House do stand adjourned until 1:00 p.m., Monday, April 15, 2020, if the Speaker is satisfied that it is safe for the House to meet at that time, at which point the 2020 Spring Sitting of the Third Session of the 34th Yukon Legislative Assembly shall resume;

THAT, if the Speaker is not satisfied that it is safe for the House to meet April 15, 2020, that the House remain adjourned until 1:00 p.m., Tuesday, June 2 2020; and

THAT, if the Speaker is not satisfied that it is safe for the House to meet on June 2 2020, or any subsequent date resulting from this motion, that the House remain adjourned until 1:00 p.m. on the first Tuesday of the following month.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to clearly communicate measures being implemented to provide isolation or quarantine measures for Yukon's homeless and precariously housed population.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to extend the due date for payment of property taxes, as legislated in the *Assessment and Taxation Act* under sections 64, 65, and 66.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to confirm that auxiliary-on-call workers employed by the Government of Yukon who do not get paid sick leave, such as those at Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, long-term care facilities, or in other health care roles throughout Yukon, will be paid sick leave should they be required to self-isolate or be placed in quarantine.

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

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: COVID-19 coronavirus testing

Mr. Hassard: So, our office has received concerning reports about Yukoners being denied testing for COVID-19, even if they show symptoms. One individual reached out to us to indicate that, even though they have symptoms, they were told that they won't be tested because they are "too young".

We have even heard from one individual who has all the symptoms and was even in contact with someone who tested positive in BC, but was told that they were not eligible to be tested.

Now, the World Health Organization has said that testing often and testing lots is the best way to get ahead of this virus. In fact, many attribute South Korea's success to their policy of lots of testing, whereas the issues that we are seeing in the United States are attributed to a lack of testing.

So, will the Minister of Health and Social Services take immediate action to ensure that any Yukoners exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 can be tested in a timely manner?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I appreciate the concerns being raised. We have also heard many of those concerns from Yukoners, and we are working around the clock to take the necessary measures to protect our territory.

We also need the community to stay calm and work with the health professionals, much like we are doing here. The health and safety of Yukoners is our top priority. Our government is working with our public health professionals. They will make the call. As noted this morning by Dr. Hanley, our chief medical officer, we need to test the right people to reduce the backlog. Health care professionals are following criteria to ensure that priority testing occurs. These criteria will change in response to ongoing developments.

Mr. Hassard: Now, we know that we rely on BC to do our testing for the virus, and last week we raised concerns that, if they get overloaded, our tests would be delayed. The Minister of Health and Social Services said not to worry and that results would only take three to five days. Now, of course, we know that this is no longer true.

Yesterday, the BC Provincial Health Officer told media that thousands of tests are coming into BC a day and that the backlog is in the hundreds. As a result, we are now seeing many of Yukon's test results being delayed, sometimes up to 14 days.

On Monday, the Premier said that the Yukon is in an excellent position to receive timely results compared to other jurisdictions. However, we know this is not true either as some provinces are turning their results around in just one day.

So, Mr. Speaker, how can we stay ahead of the curve when our results are already delayed so much?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, we had exactly this conversation with all premiers and the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada just this morning. We listened to Premier Horgan speak to the numbers of reports of testing that are happening. Those measures are increasing daily.

The numbers that were used a week ago, whether it be for GDP contributions from federal government or the projected numbers for testing, have increased threefold. We are moving with a moving target.

We have heard from the federal government a commitment to the funding necessary to expand these testing facilities as they go. We're very lucky to have the testing facility in Vancouver that we can rely on so that we are not going through the national centres in Manitoba. At the same time, the Yukon's medical system is testing as necessary to address those current circumstances.

There is a wave of flu season symptoms that are going around as we speak, as well. All persons being swabbed for flu are also being swabbed for COVID-19, and this practice began last month.

We have been working with BC, as I noted, to address those delays, and additional resources are being put in place to increase capacity not only through the British Columbia medical system but also through federal initiatives as well. We really do appreciate the coordinated effort on this.

Speaking with Alberta as well, having an app technology that is hopefully going to be used right across Canada will help to also alleviate concerns.

Mr. Hassard: So again, the Premier said on Monday that tests are being done at an excellent rate. However, we already know that we're waiting on results from over 100 Yukoners to hear back from BC. As we warned last week — and the Liberals ignored — if BC gets overwhelmed, then our results will be delayed. Well, now we know that BC is overwhelmed. BC is actually in a state of emergency as well. BC's chief medical officer has indicated that they have a major backlog of results, and this is negatively impacting our ability to monitor COVID-19 here in the Yukon. We've made suggestions to the government to address this.

Again, will the Premier agree to immediately request emergency funding from the federal government that can be used to enhance and speed up our testing here in Yukon — yes or no, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We are already far ahead of that. Measures are happening nationally, measures are happening in the provinces, and measures are happening in the territory to make sure that the funding necessary — to make sure that the testing is fluid in Yukon. We are testing people who have the symptoms with the criteria that the chief medical officer speaks of.

Again today, the chief medical officer — and I will take my advice from him and Dr. Elliott as well — said that you may have flu-like symptoms but may not fit the criteria because of a lack of travel or other things.

Again, 811 is a great place to go to see what testing is required. We are working with our federal and provincial counterparts to work on an app where information can actually flow throughout the nation — and coordinate those statistics, as well, and keep people abreast as far as who should get tested and who should not.

These types of measures, added to the financial increases that are being given by the federal government and the BC government, as well as our contributions — all of these things are exactly what the member opposite is asking for. It is an emergency look at the situation to make sure that Yukoners get the testing that they need to have so that this jurisdiction continues to be ahead of that curve.

Question re: COVID-19 coronavirus impact on education system

Mr. Kent: We are living in a time of uncertainty for many Yukon families. Many are worried about paying bills, buying groceries, and their job situation. Those same families are also concerned about what will be happening in our schools. We have seen neighbouring jurisdictions like British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan close schools indefinitely because of COVID-19. This morning, we see Yukon delay the opening of our schools until at least April 15.

With that announcement this morning, what is the Yukon government doing to support families that will now have to either find childcare or take time off work to look after their children?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. This is, of course, a topic that is top of mind for Yukon families — those who are here in the territory and presumably those who have availed themselves of the March break to travel in Canada or perhaps even out of Canada.

This is a rapidly evolving situation. As we know, this morning, Dr. Brendan Hanley, the chief medical officer of health, has suspended classes for Yukon students up to April 15, so far. As I said, this is a rapidly evolving situation. Top of mind is the concerns that this will bring to Yukon parents.

As a result of many of the initiatives announced yesterday and today by the federal government, we fully expect that parents who need to be able to stay home will be able to do so. I should note that the continuity of learning is also top of mind for Yukon teachers and administrators with respect to the schools and that those plans will continue to evolve and be working so that students' learning is not interrupted, to the best of their abilities, during this unsettling time.

Mr. Kent: Obviously, we're assuming that full-time educators will be paid in the event of this potential interruption in services, but so many others will be affected by a potential school closure, such as substitute teachers, staff at the Child Development Centre, and even school bus drivers.

I have a couple of questions for the minister: Will teachers be expected to return to school after the March break during the

time when the school services are suspended for Yukon students? What will those individuals be tasked with doing during that time? Secondly, what about those individuals who will also be affected, such as school bus drivers and substitute teachers? Can they be expected to be paid their wages during this additional time off?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As I have said, classes are being suspended as of today until April 15. Most schools are not required to be in attendance — teachers or others — over the March break, which will end on March 27. After that time, those individuals who are not otherwise self-isolating or self-quarantining, based on their health and/or their travel or both, will be required to be at school so that the continuity of learning — our top priority with respect to how students will maintain their education and maintain their learning — will be dealt with. They will obviously have some conversations with administrators with respect to making sure that there is social distancing, that teachers who can be at school are there, either on a schedule or on an opportunity to not be crowded. We expect that teachers will be able to confer with one another and continue their expectations of providing work for their students, however that may be, and that is currently being worked out, of course — this announcement only being less than an hour old. We know that teachers will be keen to make sure that students' learning continues to benefit each and every student here in the territory.

Mr. Kent: So, undoubtedly, some Yukon families may choose not to put their children back in Yukon schools for the balance of the school year, so I asked yesterday during Education debate about homeschool materials in the event of a school closure — which is now a reality. I mentioned at the time that many parents will be looking to access these materials. Some will choose to do it online, but some will require paper-based materials, especially those who live in an area with limited or no Internet connectivity.

So, can the minister confirm that these courses and materials will be provided free of charge, and will she have enough paper-based material available for those who choose that method?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: We are dedicated to students' learning here in the territory on a daily basis and certainly in the face of COVID-19. We will make every effort to work with every family to meet them where they are and to provide the materials that they need in order for their students to continue their learning — to not be disrupted so that graduations won't be disrupted — and so that the continued learning at every age level will be available to families. We will make every effort to work with each and every one of them to make sure that their needs and the needs of their students are being met.

Question re: COVID-19 coronavirus — dedicated child care for health care professionals and impact on vulnerable populations

Ms. White: Our health care professionals and essential services workers from both the private and public sectors continue to work hard on the COVID-19 pandemic. This means that they don't have the privilege to be able to stay home and

care for their children who will be away from school for the foreseeable future. It is not realistic of this government to expect these critical workers to choose between the safety of their children and the essential work that they are doing.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister confirm if a dedicated daycare space will be made available for health care professionals and other essential service workers?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With respect to the supports that are required for Yukoners, we will continue to work with all of our community members and, of course, meet them where they are, should they present a challenge, like daycare, for example. So, we have heard this morning specifically from Dr. Hanley, the chief medical officer, that the daycares are not impacted by this current announcement, so we will continue to work with the childcare centres. Of course, if there are specific concerns, we would certainly be prepared to meet the parents where they are and support the communities.

Ms. White: I asked this question yesterday and didn't get an answer, so I am going to try again.

Yukon's law prevents evictions from taking place in the winter months. If it is dangerous to leave people homeless during the coldest months of the year, it is certainly dangerous to leave people homeless during a pandemic. Canadian banks have just announced mortgage relief for six months for homeowners, which makes banning evictions a whole lot simpler.

While the federal government has announced emergency relief measures, the Prime Minister indicated that it could take a few weeks for money to reach Canadians. The problem, Mr. Speaker, is that April's rent is due in less than two weeks' time.

Mr. Speaker, will this government protect Yukoners who don't have an income in the next weeks to make their next rent payment by banning evictions for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would like to begin by thanking the federal government for their announcement this morning — both for the packages to support Canadians, Canadian families, Canadian workers and businesses, and also for their announcement about the border crossing. I did say yesterday — both during Question Period and again, I believe, during debate on the budget — that we are working diligently and with effort around the clock with our departments to look at these questions.

I don't have an announcement here today, but I am able to let all members of the Legislature know and all Yukoners know that we have identified this as a risk and a concern, and we are working to find a solution as soon as we can.

Ms. White: Yukon tenants need answers now and not in the next weeks as rent payments become due. This government needs to understand the stress and anxiety that people who know they won't be able to pay their rent are going through. Yukoners are facing similar concerns regarding their utility bills. With federal assistance being weeks away, Yukoners need to know that they will be able to heat their home, have electricity, and have an Internet connection — whether or not they can afford to pay their bills on time.

Mr. Speaker, will the government immediately work with the private and public utility providers to make sure that no one is disconnected from essential services like heat, electricity, or Internet for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, the safety and well-being of Yukoners is absolutely the first priority of this government, with all of the actions that we have done to date and all of the actions that will come forward from here. I have said it many times: We have done a lot already, but we are not stopping those efforts. The conversations have continued with our national partners, with our provinces and territories — friends and families next door — and it will continue. We are working with our partners at the federal level to ensure that a coordinated effort and response to COVID-19 continues to go on.

We are very pleased to see the measures that will directly support Yukon individuals and families that are happening right now, as we speak, to address issues from our families and our businesses — the \$82-million stimulus package will provide up to \$27 billion in direct support to Canadian workers and to Canadian businesses, plus another \$55 billion to meet the liquidity needs of the business community and households through tax deferrals to help stabilize the economy.

Some of the issues that are being worked on now — and again, it's not like anybody is slowing down on getting these dollars to flow, Mr. Speaker — proposing the increase to the maximum annual Canada child benefit, for example. This takes human hours to get done — providing a one-time special payment by early May 2020 through the goods and services tax credit. There are issues that are moving forward on a daily basis, on an hourly basis, and we're continuing to put Yukoners at the front of it.

Question re: COVID-19 coronavirus impact on economy

Mr. Istchenko: As we know, the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic is not yet even close to being fully known, but we do know that local businesses and Yukoners are already starting to feel it. I'm sure every MLA in this House has heard it from a constituent or a business owner.

The lack of certainty over whether people will be able to pay their bills has people stressed, but the government can take action — yes, they can. They can help in a big way. They can do this by extending the deadline for property taxes. The property tax deadline is July 2 and is legislated in the *Municipal Act*. I was on the phone this morning with a hotelier in my community. His tax due will be \$23,000. When you have no revenue coming in, that's a huge cost.

Will the government consider amending this and delaying when property taxes are due this year until the fall?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We took an approach — as the situation escalated, we brought in all of our teams and talked about where we identified every vulnerability that we could for all of our citizens and all of our businesses, and we worked quickly to bring forward a first phase of a package.

I thank the Premier for that package. I thank the federal government for their work. We are continuing to work, and that work is happening as we speak. This morning, I spoke with

several of our mayors. We have another call coming this afternoon to our communities, including both First Nations and municipal leaders. I just got off the phone with Minister Blair to talk about the Canada Border Services Agency. We are working around the clock to identify all opportunities to support Yukoners so that they are well and able to continue. We will continue to do that work. I thank the member for his question.

Question re: COVID-19 coronavirus — health care system preparedness

Ms. McLeod: My question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Self-isolating is impacting many Yukon workplaces, and the Yukon Hospital Corporation is no exception — obligating any employees arriving to the Yukon from outside of Canada to self-isolate for 14 days prior to reporting to work. This policy extends to everyone from admin staff to doctors to nurses. As the COVID-19 virus continues to spread, it is only a matter of time before the health care professionals become exposed, which has the potential to lead us to a shortage of health care workers.

Thankfully, the Yukon is home to many nurses and other health care professionals, but many of them are retired or employed by means other than through the Hospital Corporation or Health and Social Services department. What contingency plans does this minister have in place to screen and recruit qualified health care professionals in the event that government and hospital staff do not have the capacity to meet our response to COVID-19?

Hon. Ms. Frost: As elected officials, we all certainly need to demonstrate continued leadership. It is important that we stay calm and that we assure Yukoners that we have the supports necessary.

As noted this morning, as it has been all along, we have no confirmed cases in Yukon. Yukon is well prepared. We are working with our health professionals. We will provide as much information to the public as we can on COVID-19, recognizing that situations change rapidly. We are working with our health professionals. We are working on ensuring that we have agency nurses coming in, if necessary. We have worked with the doctors. We have virtual calls happening. Now we have telehealth happening. We have a lot of resources made available, and we will continue to deal through the health preparedness plan. We will work very closely with Community Services on the community preparedness plan.

I want to just take a moment to say thank you to the great public service for doing such an amazing job in meeting where the pressures are and standing up for Yukoners.

Question re: COVID-19 coronavirus — 811 health line

Ms. McLeod: British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario have declared a public health emergency due to the spread of COVID-19. Yesterday, the Minister of Health and Social Services stated that if Yukoners need information about COVID-19 or develop any symptoms, they need to be calling the 811 health line, which Yukon shares with BC.

As the minister is aware, we have been hearing of many Yukoners who have called that line and have been left on hold for hours or just can't get through at all. Some Yukoners have even tried calling other numbers, including those in BC, Alberta, and Ontario, hoping to get some information to ease their anxiety. The majority of these people just need clear and consistent information about whether they should be tested. It doesn't help when they can't even get through to speak to someone at all.

Can the minister give Yukoners a clear timeline as to when a Yukon-specific line will be up and running?

Hon. Ms. Frost: As I stated in the last response in the last question, we are working with our service providers, we're working with our health professionals, and we're working with our communities to ensure that every Yukoner who presents with symptoms — we are taking, of course, the lead of the health professionals. We've advised that individuals go to yukon.ca and go to the COVID-19 site. It will direct you, should you have symptoms, where you should go. We also have the 811 number. Now that we have been working very closely with our partners — and thank you to Highways and Public Works — we now are working on a designated site, and my understanding, as of yesterday, is that we will have that ready very immediately — and if not today, then it will be ready.

Ms. McLeod: Well, I hope I heard the minister say that this line will be up today or tomorrow.

Despite incredible wait times, the minister has been telling Yukoners to call 811 for information about COVID-19. Yesterday, the BC Provincial Health Officer announced that the 811 line that Yukoners use is completely overwhelmed and recommended that, unless you have severe symptoms, you should not be calling that line.

BC and Alberta both offer online self-assessment tools for those who need information, who have recently travelled out of the country, or who are developing mild symptoms associated with COVID-19. This is intended to help fill in the glaring gaps of information for people who are experiencing the same frustrations as Yukoners with the 811 line.

Has the minister considered implementing a similar online tool for Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, to reiterate what the ministers have said today, more resources are coming to the phone lines — to the 811 services. Also, more money is coming to the testing zones — to the testing facilities in Vancouver. More federal funding is coming to help support the more provincial funding in those particular areas.

Also, I just found out from my Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission that the app that the Minister of Health and Social Services talked about has been localized. It is up and running and is available on yukon.ca.

What you're seeing here, Mr. Speaker, is that, whether it's on a local level through all of our ministers or whether it is through our partners with other jurisdictions or the federal government, all of the concerns that have been asked today are being identified through extra funding and extra efforts.

Ms. McLeod: We have been asking the government to be proactive about certain response measures for almost two

weeks now. For the first while, the government said that there was nothing to worry about, everything was business as usual, and anyone who is worried is merely paranoid.

Currently, the 811 line is barely functional because it is so overwhelmed. It is absurd that anyone is waiting several hours just to be hung up on when they have legitimate worries during this pandemic.

The federal government has money available to assist provinces and territories to address some of those response measures. This money could help to get a Yukon-specific line off the ground, a self-assessment tool hotline, or a mobile testing facility here in the Yukon.

When can we expect to see federal funding to enhance our capacity?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, again, the whole premise on which the member opposite is asking this question — of saying things that we did not necessarily say or picking things back and forth. Again, Mr. Speaker, when we have the opposition panicking, we told Yukoners to calmly go to the advice of the medical office. We also answered the questions here again today, but we're hearing the members opposite saying that we're not answering the questions. Again, today and yesterday and last week and the weeks coming forward — it is not a time to be partisan. Today is to have a united voice when it comes to solutions.

We are asked by the opposition for local testing. Local testing, according to the medical office, is not a solution to the testing concerns. We have addressed that question as well. Testing capacity is a national issue at this point. We have talked about local issues, local efforts, and national and jurisdictional efforts in those areas.

Mr. Speaker, the health and safety of Yukoners is absolutely at the top of our minds, just like every other jurisdiction is pulling together for Canadians, just like the world is pulling together for everybody as we deal with this pandemic. Our government is absolutely working very closely with our partners. Nobody over here is sleeping, Mr. Speaker. We are working around the clock to make sure that the priorities of our Yukon individuals, the businesses, our children, our education systems, and our economy are all in as good hands as possible under these circumstances, which change on an hourly basis.

I'm extremely confident and proud of the work of the Yukon government in these very trying times.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Unanimous consent re moving without notice a motion re membership of the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of the House to move without notice a motion, pursuant to subsection 22(2) of the Yukon *Human Rights Act*, to reappoint Karen Keenan and Benjamin Bruce Warnsby to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators and, pursuant to subsection 22(2) of the Yukon *Human Rights Act*, to appoint Carol Geddes and Victoria Chan to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators.

Speaker: The Government House Leader has requested, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, the unanimous consent of the House to move without notice a motion, pursuant to subsection 22(2) of the *Yukon Human Rights Act*, to reappoint Karen Keenan and Benjamin Bruce Warnsby to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators and, pursuant to Section 22(2) of the *Yukon Human Rights Act*, to appoint Carol Geddes and Victoria Chan to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 210 re membership of Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2) of the *Yukon Human Rights Act*, does reappoint Karen Keenan and Benjamin Bruce Warnsby to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for a term of three years, effective May 9 2020; and

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2) of the *Yukon Human Rights Act*, does appoint Carol Geddes and Victoria Chan to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for a term of three years, effective immediately.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2) of the *Yukon Human Rights Act*, does reappoint Karen Keenan and Benjamin Bruce Warnsby to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for a term of three years, effective May 9 2020; and

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2) of the *Yukon Human Rights Act*, does appoint Carol Geddes and Victoria Chan to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for a term of three years, effective immediately.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would like to thank the Members of the Legislative Assembly for their unanimous consent in having this motion brought forward today. I would also like to thank very much the members of the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for their dedication to the important work that this panel does and the work and decisions that it provides for the public who need to bring matters forward through this process.

It is important that Ms. Keenan and Mr. Warnsby have rededicated themselves and agreed to be reappointed. It is extremely important that Ms. Geddes and Ms. Chan have put their names forward to assist with the work of the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators. I appreciate the opportunity to bring their names forward in the Legislative Assembly. Each of them will bring their own experience and dedication to this position.

The uninterrupted work of the panel of adjudicators is important and I appreciate the opportunity to do this today.

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the motion? Are you prepared for the question?

Motion No. 210 agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Mr. Hutton): Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 203, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a 10-minute recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 203: *First Appropriation Act 2020-21* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 203, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Highways and Public Works

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and yes, indeed, there is.

Before I begin, I would like to welcome my deputy minister, Jaime Pitfield, and Mr. Richard Gorczyca. It's Mr. Gorczyca's first time here in the Legislative Assembly, so I hope you treat him with kindness and respect.

I'm pleased today to provide an overview of the Highways and Public Works budget for 2020-21.

Last week, in his speech to this House, the Premier spoke of how this year's budget — and I quote: "... represents a vision of a territory in which all communities have access to infrastructure and services that support healthy living now and into the future." I believe the Premier's words got to the heart of what motivates us as a government.

Yukon is the sum of its communities, Mr. Chair. Our futures are inextricably linked. None of us can meaningfully get ahead if others are left behind. Mr. Chair, those words are especially true today.

This year's budget for Highways and Public Works is once again doing its share to build a stronger, more prosperous

Yukon that works better for all of us. For our highways and airports, the government has budgeted \$63 million for operation and maintenance and almost \$88 million for capital improvements. We have also budgeted more than \$44 million for operation and maintenance of the government's building portfolio and \$60 million for building projects. Finally, we have budgeted more than \$22 million for operation and maintenance of the government's information systems and nearly \$16 million for capital additions focused on reducing red tape and streamlining services.

Obviously, Mr. Chair, this is just a high-level overview. I look forward to providing more details in response to any questions that my colleagues may have.

Mr. Kent: I am subbing in for my colleague, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. He will be along shortly to take over questions as this is his critic role. I would just like to thank and welcome the officials for attending today to provide support for the minister.

I will just jump in with a question about extra measures at the Whitehorse airport — the Erik Nielsen International Airport — with respect to screening for COVID-19. Can the minister provide us with an update on the additional measures that are taking place there, especially as we get into a fairly busy time with people returning from March break vacations in Canada and some who are returning from abroad. I know that we have talked about this in Question Period, but I would appreciate an update from the minister on what extra measures have been put in place, what is planned, and any budget line items that may be associated with them out of the announcement that was made the other day.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for his question this afternoon.

We are in a situation on this planet that we haven't seen in more than 100 years, and the pace at which the world's governments — locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally — are responding to this crisis is frenetic. We are acting this way — we are tackling this crisis together because it poses a risk to all of us. So, we are working together to ensure that we safeguard the lives of our citizens in the face of a disease that the world has not seen before. Ensuring the health and safety of Yukoners is the government's top priority, and we are taking decisive, coordinated action to better protect the public during this global health crisis.

Highways and Public Works is supporting the government-wide response focused on enhancing safety and minimizing service disruptions to address COVID-19. There is currently, of course, no confirmed case of COVID-19 in the Yukon. That is as of this morning when we heard from the chief medical officer of health. Yukoners are encouraged to check yukon.ca for the latest information. Just this afternoon, we have localized an Alberta app that is now going to be rolling out across the country to better track data nationally on behalf of this jurisdiction and all jurisdictions across the country. The staff at Highways and Public Works worked very, very quickly to make sure that this app met our local demands, and it will help to alleviate some of the demand that we are seeing on resources such as 811 and others. This is part of the self-assessment tool

that we have just launched. It is part of our effort to make sure that Yukoners have the tools that they need to diagnose and assess their health in the face of this global crisis.

Needless to say, Mr. Chair, we are closely monitoring the situation. We will continue to make other necessary changes as required.

When it comes to the Transportation division, we are taking steps at our Motor Vehicles office to minimize the exposure risk of both staff and the public. The lobby area and equipment are disinfected more frequently, and we are limiting the number of people in the lobby at any given time. Only one client is permitted in each available wicket, and no more than five people are allowed in our waiting area. Motor Vehicles staff have also removed chairs in the lobby to maintain a safe distance between people.

Signage is being installed at all land border crossings to provide inbound travellers with information about COVID-19. Updated messaging is being developed to help ensure the safety of travellers. Last weekend, the government installed signage and messaging at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport directing passengers arriving from outside Canada to self-isolate for 14 days. We are also providing additional public health information to deplaning passengers and will be providing information to commercial drivers reporting at our weigh stations.

At this time, I want to recognize the absolutely incredible work of Highways and Public Works staff as they rise to the challenge of meeting this unprecedented global health pandemic. The good staff at Highways and Public Works actually went to the airport and have been handing out this information to help our travellers as they arrive in Whitehorse International Airport. This is work that they're doing because they see the importance of this work, and I really have to commend their efforts on behalf of Yukon citizens.

We talk about civil servants all the time. This is where they are stepping up and beyond in their service to Yukoners. Highways and Public Works has a long and storied history in this regard, and again, they're just proving their courage and service to Yukoners in this latest crisis.

We are also providing — to avoid people from entering the airport terminal, we encourage those picking up passengers to stay out of the terminal building and use either the cellphone lot, which we installed recently — well before this crisis, but it's helping us with this effort — and it will be free for the foreseeable future.

On March 14, 2020 — just a couple of days ago — we were dealing with all sorts of issues, including passengers who have questions and potential illness — and we're dealing with that with medical services and making sure it's all dealt with effectively, efficiently, and within the medical protocols.

Highways and Public Works, Health and Social Services, and the Yukon chief medical officer are working with the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Canada Border Services Agency, and Transport Canada to ensure the safety and wellness of Yukoners.

While there are currently no changes to screening practices at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport, we are

preparing to implement any necessary screening procedures as the result of changing conditions should international flights resume. Of course, right now, all international flights are suspended and are not likely to resume anytime soon — but we will be monitoring this situation and adapting as necessary.

At Corporate Services, Mr. Chair, our fleet vehicle branch is also taking precautions by cleaning the interior of every vehicle returned to the office with disinfectant spray. They are providing users with sanitized wipes and garbage bags, encouraging them to clean the vehicle and remove all garbage before handing in the keys. They are asking vehicle users to inform them if someone in a vehicle was sick. Our procurement support centre is cross-training staff to ensure that there is adequate coverage to minimize interruptions in service should people fall ill or have to self-isolate.

Supply Services is working with departments to determine what items are needed most and will distribute them based on a priority need; for example, masks for the Department of Health and Social Services. We are closely monitoring our inventory stock of health-related items and demands from departments is increasing. Given the current global context, Supply Services is working with suppliers to order goods — including hand sanitizers, disinfectant wipes, et cetera — to help departments make sure that staff stay healthy.

As always, with Property Management, government-owned buildings are being cleaned thoroughly and regularly. We are working with the chief medical officer to determine whether any additional measures are required. We are also updating our building security measures to ensure that government buildings remain safe and secure if a substantial number of employees are unable to report for work or have to be sent home.

Staff are also, in terms of information communication technology, being cross-trained to ensure that there are necessary ICT resources in place to keep the data centre open. We are also taking steps to ensure that more staff can work from home if necessary. We currently are working toward 1,000 users remotely logging into the government network through VDI. ICT has ordered the equipment and is working to increase that capacity to allow more than 2,000 users to work remotely. The way it's being set up is so that it almost should allow every government employee to work through that process.

ICT is reviewing and implementing the best practices to ensure that the VDI system remains stable and available during this process. We are also using social media, Mr. Chair, to remind Yukoners about online services, such as vehicle registration, paying a government invoice, and the ability to make an online ATIPP request.

These are all the actions that the Department of Highways and Public Works is making throughout its organization. We also have \$130 million in contracts that are going out at the right time to make sure that the business community has the ability to bid on these contracts and to plan their year, which is even more important this year in the face of this global crisis. We have an awful lot of stimulus money in this capital budget. It's one of the largest budgets that this government has ever put together and we're working very hard to make sure that the

procurement procedures we have going will support businesses and make it easy for them to bid on the contracts they need in the time they need to execute.

This is going to be a difficult year. We have a lot of sickness. We're going to have to deal with that throughout our community — potentially — and we will adapt as we have to make sure that the work gets done.

Mr. Kent: The minister mentioned — as the Premier did during Question Period — an Alberta app that, I guess, is available with respect to providing information on COVID-19. If he could provide the name of that app, that would be helpful so we could transmit that to Yukoners.

The Premier's announcement the other day had airport landing fees forgiveness in there. I'm just wondering if that's the only aspect from Highways and Public Works that was in that announcement and, if so, what the anticipated value is of forgiving those landing fees — and then anything else that was in that announcement as well.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The self-assessment tool we talked about is available on yukon.ca. It's on the landing page. You can get it there. It is currently live. It is also being translated into French — that work is currently underway and will soon be live as well.

As far as the airport landing fees go, the total savings to the industry from that initiative — the suspension of those fees — will be \$125,000.

Mr. Kent: Just to clarify with the minister, he talked about a self-assessment tool in his previous response, and the Premier, during Question Period, talked about an app from Alberta. Are those the same things, or is this like a mobile app that Alberta is developing? I believe the minister said it was going up today.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, Mr. Chair, it is the same tool. It is available on our website. It's on the main COVID page, so click through to that page. It is available. We are working diligently, as well, to expand the capacity of 811. The entire nation is experiencing an influx of calls into resources such as this, and we will continue our work to match this demand and ensure that Yukoners have access to the services that they need.

One of the actions that we have taken, though, is to make sure that this Alberta-developed app now meets the needs of Yukoners, and that mobile resource is now available on our website at yukon.ca.

Mr. Kent: The minister talked about a number of contracts that the government will be putting out through his department this year, many of which will be seasonally dependent. I'm curious — how many of those seasonally dependent contracts will be out before the end of this month?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The value of the contracts going out this year is \$130 million. It's up from \$58 million last year. I believe the number of contracts is actually 68.

Mr. Kent: Sorry — I'll just get the minister to repeat the value from last year and the increase, and then he mentioned 68 contracts. How many of those does he anticipate being tendered before the end of March? Is that the 68, or is it 68 for the entire construction season or the entire fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are working under extraordinary circumstances, of course, but the goal this year is to have \$130 million worth of contracts out by the end of March.

Mr. Kent: That is great to hear. I think we should all congratulate ourselves for passing that interim supply bill on Monday that allows those expenditures to take place before the budget is passed sometime during this current Sitting. So, I thank the minister for that. Looking at the tender management system, there are a number of those contracts here, such as the skate park upgrades and such, so it is good to see them on here and closing in March or closing in April.

I just wanted to go back to something that the minister talked about with respect to buying supplies. He mentioned buying extra hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes for distribution to different government facilities. Can he elaborate on that? I guess what I'm getting at here — you know, obviously, there was a decision made to close down the government's Central Stores, but it almost seems like this is central purchasing and that it is just re-setting up Central Stores in a way.

Maybe I can get the minister's clarification on that, and then if there are any supply gaps as a result of the closing of Central Stores and some of the products that are in high demand here more recently, like toilet paper, hand sanitizer, and that type of thing — I'm curious what the minister was talking about — again, it seemed like central purchasing for distribution to government facilities, which is pretty much what I thought Central Stores did.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are supporting, at Highways and Public Works, the Yukon government centrally through the purchasing unit at Supply Services. That hasn't changed. What has changed is that we're no longer storing supplies. The storage function is being handled by the shipper or the actual supplier of the product, and it's going then directly to the government agencies requesting those supplies.

There are also emergency supplies that are on hand within government. Highways and Public Works has emergency supplies, Health and Social Services has emergency supplies, the hospital has emergency supplies, and those are stored and distributed by those agencies.

We are helping with all of the government departments through this pandemic crisis. We started ordering critical supplies more than two weeks ago to actually supply the government and make sure that we had a steady supply of goods for the institution.

Mr. Kent: I'm going to take the minister to page 3 of the five-year capital concept that was tabled with this budget. The first, in table 3 on that page, says that there are renewable energy upgrades to buildings of \$1 million to \$2 million. Then, a couple of lines down from that, it says that Yukon government buildings energy retrofits are \$10 million to \$15 million. Can the minister just break down for us which buildings will be receiving, presumably, solar panels with the renewable energy upgrades? If there is a difference, it would be great to know. Which ones will be getting building energy retrofits for the \$10 million to \$15 million expenditure there and then the \$1 million to \$2 million expenditure under the other line?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'm glad the member opposite has asked me to dive into our five-year capital plan. Just to be clear, notwithstanding, concepts are actually experimental cars that are show in Las Vegas and that type of thing. We're talking about a plan that we've enacted and have revised every single year and improved and worked very diligently to refine over the course. This is something that's new to the Government of Yukon — not so new now; we're in our third year — but we're working very hard to refine and provide a forward look — a little bit more information — to our citizens to see where the government is going.

One of the things we are doing is addressing the very great need of climate change. Part of the work we're doing on that file is we are expending an awful lot of money and resources to make sure that we tackle this global crisis that faces the world, and so we're working to provide renewable energy upgrades to buildings. It's not just solar panels, Mr. Chair. There are also other various projects, and we're going to get some detailed information about that to the member in just a second.

The \$1 million to \$2 million — there's also \$1 million to \$2 million for planning and design for the green action plan. Under building energy retrofits, there are pages of information I will start to recount to the member opposite if he wants to hear the multiple projects covered under the small communities fund.

We are also — of course, as the member opposite knows — investing in biomass over the next years. I am working with my colleague, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, and my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, who are looking to the boreal forests to try to bring down the fuel load. We are going to start to use some of that biomass for our heating projects throughout the territory, Mr. Chair. Biomass is, of course, an important renewable energy source that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and creates local jobs.

We are proud to support the goals outlined in the clean future Yukon strategy for climate change, energy, and a green economy. That is our climate change plan. Two Yukon government buildings are currently heated using biomass fuel — the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and the Dawson City waste-water treatment plant. We are expanding the biomass system at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre with support from the federal government to include Takhini Haven and the Yukon Young Offenders Facility.

We will continue to work with industry. I have had great meetings with industry groups about our biomass plan, Mr. Chair. We know that biomass is becoming more viable because of our carbon-pricing mechanism brought in by the federal government, which is raising the cost of gas and heating fuel — or was, before the momentous collapse we saw recently. It is still an economic driver that helps to raise the cost of our fossil fuels to make these alternate fuels more viable.

Next year, the Arctic energy fund is going to be contributing \$3.7 million to our climate change, energy, and green economy strategy. The climate change, energy, and green economy strategy is going to be funded to \$1 million. Energy retrofits from the low-carbon fund is \$2.1 million. First Nation residential energy retrofits are coming in at \$1.5 million. We

have innovative renewable energy initiative funding of \$1.5 million. We have the small communities fund energy projects coming in at about \$7 million this year. The Whitehorse Correctional Centre district heating system that I just spoke about is \$3.6 million, and the Yukon College and McDonald Lodge recommissioning will be \$100,000. That's a total for the climate change, energy, and green economy strategy of \$20 million this year — and it just gets more year after year after year, over the next five years.

Mr. Kent: I'm assuming HPW, through the ICT branch or the technology branch, will be taking a lead role or one of the lead roles with respect to the development of yukon.ca and the decommissioning of the old website. Can the minister perhaps provide some details? We have heard that the old website is going to be decommissioned at the end of March, and if that is the case, I know there are a number of programs, such as the tender management system, that still appear to be running off that old platform. What are the plans to migrate pages like that one to the new yukon.ca if this end-of-March timeline that we've heard about is correct?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: A priority of mine has been improving the online government services for Yukoners, making sure that we get more information more easily into Yukoners' hands. That's essential for me. We're seeing it right now, through the years of neglect of information technology in this government. It's regrettable. It makes us less able to respond to the needs of Yukoners when they ask us for information.

I'm very committed to changing that, and we're making great investments to make sure that Yukoners can get access to their government's information, because really, the information of this government is the people's information, in almost all cases, with limited exceptions.

Our government is committed to improving online government services for Yukoners. One of the things we're doing is rewriting the content on yukon.ca to make it more citizen-focused and accessible on more types of devices, like cellphones. We're seeing most of our requests for online information now — a growing number — and perhaps the majority of our requests are now coming through cellphones, and we had to make sure that our website was responsive to this change in technology.

We're modernizing yukon.ca, as the member noted, by moving to a more stable, open-sourced, and secure platform called Drupal — if you really want to get into the weeds.

Shifting to a widely used open-source platform like this will allow local developers to leverage their experience working with the Yukon government for work with other organizations. This new open-source platform will be cheaper to run, it will also be cheaper to license, and it makes updating the website easier and more secure. Again, that saves government resources in the maintenance of this site.

As we transition to the new platform, we're taking the opportunity to revise the content available on yukon.ca to ensure that the public can more easily find the information they need when they need it. A good example of this is the

information that we're currently relaying to Yukoners on the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last year, we spent \$281,000 to finish the initial content rewrite. Moving forward, we will continue to keep the content up to date to better serve the public.

The tender management system that the member opposite was referring to is on yukon.ca. It will be the platform for the Yukon government going forward. We're currently in the process of updating the tender management system to make sure that it's a modern platform that better meets the needs of our procurement team and our contracting association using it.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for that response. One quick follow-up question on that is: Could he tell us if the old platform is indeed scheduled to be decommissioned? Perhaps he did, and I apologize if he did; I didn't hear it. I'm just curious about that older platform and whether or not it's going to be decommissioned at the end of March, as we've heard.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The existing platform is going to be decommissioned. We're working very hard to move the current content onto the new site.

It's important to note that a really good example of why we were able to deploy this new self-assessment tool in the face of this COVID-19 pandemic was because of the new platform. The ease with which we're able to manipulate and work within that platform allowed us to get this vital tool in the hands of Yukoners within 24 hours. It wouldn't have been possible on the old platform, but the innovations that we're making in the digital realm have allowed us to be more responsive to Yukoners' needs.

Mr. Kent: The minister did say that the old platform would be decommissioned, but I'm not sure if he said when it would be decommissioned. Like I said, we have heard "the end of March", which sounds fairly aggressive as far as getting that done, especially when some of those important pages, like the tender management system, are still on it. I guess we will see. Hopefully, he just gives us that definitive timeline or whether or not our information is correct.

I just have a couple of riding questions before I turn it over to the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. I have talked to the minister and written him on a number of occasions about an acceleration lane at the Meadow Lakes golf course northbound coming into town, as well as just some signage even, as a bare minimum, where the Standard Bus turnoff is. There have been a number of, I would say, close calls there with vehicles either making unsafe manoeuvres to try to pass a bus on the right or maybe getting caught off guard when the bus slows down to turn in there. I know that I didn't get anywhere with just some signage for that — until a better safety plan is put in place for that stretch of the Alaska Highway.

So, I am just wondering if there is any money in this budget for any of those projects, whether it is that acceleration lane out of the Meadow Lakes golf course on the Alaska Highway or just some basic signage that would say "Buses turning" or "large vehicles turning" near the Standard Bus turnoff on the Alaska Highway.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The member opposite used "aggressive". I prefer the term "decisive". So, yes, it looks like

the end of March is when we hope to have the old site decommissioned and the new site taking on all of the duties of the old site.

I commend the member opposite for his advocacy on behalf of his constituents. We have had conversations and correspondence going between my office and his. We took a drive one time, and it was very pleasant. He took me out, and I appreciated the gesture. It was a nice afternoon, and he showed me a lot of the things in his riding — some of the concerns that his constituents had flagged along the highway.

We are working — and I know I have responded to his requests. We currently have no money in the budget for an acceleration lane near Meadow Lakes, but I do take his point and we know the importance of highway safety, so we will certainly consider those projects in the future as we triage all of the safety improvements that we're making along the Alaska Highway.

I have received the correspondence, and I believe I have responded to the correspondence for the member opposite. If indeed I have missed anything, please let me know, and I'll be happy to get him a response.

Mr. Hassard: I would just like to begin by thanking the officials for being here to assist the minister today and provide us with some outstanding answers to our questions — outstanding questions, too.

The first question that I had for the minister is: During the briefing, we were told that procurement would be looking at a new component regarding past performances when companies are bidding on contracts —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Hassard: The Member for Whitehorse Centre actually asked the question in the briefing. You are right. At any rate, we all want the answer.

So, if the minister could provide us with some information on how that's going to work and how past performance will affect the evaluation of someone's tender price moving forward — thank you.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Years ago when we started down this path with procurement and procurement improvement, we recognized that we had to do a better job and fulfill all the recommendations of the Procurement Advisory Committee. We committed to doing that within two years. We met our commitment and did that. I have always said, though, that procurement is a journey, not a destination. We continually work to revise, refine, and improve the way the government buys goods and services.

One of the things that was recognized in talking to contractors and chambers of commerce was making sure that the government lived up to its commitments in its procurement policies — to make sure that they are cleaner and better written — and that when we say that we're going to use an HVAC system, we don't accept the use of a wood stove. So, I have heard these things and we work very diligently to make sure that we actually meet the criteria we set out in our contracts. Of course, contracting and procurement is a very legal process, Mr. Chair. It is continually being refined and changed. There

will always be work to make sure that we are communicating to our contractors in a clear and fair manner.

Highways and Public Works is replacing our current tender management system with a new modern e-procurement system that will allow businesses to submit bids online. Not only will this online bidding reduce the need to mail in paper bids to a government department, but the new system will flag many compliance errors for bidders so that, when they go to fill out their tender, if they miss a line or don't fill in a certain box — as is common with many online forms — if you do any online purchasing, you will be told that you have missed a box — box X — so please fill it in before you submit it. This should clear up some problems that we've been having with tenders and make it easier for contractors and the business community to actually meet the terms of the procurement process.

As part of this new e-procurement system, Mr. Chair, we will have a vendor performance review system that will incentivize good performance and strengthen measures to hold poor performers accountable. The vendor performance review will be the final phase of the procurement system rollout. More information on how it will work will be available for suppliers closer to the implementation date for that phase.

For the last year and a half, though, we have had a pilot project to look at how we might implement performance management for Yukon government contracts. That pilot has been going well. We have been working with our procurement advisory committee on all matters of procurement, and we feel that, by making sure that we incentivize good performance on the part of our contracting industry, our business community, we will improve the jobs in the territory, get better value for Yukon taxpayers' money, and actually improve contracting and procurement throughout the territory.

Mr. Hassard: I guess that was a very long answer with part of an answer. Can the minister update the House on when he anticipates the implementation date to actually occur?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The new e-procurement system is scheduled to go live in the summer. Now, of course, as I mentioned before, we are in really uncharted waters right now as a society, so I am qualifying my answer with that — but the plan right now is to go live with our new e-procurement system at the end of the summer, and then further enhancements like this incentive — the new assessment for contractors — will go live sometime after that. We expect that by the end of the year.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate the answer from the minister. When this is actually implemented, will this just be contracts that are done through HPW, or will this be across government? With the Department of Community Services, Department of Environment, Yukon Housing Corporation — will they all be following these new guidelines?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It will apply to the entire Yukon government — so all departments. We are currently starting to train and will train representatives responsible for procurement throughout the Yukon government. When they have actually finished the training, they will be certified as procurement experts. We're also training the business community as well — again, with the caveat that we're in uncharted waters as a society and we'll take that into account as we move forward.

Mr. Hassard: I'm wondering if the minister could give us some examples of what will be used to determine poor performance. Where will that information come from? Who will be determining whether a contractor should be allowed points for good performance or lose points for poor performance?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the member opposite's interest in this file. It is one certainly that interests me as well. There is a lot more to come and I'll be happy to make a statement on this once we have more to say about the processes through which this will be implemented.

Mr. Hassard: I wonder if the minister could repeat that answer. He's very difficult to hear, so it's — I know I certainly didn't get all of that answer.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am sorry — my throat was a little dry, so I will endeavour to speak up. So, I just said that I appreciated his interest in this project. We are still developing the website. We are going to make sure that it is performing well. We are going to work with our project managers, and when I have more information about the criteria we are using — we are working with our Procurement Advisory Panel and within the Department of Highways and Public Works to refine those criteria — and once they are finalized and we have communicated with the business community and have it all worked out, I will be happy to let the members know how that is going to operate.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate that commitment from the minister.

I would like to turn to the third-party rentals for a few minutes, if I could, Mr. Chair. If you go through the categories list, under "Forestry", there is no sub-category for mulchers or excavators with brush-mowing heads or skid steers with brush-mowing heads. This is how Highways has been doing most, if not all, of their brushing, so we're curious as to why these three items aren't listed in that third-party rental book.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The annual third-party heavy equipment rentals standing offer agreement was tendered on February 26 and will close on March 26, 2020. It includes a new online component for contractors' submissions that will allow contractors to submit their list of equipment and pricing online from anywhere. Those who prefer to submit on paper can still do so. The new process will reduce red tape for businesses, significantly decrease compliance issues, and greatly decrease administrative costs. This new portal will integrate with future and current online tender management systems, such as the new e-procurement system that we were talking about just a minute ago. Businesses can revise and submit equipment lists and future tender processes using their same profile and past data on the portal — i.e. in future years, they can update their submissions instead of starting over every year, saving them time, energy, and money and probably some frustration as well, Mr. Chair.

The tendering process includes two information sessions. Businesses were introduced to the new system in early development stages at the reverse trade show last November. We also consulted with a few local contractors using a prototype in the early stages of development.

Mr. Hassard: I'll just remind the minister that this isn't Question Period — he's actually allowed to talk about the things that we ask about. Maybe he could stand up one more time and see if he can tell us why there's no subcategory for mulchers, excavators with brush heads, and skid steers with brush heads, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am endeavouring to get the member opposite answers. I don't have answers on specific equipment like mulchers, but I'll be happy to get back to the member opposite to find out what specific equipment we require.

Mr. Hassard: Wasn't that easy? But my next question might not be as easy. Is that information going to be back to me or to contractors before the tender closes for the third-party rentals, which, as the minister said, is May 26?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We would be happy to do that if a specific contractor got in touch with the Procurement Support Centre with their concern.

Mr. Hassard: I certainly hope that is the case, because I know that contractors have asked this question of the Procurement Support Centre and are still waiting for an answer to that.

Another one, similar to third-party rentals, is the fact that semi-trailers are separated from the semis, so rather than a price for a truck and trailer, they're asking for a price for a trailer. I guess I would have to ask the minister what the rationale is for that, because I wonder who rents out the trailer without renting out the truck with it.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I don't have that level of detail on the specific question. If he has more detail, he can certainly provide it to me in writing and I will be happy to look into it. Another option would be for that contractor to contact procurement support with the details and we will look into it further.

Mr. Hassard: As I said, Mr. Chair, the contractors actually have taken this to the procurement department and asked these questions and have not received answers. I guess it concerns me a bit that the minister can't commit to providing me an answer to that. He would rather I write him a letter. Well, I just asked the question here in the Legislative Assembly, so I don't think it should require that I write him a letter.

I would hope that, in his next response, he will commit to finding the answer. If he doesn't commit to that and insists that I write him a letter with this question, I would certainly like that confirmed as well.

Another question concerning the third-party rental book — the engineering department of Highways and Public Works has let contractors know that they will not be using the third-party book for hourly work. They prefer to use the Alberta roadbuilders handbook instead. I guess that, Mr. Chair, I would have to ask the minister: Why would contractors go through all of this work of submitting these prices if the engineering department has already determined that they would rather use a different process?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Just to be clear — and I'm terribly sorry; the member opposite doesn't have to write me a letter. If

he had more information that he wanted to provide, I would be happy to take it in a written form. It could be an e-mail. If there is no other information — and we are looking into it within the department. I will get him an answer, but if he has any other information about a certain — I have no idea why we would hire a trailer without a truck unless we just needed a trailer, but I will look into the information. The department is looking for more information. We'll see what we can find out. I would be happy to provide it. If I get it in the next few minutes, I'll provide it on the floor of the House, but if he has any — there's not a lot of detail there — other information, he could certainly provide it, but we will look into an answer and get him an answer.

As far as the Alberta logbook, we're not sure where this is coming from. The Transportation Engineering branch will use the third-party list and the third party is the basis. Sometimes, if it's not included in the SOA, they can go to the Alberta list. I will endeavour to get him this. This is a fairly technical question as well, and I will look into this in more detail should the member opposite require that.

Mr. Hassard: It's certainly not a technical question. I've spoken to contractors who have been told by engineering that they will not be using the third-party book. I don't know where the minister thinks the technical part of that is.

As for the question on the trailers, if the minister could provide me with what additional information he might need, I would be happy to try to provide that. I mean, we're talking about a truck and a trailer — so, I guess if the minister could provide me with some clarity as to what other information he may need.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are currently debating a \$1.6-billion budget. Inside Highways and Public Works, there is more than \$240 million in spending. I'm more than happy to get him information on a trailer. I will continue the discussion.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate that because, yes, we are debating a \$1.6-billion budget, and there are contractors who would like their fair share of that \$1.6 billion. They need this information so that they can have proper access to do just that.

If I could go to the Dempster Highway for a few minutes, we have seen the capital budget for the Dempster Highway deplete significantly from two years ago down to \$500,000 this year, and now, in this year's budget, we don't see any dollars at all for capital for the Dempster Highway.

I know I asked this question in Question Period a week and a half ago, and the minister gave me a whole lot of numbers from the O&M budget, but I'm hoping that today, with help from his officials, they can keep the O&M separate from the capital, and maybe we'll have a little more success in finding out why there appear to be zero dollars for capital on the Dempster Highway.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Just to recap, of course, a couple of weeks ago, as the member opposite noted, we did have questions in Question Period about the Dempster Highway. I noted that, in 2019-20, we allocated almost \$10 million to the Dempster Highway, including: \$5.4 million for operation and maintenance and vegetation control; \$2.9 million to rehabilitate the Klondike River bridge; \$50,000 for capital improvements

at Chapman Lake, which we talked about in the last budget discussion last year; and \$1.2 million for the production of aggregates.

This year, Mr. Chair, we have increased the O&M to \$6.7 million for 2020-21. In capital, there is not as much capital work going on for the Dempster Highway this year. We are spending about \$80,000 on capital on the Dempster Highway this year. The majority of our spending will be on the O&M side, making sure that the road is maintained.

Mr. Hassard: Would the minister be able to provide us with some information as to what that \$80,000 is going to consist of?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The majority of that capital spending will be in vegetation control.

Mr. Hassard: I am just curious — we have heard from the Mayor of Inuvik with complaints about the lack of work that was done to the Dempster Highway last summer and last fall. There were obviously a couple of rollovers of tractor trailers headed to Inuvik filled with natural gas.

I am wondering if the minister feels that this is sufficient funding to curb those fears or those concerns from the Mayor of Inuvik, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will not speculate on whether or not our nearly \$7 million in O&M spending on the Dempster Highway will curb the Mayor of Inuvik's fears. I will tell the member opposite that, with the money that we are spending, we do take the safety and passability of our roads very seriously. We believe, in the department, that this is enough money to keep the roads maintained and in a safe condition for the travelling public.

I will also say that I have been in touch with my colleagues in the NWT at a recent federal-provincial-territorial conference in Toronto. Unfortunately, my colleague was in the House at the time and couldn't attend that meeting, but we did have a very good chat with her officials, and we have agreed to work together to improve the Dempster through collaboration with Ottawa.

That work to find money that will improve the Dempster is going to be beginning in the near future.

Mr. Hassard: I have a question regarding boat launches. I'm not sure if the Minister of Highways and Public Works has the entire answer or if he would defer to the Minister of Environment or the Minister of Community Services, but I'm sure that he has a certain amount of involvement in it, so I will ask it anyway.

In the budget, there is \$785,000 for repairs to docks and ramps. Would the minister be able to provide us with some information as to where that work will be taking place throughout the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: When it comes to boat launches, we have split authority in this government. We have — and I'm sure the members opposite remember what this is like — responsibility for boat launches in Highways and Public Works, in Community Services, and in Environment, so what we have done, working together in a whole-of-government approach, is that we're working to reconcile the boat launch distribution and

actually come up with a territory-wide plan based on the conditions of the various boat launches.

I know that we recently dredged the Destruction Bay boat launch. My colleague from Community Services did that work, and I thank him for that. We have other work that we have done. We are working to triage and actually come up with a whole plan for the entire territory to refurbish our boat launches. The three departments are working collaboratively on that project, and we will have more to announce on that in the near future.

Mr. Hassard: So, maybe the minister could let the Assembly know who we should be waiting for to hear that announcement. Will that be coming from Community Services, Highways and Public Works, or Environment?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are going to leg wrestle for that privilege.

Mr. Hassard: I see that the minister thinks that this is pretty funny, but the reality is that the Premier is talking about this Legislature coming to an end tomorrow, and so I think that, obviously, we won't be here in the Legislature to ask these questions. I may not have the opportunity to remind any one of those three ministers down the road as to when that announcement will be coming.

So, maybe if the minister could take his job seriously for a minute, he actually could tell us who will be giving that information to Yukoners.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I want to assure the member opposite that I do take this job very seriously, as do my colleagues, and we are working together on this project. When we have more information to relay to the public on our efforts to come up with a cohesive plan for all of the boat launches in the territory and a list of which projects have priority, one of us will be happy to make the announcement to the Yukon public and to the opposition.

We have done this before, Mr. Chair. We looked at this when we came from this whole-of-territory approach to brush-clearing along our highways. We came up with a cohesive plan. I believe that Mr. Gorczyca was involved in some of those efforts, and I thank him for that because we are now, for the very first time, clearing all of the brush from all of our highways across the full highway network — almost 5,000 kilometres of road.

We're doing it in a methodical manner. We're going to continue that work. Our approach to the boat launches is another one of those efforts where, as a government, we work together to come up with a plan and then execute on the plan in a methodical and cohesive way.

Mr. Hassard: I do appreciate the work of Mr. Gorczyca, ensuring that we have some cohesiveness in how we go about doing that brushing, because it is very important.

Mr. Chair, if I could go a little east and north, I guess. We'll go to Ross River for a little while. In the five-year capital concept, we see that, over the next five years, it says — between \$9.5 million and \$13 million. It lists that money as Ross River School remediation. Now, we've heard the Premier mention that the government is working with the community of Ross River, as well as with the First Nation of Ross River — Ross River Dena Council — toward a new school.

My question is: Is any of this \$9.5 million to \$13 million going toward any part of the planning or building of a new school, or is this money all being directed toward remediation of the current school as it stands?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: A multidisciplinary team including an architect, a structural engineer, a geotechnical engineer, and a surveyor continues to inspect the school quarterly — this would be the Ross River School. The latest building condition inspection was completed in February, and it confirmed that the school remains safe for occupancy. The report is expected to be finalized by the end of March.

The Government of Yukon is currently performing construction work on the building, addressing structural repairs that were recommended by the engineers monitoring the school. A new school for this community has been promised. Work will continue on the existing school to keep it safe and to help prevent structural movement.

The current budget for the Ross River School, which the member opposite sees in our five-year capital plan, refers to just maintaining the school in the existing school, but as soon as the community chooses a location for a new school — and we're working with the community on plans for the new school — once those decisions are taken, then we will move to construction of a new school and transition to that.

Mr. Hassard: So, if the First Nation and the community come together and determine a new location next week, is the government committed then to taking this money that they have in the five-year plan for remediation and moving that money to the construction of a new school?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This money, as I said to the member a few moments ago, is money for maintaining and rehabilitating the current school in situ. If and when a decision is made to build a new school and where to build a new school with the community, then we will go to Management Board, get the necessary funds to build a new school, and start that whole planning process.

Until the new school is built, we will continue to need money to maintain the existing school. We will do those assessments and shift to make sure that school is safe for the students and teachers who work in that facility. We want to make sure that continues to be maintained until a new school is put in place to better serve the residents of Ross River.

Mr. Hassard: Just to clarify the previous answer, my understanding is the minister said the holdup was that the community had not yet chosen a location for the new school. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: That is correct.

Mr. Hassard: Can the minister update the Legislature on when the last meetings were held in Ross River with the community and the Ross River Dena Council regarding the new school?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I believe the last meeting in person with the community was done with the Premier and the Minister of Community Services late last summer, but I will check our files. I haven't been up to Ross River recently. Possibly, the Education minister has recently met with the

community as well, so I will check with my colleagues and come up with an answer for the member opposite.

Mr. Hassard: When the minister is getting that information, if he could also let us know who that meeting was held with — was it just the Ross River Dena Council, the community, or in fact both? I will leave that with the minister and his prompt reply with that and I would appreciate it.

With regard to the Campbell Highway between Faro and Ross River, we obviously know that the minister has talked about paving that section of road for the last few years. Recently, the government has announced \$71 million of Gateway funding that will be used to upgrade the road between Faro and Ross River — the Campbell River Highway — as well as work done on the North Canol. I am wondering if the minister could give us some type of an update and breakdown on how much money will be spent on the Campbell Highway. How much money will be spent on the North Canol? What will that work look like? Will it include any road widening, culverts, road base repairs, or even paving?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The member opposite is correct; we have signed one agreement with the Liard First Nation. We are continuing to work with the Ross River Dena Council.

With the agreement with the Liard First Nation, we are working on an implementation plan, and then we will know exactly how that rolls out. That project will be done and approved through Cabinet.

This year, we are spending \$5 million on the Faro to Ross River stretch of highway to start the BST work that we have been talking about for the past couple of years.

Mr. Hassard: Can the minister confirm how many kilometres of BST that \$5 million will actually produce?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: First of all, I would like to correct the record, because when I was speaking just a second ago, I said, "... \$5 million on the Faro to Ross River stretch..." That is actually incorrect — it will be \$3 million in BST for the Faro to Ross River stretch this year. The other \$1.7 million is on bridge work on the Campbell Highway. So, just to correct the record, I said \$5 million for the Faro to Ross River stretch, but it is actually \$3 million this year. I will get back to the members on the number of kilometres that will complete this year — then we are also doing some bridge work worth \$1.7 million.

Mr. Hassard: So, my understanding, from what the minister has just said, is that the entire section from Faro to Ross River will not be — he's talking BST now. He was talking pavement before. The entire section will not be either paved or BST'd this year.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The member opposite is correct. The project will not be finished this year. It's actually a five-year project to do the 40 kilometres between Faro and Ross River. The work is starting this year and will roll out over the next several years.

I'm very happy to be starting that work this year.

Mr. Hassard: So then, I guess the next question is: Will it in fact be BST, or will it be pavement as the minister has promised in the past?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The member opposite chided me for not taking my job seriously. We've been through this last year.

He knows very well we're talking BST this year. I'm happy to give him some information on the differences should he request it.

Mr. Hassard: I do take the job seriously and it is the minister himself who has, on numerous occasions, stood in this House and said that the road would be paved. I think it is a very legitimate question, Mr. Chair.

The minister has said there is \$5 million in total for the Campbell Highway. Does that in fact mean then that the rest of that \$71 million is going to be spent on the North Canol? What will that entail for work?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The member opposite is correct; the Government of Yukon has reached an agreement on a third Yukon Resource Gateway project. Recently, the government and the Ross River Dena Council have reached an agreement in principle for the North Canol and Campbell Highway components. The project has an estimated value of \$71 million. The Yukon Resource Gateway project will provide necessary upgrades to existing public road infrastructure in the Dawson and Nahanni Ranges — two key areas of high mineral potential and active mining in the Yukon.

The Carmacks bypass agreement continues to progress to construction. The Carmacks bypass environmental assessment is anticipated to be submitted by the early spring of 2020, and construction is expected to start as early as the fall of 2020.

The Yukon Resource Gateway project will also contribute to new road infrastructure that industry will construct, such as the proposed new access to the anticipated Coffee Gold project. A project agreement has been approved with Liard First Nation for the first phase of the Nahanni Range Road component. Phase 1 work is expected to cost \$17 million, with the environmental assessment to be submitted in the spring of 2020 and initial construction to start this fall provided — again, the caveat that we are in uncharted waters. So, we will see how the current COVID-19 pandemic plays out in the territory, but our plan is to make sure that the initial construction work will start in the fall of 2020.

The Yukon government remains committed to maximizing benefits that can be accessed through Gateway and is continuing to work with the Government of Canada so the project will best meet the needs of Yukoners.

Mr. Hassard: I thank the minister, who partially answered a question that I hadn't asked yet. Again, it's very hard to hear the minister. I did not hear anything about a commitment on how much of this \$71 million was actually going to the North Canol this year and what type of work would take place on the North Canol.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'll move my mic so the members opposite can hear me better — I apologize for that.

The North Canol phase 1 project has a \$16 million estimated construction cost. It involves bridge rehabilitation and the replacement of 15 bridges and line-of-sight and brushing work. A project agreement with the Ross River Dena Council is expected very soon.

The project agreement implementation is scheduled to happen in the spring of 2020, and then we will assess and rank the bridges for replacement, do the design work, and do a

YESA submission. That will be happening after the spring of 2020, so there is more to come on that project, Mr. Chair, because it is still in its very preliminary stages.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate the answer from the minister. I know he said that there are agreements in place with the Ross River Dena Council regarding the funding on the North Canol and the Campbell Highway, but can the minister tell the House: Will the work on the North Canol in fact be going out to public tender — all or any of that work, Mr. Chair?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The member opposite must appreciate that we have an agreement with the First Nation. We are working very closely with the First Nations on these projects. I am very pleased with the progress that we have made on these Gateway projects.

Of course, the projects will be tendered. As I said, we are doing the assessment work and will do the prioritizing about which bridges will begin this project — for a total of about \$16 million. The tenders will go out once we've assessed, done all the environmental assessments, done all the planning, and done all the design work that is necessary to execute on these projects, Mr. Chair.

I expect that the work will actually begin in 2021.

Mr. Hassard: With regard to the Campbell Highway in the capital budget, it shows \$500,000 as the estimate in the mains. I am wondering if the minister could explain where that \$500,000 is going to be spent. If we know that the other \$5 million that he spoke about — well, \$3 million of it — is in chipping or BST, and he said that \$1.7 million is in bridge upgrades, then I guess I am curious. We know that there are two bridges in the five-year plan, being Bearfeed Creek and Drury Creek, both at between \$1 million and \$2 million — so, maybe if the minister could clarify a little bit what this \$500,000 is for and what the additional \$1.7 million is for that he spoke of when he was talking about the Gateway money.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: After consulting with my officials here, we will respond to the member's question in detail in writing.

Mr. Hassard: I look forward to that information.

Now, the minister spoke a few minutes ago about the Nahanni Range Road and the agreement that the government had with the First Nation in Watson Lake — the Liard First Nation. Can the minister confirm that the work on the Nahanni Range Road will be put out to public tender as well?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We continue to work with the First Nation. Of course, the implementation plan has not yet been finalized, but we can commit that the majority of the tenders going out on the Nahanni Range Road will be publicly tendered.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate that answer. Regarding the budget — under "Pavement Rehabilitation and Other Road Improvements", we have seen the budget go from roughly \$5.5 million to roughly \$19 million for this year. Can the minister provide the House with some information as to what Yukoners can expect to see with this additional \$12 million to \$13 million?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I wonder if I could ask the indulgence of my colleague on the other side of the House to please repeat the question.

Mr. Hassard: Sure, Mr. Chair; I'm happy to. The question was regarding the line item "Pavement Rehabilitation and Other Road Improvements", on page 14-11 of the budget document, where the 2019-20 forecast was \$5.950 million, and we now see a line item of \$18.943 million. I am wondering what Yukoners can expect to see in improvements with that increased budget?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: What we are talking about in that almost \$19 million is work, as it says, to rehabilitate pavement and other roads. We have \$8.3 million for pavement rehabilitation at various locations, executed by the Transportation Engineering branch. We have \$6 million for roadside safety improvements. We have \$3.4 million for BST aggregate production. We're going to spend \$600,000 on highway heavy rehabilitation. We're going to spend \$350,000 on small culvert replacement and repair. We're going to spend \$200,000 on drainage improvements throughout Yukon's highways.

Mr. Hassard: I didn't get all of those numbers written down quickly enough, but I don't think it added up to \$19 million — but maybe the minister can correct me if I'm wrong on that.

The lion's share of it appeared to be the \$8.3 million that the minister spoke about on pavement rehabilitation. Would we be able to get an update in the Legislature today about where those pavement rehabilitation areas might be?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Rehabilitation of existing pavement is going to be done by full pavement overlay, recycling the pavement into base course, and resurfacing with BST or other rehabilitation procedures. The Transportation Engineering branch utilizes a custom surface management system as a tool to facilitate planning and project selection required to manage Yukon's maintained road network. There are locations throughout the territory where these rehabilitation projects will be executed. I would be happy to come back with more detail for the member opposite.

Mr. Hassard: I would be happy to see more detail. Would the minister be able to provide us with the information on how much of that money would be on pavement rehabilitation and how much will be on BST overlay?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So, we are spending \$2.8 million on Alaska Highway gravel and BST. We are spending \$1.2 million on the Campbell Highway gravel and BST. We plan to spend \$302,000 on the Dome Road gravel and BST, \$819,000 on the Haines Road, and \$512,000 on the Klondike Highway, for a total value of — BST and gravel — of \$5.6 million.

For pavement, we're going to spend \$32,000 on the Alaska Highway, and we're going to spend \$2.6 million on the Klondike Highway, for a total of \$2.6 million.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate that information from the minister.

Now, in the budget binder, we see an increase from \$3 million to \$13.322 million for the Klondike Highway. Would the minister be able to provide us with some type of a

breakdown on that increase? What work can we anticipate seeing? Where will we see that work take place?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Last summer, the governments of Yukon and Canada announced \$157 million in funding to upgrade critical sections of the north Klondike Highway. This is one of the largest capital projects in the territory's history; it is in fact the largest single capital project in the territory's history. We are doing this because the north Klondike Highway is one of the busiest roads in the territory. It is a vital link for industry and a well-travelled route for tourists from across the country and around the world.

The upgrades that we are proposing to this stretch of road will increase safety, improve road conditions, and connect Yukoners with an increasing number of economic opportunities, particularly in the territory's resource sector. The project is expected to support 800 jobs over the construction period, which will be vital as the territory navigates through these really tricky months ahead with the pandemic that we face.

Mr. Chair, we are spending \$12 million on the north Klondike Highway reconstruction in various locations this year. This is part of that national trade corridors fund project.

Mr. Hassard: I think that pretty much everything the minister just told us is right there on that page, so I was actually looking for a little more detail. Where is the work going to take place? What type of work is taking place? Is it brushing or actual road reconstruction? How many kilometres of reconstruction are involved, or is it in fact resurfacing? What does that \$12 million consist of?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are doing full road reconstruction at Meadow Creek and Stoneboat Creek — two separate projects — a total of \$12 million. Those projects are expected to be tendered by the end of April.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate that and look forward to seeing those tenders out by the end of April.

A question on the Alaska Highway construction — the \$10,600,000. Can the minister give us some information on where that money will be spent? Obviously, I realize that some of it — the lion's share — is up between the airport and Two Mile Hill, but if the minister could just give us a bit of information or a bit of a breakdown about how much will be spent there, and where the rest of it will be spent.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The \$10.6 million is divided into two projects. The \$5.4 million will be spent on the north Klondike intersection — that is kilometre 1434.4 to kilometre 1437.4. The other project that we are spending money on this year, part of that \$10.6 million, is the Lodestar Lane to Burns Road section — the Alaska Highway through Whitehorse — and that is a total of \$5.1 million.

Mr. Hassard: I have another question on the same page in the budget binder. We see "Transportation Facilities and Equipment" dropped from nearly \$11 million to just under \$2.5 million. I'm wondering if the minister could explain to the House or provide a little bit of detail — why that decrease?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The large capital expenditure in transportation facilities last year was to accommodate the baggage handling project, which is currently in process. That's

a very large project. It's being coordinated with CATSA, so this year, we're spending a lot less on transportation facilities. The \$2.4 million is largely small projects — none larger than \$350,000.

Mr. Hassard: Down near the bottom of page 14-11, there's a line item for "Other" for \$84 million, which is an increase of roughly \$15 million. Would the minister be able to provide us with some details and information on that \$84 million?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'm going to ask for clarification from the member opposite. The figure he's looking at — \$87,900,000 — is that the number he's looking at?

Mr. Hassard: No, in fact, the number is \$84,058,000.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are trying to find the line item that the member opposite is referring to. We can't find a reference to the same number. We'll have to get back to the member. We don't have that sum in our documents there, so I'm not sure what the member opposite is referring to — if he could provide some more information, please.

Mr. Hassard: I certainly hope that we have the same document. It's page 14-11, Highways and Public Works, Transportation. It says, down near the bottom of the page under line item "Other", \$84,058,000, and forecast for 2019-20, \$69,123,000.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It's in the public document, and it is not a separate expenditure line. It's a rollup of all of the numbers, so it is basically a summary of the Transportation budget, spending that's not for personnel or tangible capital assets across the O&M and capital budgets. That's the reason. It is a summary of the entire budget. It includes O&M and capital. It's everything.

Chair: Do members wish to take a 10-minute recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 203, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there further general debate?

Mr. Hassard: A few minutes ago, we were talking about the almost \$19 million under "Pavement Rehabilitation and Other Road Improvements". The minister gave us some information regarding the pavement rehabilitation.

The second item that he mentioned after the \$8.3 million — and I didn't get it all written down quickly enough — was something to do with — I thought he said "roadside safety" — maybe the minister could clarify that a little bit further.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I believe the member opposite was referring to the \$6-million roadside safety improvements program. That was \$6 million.

That's a six-point program that is going to be for brushing, barriers, lane delineation, line painting, clear zone safety, and roadside grading. The budget will also be used to investigate

safety concerns and the delivery of small-scale projects that respond to a specific safety, highway operations, or maintenance problem. Work may include spot community lighting enhancement or repairs requiring engineering design and supervision that usually arise on short notice and require a short-term response.

Government of Yukon, of course, takes the safety of travellers using the territory's highways very seriously. We've implemented this program that will improve the quality and efficiency of highway and roadside maintenance. The program will result in better sightlines and right-of-way visibility, improve lane delineation, fewer hazards in the right-of-way, and the installation and maintenance of more roadside barriers along our highways.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate that.

Can the minister let us know how much of that is actually dedicated toward brushing? Is that part of the ongoing brushing program that we know that Mr. Gorczyca had a hand in getting in place for us?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It is a good question. We have the numbers here. They are all broken out through the territory. What I will do to expedite debate this afternoon is compile those numbers for the member opposite and get them to him.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I look forward to receiving that information.

In "Aviation/Yukon Airports", we see a line item of just over \$11 million. I am wondering, Mr. Chair, if we could get a breakdown of where that \$11 million is being spent. I know that your lovely home community of Mayo is due for some of that money, so we are wondering if we could find out how much money is being spent at the Mayo Airport, as well, and what that work will consist of for this year.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We have budgeted this year \$1.2 million for improvements to the Mayo Airport. It is now an airport — the fifth airport certified in the territory. Also, I will tell the member opposite that, of the \$6 million in this year's budget for roadside improvements, approximately \$2.5 million is for brushing.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate the information on the brushing and the Mayo Airport, but I was also hoping that the minister would be able to provide us with a little more in terms of where the other almost \$10 million is being spent in regard to airports.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It is a good question. In order to expedite debate, I will make this brief. We're spending \$4.4 million on Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport projects, including site servicing, expansion of existing lease parcels, and construction of \$2.5 million. We're doing airside infrastructure removal investigations, engineering, design, and construction of \$1 million. The main runway is going to receive about \$755,000 in work and reconstruction; surface water management improvements of \$100,000; we're going to do temporary general aviation parking improvements of \$100,000.

At Dawson, we're spending \$1.4 million on Dawson airport projects, including \$650,000 on the south apron operational light infrastructure and passenger comfort and north apron lighting. We're spending \$400,000 on surface

water management improvements and \$400,000 on fencing and electric gates and airfield electrical updates.

The Old Crow aerodrome is receiving about \$600,000 in runway improvements. We are doing about \$3.4 million in Yukon-wide aerodromes, including almost \$2 million for community aerodromes; \$1 million for certified airports at Whitehorse, Dawson City, Mayo, Watson Lake, and Old Crow; and almost \$600,000 on lease parcel subdivision for new lots and airstrips.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate that information from the minister. I have a couple of questions regarding biomass. I'm wondering if the minister could inform the Legislature: How many YG buildings are currently being heated with biomass, and of those buildings, how many actual contracts are in place with companies or firms to provide biomass heat to those YG buildings?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and it is a good question. In order to expedite debate this afternoon, I will say quickly that we, as I said in my earlier answer this afternoon, have two Government of Yukon buildings currently heated using biomass fuel. One is the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, and the second is the Dawson City waste-water treatment plant. We have a contract with a Dawson City wood-chip producer. I will find the name for the member opposite. The Whitehorse Correctional Centre is run on pellets. We have, obviously, a contract with a pellet producer. I will endeavour to find the name of the pellet producer with which we have a contract.

Mr. Hassard: Could the minister inform the House if there are any other YG-owned buildings that currently are set up to use biomass and that are not utilizing biomass at this time?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I believe that the Elijah Smith Elementary School has a biomass boiler in it. As part of the work in assessing the use of biomass in the City of Whitehorse, I know that my colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, looked at the Elijah Smith Elementary School as a potential conversion — to dust off and start the biomass project there — but I believe that we decided not to proceed to go with biomass in that school.

Mr. Hassard: It would be interesting if the minister could provide us with some information as to why the government chose not to, as he says, "dust off" the pellet boiler at the Elijah Smith Elementary School.

In saying that, I am curious if the minister can tell us if there are any other YG-owned buildings for which there are plans in the near- or long-term future that the government intends to change over to some sort of biomass heating systems. I know that the Andrew A. Philipsen Law Centre had a biomass heating system in it, and it was actually removed, I believe, last year to install new propane boilers.

I am curious as to which direction the government might be going in the future — if there are plans to either install more biomass or, in fact, to do as the government has done and go away from biomass.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As far as the Elijah Smith Elementary School, we actually applied for federal funding with producers to put biomass in there, and the school did not

qualify for federal support. It didn't meet their criteria, which is why we ended up going to the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

We are looking, of course, at opportunities at schools. We're looking at one in Watson Lake and one in Teslin. That's not finalized yet.

We're using planning money this year to identify more opportunities for biomass throughout the territory. It is part of our climate change strategy. It's an important part of our strategy. We are working with producers to make sure that we have a supply of wood chips and biomass for our new biomass initiatives.

The school in Haines Junction — absolutely right. We looked at that. There are a number of reasons why biomass did not make sense for that facility, but we are always doing our assessments. Where it makes sense and where it's safe and usable, we are going to work very hard to get biomass boilers into our facilities.

Ms. Hanson: I just want to ask one final question, I hope, on biomass here. Can the minister confirm or clarify — when he was talking about pellets, are we talking about Yukon-manufactured pellets, or are they being imported?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I welcome the Member for Whitehorse Centre to the debate this afternoon. These are wood pellets that are imported from BC. We looked at this facility. It was built with a wood-pellet system in place. We're not changing out that existing facility, but it was such a big boiler; it was underutilized. That's why we're getting it now to district heat at two separate facilities — the Takhini Haven and Yukon Young Offenders Facility — and that will make better use of the wood-pellet boiler there.

We have worked with the industry. They understand that we are moving now to wood chips in many facilities, and that will be part of it. We hope, at some point — it would be great if we had a Yukon producer of wood pellets, but we don't have that yet, so we're having to import to heat that facility. Yes, biomass is the primary heat source for the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

Ms. Hanson: I'm kind of disappointed, because one of the things, I guess — I wasn't planning to go into this line of questioning, because I had assumed that, over the last few years, there had been a significant consideration of the fact that, in order to use pellets for biomass, they are imported — greenhouse gas emissions. I'm wondering if the minister could — not at this very moment, or perhaps he has it at hand. We certainly don't have access to it — what the benefit analysis is and what the offset is in terms of greenhouse gas emissions and the cost of importing these pellets from British Columbia, particularly the issue with greenhouse gas emissions. Ostensibly, we're moving to this to move off of fossil fuels, but we're actually using extensive fossil fuels to import them.

Can the minister please provide a synopsis of the analysis and then table that or provide it to the opposition by return?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It is a good question. Of course, the member opposite and I agree — in a perfect world, we would have inherited a building that was already using a local supply of wood. But we did not inherit that building. We inherited a

building that was equipped with a wood-pellet boiler that had been used for years to heat the building. The boiler used at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre is large and it made perfect sense to use it to its full capacity to heat these other two buildings and squeeze a little bit more energy efficiency out of that boiler. The member is right. We are trucking the pellets into the territory and using fossil fuels to do that. As I said, that was a decision taken when that facility was built. I am not sure why that decision was taken at the time, but I will say that biomass is a good heating source. Pellets actually guarantee the humidity levels to operate a boiler efficiently for a correctional facility like this, so there are benefits to that. We are not using oil in that facility, but we do have to use oil to bring the pellets into the territory, because there are no local suppliers. That is the hand we were dealt.

Ms. Hanson: Unless this minister is able to answer the question, we will certainly be looking forward to getting an answer from a minister about where we are at with developing that in-territory wood pellet product so that we are not creating a false sense that we are doing something environmentally great by burning biomass when we are actually expending greenhouse gases to get it here. But, Mr. Chair, in the interest of — as the minister keeps saying — moving this forward, I would like to go back to the budget per se and then I will ask some questions arising from that budget.

I would ask the minister to turn to 14-4 in the budget. If he can signal when he is actually at 14-4, that would be helpful.

Mr. Chair, I would like the minister, then — I have a number of questions with respect to the figures that are depicted here. I am raising these because it's the budget debate and partly because, as we go through this, you will see that there are a number of questions. It is very, very difficult when you don't have any substantiating data to be able to figure out how that difference happened.

Mr. Chair, when I get the budget documents that are tabled in the Legislative Assembly, I do what every other MLA does, I am sure — I sit down and look at it. I also look at what we debated and how it was dealt with last year. I start with just simply comparing what I hope is apples to apples.

In 2019-20, the main estimates said — under the operation and maintenance vote for Corporate Services — that the main estimates had an amount of \$12 million. I think it's \$255 million — this is my transcribing, because I left my other document — but now what is being depicted is \$14 million. Mr. Speaker, the minister will notice that there is a discrepancy there. There is no information that tells me how that main estimate changed. The mains don't change, Mr. Chair.

Then I go down to Information and Communications Technology — not a substantive change, but there is a change. So, the mains last year said \$22,063,000. Here it is depicted as \$22,167,000. With the next number for Transportation, the mains last year said \$63,747,000. Here, it says that the mains are actually \$62,520,000. Either we have a sound basis for depicting what our budgets are and explaining them to the opposition and to the citizens of the Yukon — there is nowhere in any of the documentation and nowhere online that anyone, let alone opposition MLAs, can find this information. So, I am

asking the minister to explain this discrepancy. What makes up that discrepancy for each of those numbers?

If you look at Information and Communications Technology, Mr. Chair — the mains last year said \$5,953,000. Now the mains are telling me that, somehow, it is magically converted for 2019-20 to \$11,831,000. How am I supposed to guess what that is? How is any citizen of this territory able to guess how that magically changed if it was approved last year as the main estimate at \$5,953,000? That's the only information I have to go on, as the opposition critic for this area.

The next two numbers are the same. That gives me some confidence. Of course, when we get to the summaries, then there is a corresponding discrepancy. So, just to start — because we're talking about the budget — if the minister could tell the House — and for Hansard — how that discrepancy arises and then how we're supposed to parse it out. How we, citizens of the territory, members of this Legislative Assembly, absent any crosswalk information — any background information — as to how that happened or what that means — and I'm not saying it's not legitimate, Mr. Chair; I'm not saying that at all. I'm just saying, accountability and transparency means that the information is available, and it's not available.

I need to have — I'm asking the minister to provide that for the record so that we are operating from the same basis when we talk about what was put in the main estimates, what was approved in this Legislative Assembly, and then what we're going forward with, in terms of — then we'll talk about the estimates for this fiscal year. My questions will then focus on that, but I need to understand how that discrepancy comes.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question. It's a good one, and in the interest of expediting the debate, I'll keep my comments short.

As I said, there's no discrepancy in the financial documents. What the member is alluding to is a restating of the accounts according to accounting principles.

I know the member opposite has asked this question of the department already, and we have agreed to provide a road map to the changes so that it makes it easier for the member opposite to see why this was done. We can provide a schedule of restatements to the member. That's what we committed to in the briefing that we gave the member opposite during the budget.

Really, the numbers change when programs get shifted from one budget to the other. This is an accounting principle. Our budgets are reviewed by the Auditor General of Canada. We work very closely with that agency. This is a typical accounting principle. We're happy to provide a road map to the member opposite.

Ms. Hanson: I do appreciate the officials explaining this. It's not unique to this department. That's why I'm raising it here. What I am trying to point out for this minister, for the Minister of Finance, and for all ministers is that, unless the information is clear and transparent — I understand the fact that there's a change in how budgets are depicted and represented, but the information needs to be accessible and available, and it's not.

So, on the face of it — and actually, the restated amounts are on page 14-3. It doesn't say anything about restated amounts on page 14-4. On the face of it, it looks like an error. It looks like — so, what happened? It's not simply — pat, pat — “MLA, it's okay. We'll explain it to you.” I'm insisting that this is a principle — that, at the time that we are provided the budgets and at the time that we do briefings, we should not have to be trying to reach behind the cloak to guess what those discrepancies are. It should be provided to us as a matter of course.

We had to insist that we got access to background information that was regularly available in budget documents. We finally got them posted to the Department of Finance website. This is a government that insists that it's more transparent and accountable — less and less information available to the opposition to be able to figure it out.

So, the minister can stand, and when the Leader of the Official Opposition asked the question with respect to projects around airports, he has a crosswalk; he has all that information. Where are members of the opposition supposed to find that information? Where? That is simple information that should be readily accessible so that it would make the budget debate more informed as opposed to guessing. Then you could debate whether or not there are objects, projects or whatever from a constituency — from the other ridings in this territory that are not part of the government representation — the ridings that we hear different things from and that obviously are being heard by the members opposite. Then we could say “Actually, what we have heard from our constituents is this and this. How does that fit into what those plans are?” But we have to guess every time. Why is that information not available? Why?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I hear the passion in the member opposite's voice. She and I share a passion for information. I have been reading budgets delivered and tabled in this Legislative Assembly since 1989, Mr. Chair. The budget that we tabled today is very similar to those that have been tabled over the last 30 years. This budget, to opposition and journalists — I don't share the member opposite's opinion that we are sharing less information. I know for a fact that this government is sharing more information with the public. We are sharing more information with the public that we serve. We have a principled stand that the information that this government produces is the people's information, and we are doing our utmost to improve the processes and the delivery systems for that information so that our citizens can access that information more quickly and with more detail than they have ever had before.

I know that my colleagues in Highways and Public Works have worked diligently to make sure that this information is available to our citizens, and I am really happy with the efforts they have made. There is more to do, Mr. Chair, and we will continue this transformation of the Yukon government to provide more information to our citizens as we go forward.

On that, Mr. Chair, the Member for Whitehorse Centre and I can agree.

Ms. Hanson: I wish it were so. I can actually — and perhaps the minister would like me to — bring in past budgets

where we got detailed information by department, where we got organization charts, where we got changes and breakdowns of the relative spending, and we got the FTEs by department and by function. We don't get any of that information unless we ask for it. When there are organizational changes, we don't get updates on those in terms of a changed organization unless we ask for it.

I don't want to belabour this point, but the minister, when outlining the \$11,090,000 under "Aviation/Yukon Airports", listed off this long list of things. That was very interesting. My question to the minister is: Is that breakdown on the website anywhere with that level of detail? Where do I get that level of detail?

My question was: The \$11,090,000 that he recited — the breakdown of projects that he put on the record to the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin — is that detail — that level of granularity — available on the website or in background budget documents? Where is it? How do I access that so we can have that informed conversation — so we don't have to have him stand and recite them, but we could say, "I don't really care for the whole long list of these things that becomes a recitation." It sounds like a found word poem, as opposed to — you know, I have an interest or I've heard a concern being raised about this particular project and I can zero in on that, but where do I find that?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: That information is not available in that level of detail. I can't recall anytime in the last 30 years that I've ever seen a budget provide that level of detail. That's where we are at, Mr. Chair. We are in a budget debate. We are asked for information on that budget. I have provided it willingly and openly in great detail here on the floor of the Legislature.

I suppose you could say that it is on a website; it's in Hansard.

Ms. Hanson: Great — that gives me a good indication of where the minister is coming from with his sense of what is open and transparent in terms of the expenditure of public monies on projects. If I recite it to you, that's what you get — great.

I would like to move on, Mr. Chair. When I again compare — it's a bad habit, Mr. Chair. I actually look at the documents that the government provides, and I go back to look at how they compare one year to the next just so that I can get a sense of how we're moving on. Could the minister update us on the new food service function or facility that was announced for the Whitehorse airport on February 25, 2019? I know that there is a bar somewhere hidden up there. I have heard this. I have not availed myself of it. There was to be food service there. It was announced through a press release, because that's how we get our information from the Yukon government. Can the minister update us on that?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question. In the efforts of advancing the debate this afternoon, I will give a succinct answer. The previous restaurateur up at the airport decided that they no longer wanted to provide services there. We have gutted the entire operation and fitted it out and prepared it for a new tenant. We held a competition —

a tender — for those services. Someone has won that competitive bid. We are currently negotiating with the winners, and we expect to have them proceed over the coming months.

We will be happy — very elated, actually — to announce who that is once the whole tender process is resolved.

Ms. Hanson: I appreciate the minister's answer to that question. The minister indicated earlier, in response to a question, that \$2.5 million has been allocated for brushing. I would like to go back to the question raised by the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin with respect to — it was a different take on the question I had raised, as his officials will have briefed him — with respect to the responsibility for the department with respect to monitoring performance of tenders. I am raising this question specifically in conjunction with the work that was done on the south Klondike Highway toward the Carcross Cut-off toward Tagish and along the Tagish Road.

The minister is aware that there have been significant concerns raised by citizens about the — including myself — letters to him with photographs of dangerous material left along as a result of the badly performed brushing along both the south Klondike Highway and the Tagish Road. I had pointed out to him that the Department of Environment, along with the Southern Lakes Caribou Steering Committee and the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, had some time ago come to an agreement on the kinds of environmental measures that were necessary to prevent damage to wildlife — caribou, moose, and others — now deer — along that area. They can shatter the bones and perforate the skin when we have these shards sticking up — as he's well aware.

My question is — and again, I want this in Hansard — what holdback is there until these contracts are completed to the satisfaction of both the department and the Department of Environment — both Highways and Public Works' and Environment's standards with respect to ensuring that there is safety for our wildlife? I would presume that we're hopeful that there's safety for citizens as well who are using these for snowmobiling and skiing and some of them for dogs — with dog mushing along the side of the south Klondike Highway.

At what point does Highways and Public Works — do they monitor the work that's being done? At what stages of the work do they monitor it? What holdback is being done? And finally, with respect to the remaining section of the Tagish Road, when is that scheduled to be completed and at what cost?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I want to reiterate that our government takes the safety of the travelling public very seriously, which is why we undertook this brush-clearing, roadside improvement program over the next six years. Brushing completed on the Tagish Road and Klondike Highway is a component of the larger roadside safety improvement program. It was implemented this fiscal year and the focus of this program is improving the safety of our highway network for year-round users. Frequent brushing improves roadside visual detection of wildlife, which will result in fewer vehicle-wildlife collisions and will reduce large diameter stems, which could be harmful to animals. The brushing program was adjusted through Tagish and Crag Lake. We respected property boundaries while maintaining a safe

brushing width in the right-of-way, which was set aside by Highways and Public Works when the roads were built.

Brushing activities have occurred within the surveyed highway right-of-way and have been adjusted to 10 meters from the road shoulder to meet safety requirements determined by engineering review. This leaves a buffer of approximately 15 metres between the brushing and the edge of the highway right-of-way. Compliance inspections conducted by the department staff found deficiencies, including brush height along the south Klondike Highway and Tagish Road. The contractor is required to correct these deficiencies by May 2020. The engineering staff will be monitoring the situation to make sure that work is done by that month.

In 2020-21, we are increasing inspection activities and we are working to refine the brushing program to minimize impacts to wildlife. The very execution of the brushing work is to reduce animal-human conflict.

The revised requirements include cutting to 50 millimetres where terrain permits, as well as rock removal within the highway right-of-way. These new measures will be implemented in the 2020-21 years and will help to prevent potential injuries to wildlife. The Tagish Road at Crag Lake is designed for the posted speed limit and drivers tend to match their speed to the speed of the road it was designed for — and that is how it is going. So, this year, in 2020-21, we are refining the activities of brush-clearing along Yukon roadways.

Ms. Hanson: The minister read essentially the same briefing note that he has read into Hansard before. The question was: How much, if anything, is held back on a contract until you have compliance or assurance that the performance of the contract has been made, as per the contract? Secondly, what is the budget for the remainder of the Tagish Road for this fiscal year?

That was the question. I wasn't asking him to justify the lack of monitoring of the work that was done this last year. The fact that there are still spikes all along the south Klondike Highway and the Tagish Road — they are clearly not in compliance with the standards that this government has set. I am not getting into an argument about that. I want to know what holdback has been done. He says that there is monitoring. He says to expect them. Are they doing it out of the goodness of their heart now?

The reason why the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin was asking this question was because he was asking how the government assesses their experience with contractors who do not perform to the standards set out in the contract. So, the question was really, when we asked this in the briefing, is if there is a point system. If you have a bad performer, are we going to reward them by giving them contracts to continue to do bad work? That is the question on that part.

There are three components to this question. If the minister would like me to repeat them, I will, but I'm sure he has it. I know his officials have.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: In the interest of the time of the House, I will keep my answer short.

The answer is this: Compliance inspections conducted by the department — which does review the work of the

contractors that they have employed to do the brush-clearing — found deficiencies, including brush height along the south Klondike Highway and Tagish Road. The contractor is required to correct these deficiencies by May of 2020. If they do not correct those deficiencies that were identified — which they tried to do last year but didn't get to because of extenuating circumstances — now they are required to do it by May of 2020. If they don't do the work, they will not receive the payment, Mr. Chair.

As far as performance appraisals of the contractors who do work with the Yukon government — we have a pilot program. I spoke about that earlier in discussions this afternoon with the Leader of the Official Opposition. We are taking measures to make sure that there is a performance assessment of our contractors. It's going to be rolled out with the new e-procurement system. I know that the member opposite had heard those answers this afternoon. This is part of the work that we're doing to make sure that procurement is done better and that people who do good work in the territory are rewarded for their work.

Ms. Hanson: Thank you — two for three. The third part of the question was about the balance for fiscal year 2020-21. How much is being spent on the balance of the Tagish Road?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: To promote this debate, I will get to this very quickly: \$12,600.

Ms. Hanson: Early in the debate, the minister mentioned that, in fact — and I appreciate that there is the self-assessment on the website for COVID-19. As the minister responsible for Highways and Public Works, what measures is he taking to ensure that all travellers who work for his department — so people who we know have been travelling, people who have been gone out of the territory. It says here that anybody who has returned to the Yukon from outside Canada on or after March 13 are required to self-isolate immediately for 14 days. Are those employees who self-isolate for 14 days, before there is any diagnosis or whatever, on paid leave or unpaid leave?

Secondly, what measures does the minister have to ensure that people are doing that? The reason I ask this is because I had a worried phone call from somebody today who has a rare autoimmune disease who is aware of somebody who has just come back from a country outside of Canada and did not self-isolate and is working in the Government of Yukon — not at home.

Are they paid or unpaid if they are self-isolating, as per the directions that are provided by the chief medical officer of health? Secondly, what measures, as the minister responsible for the department, is he and every other minister — I would hope, because, incredibly, all of us are seized by this and want to make sure that we're doing the right thing in the right way. What measures are being taken in his department to ensure that those employees who have returned to work from outside of Canada are following the direction of the chief medical officer of health?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question. COVID-19 is on everybody's minds. Unfortunately,

she has me at a bit of a disadvantage because I have taken my Public Service Commission book upstairs.

I'm happy to answer questions this afternoon on the 2020-21 Highways and Public Works budget, and I did earlier give a fairly lengthy answer to the department's response to COVID-19.

I will say, without my notes here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, that the Public Service Commission and the Public Service Commissioner are working very hard to ensure that no Yukoner suffers as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are working very hard with our union partners to make sure that all employees are looked after through this unprecedented health crisis and that they are able to pay the bills, look after their families, and make it through the self-isolation orders that have been made by the chief medical officer.

Ms. Hanson: I am perplexed by that response. The minister has his deputy beside him. Could he ask the deputy what direction has been given to the employees of the Department of Highways and Public Works with respect to self-isolation if they have been outside of the country?

Surely to goodness — we have pretty clear information on the website about it. It says that's what you're supposed to do. My question was pretty straightforward. I wanted to know: For those employees at the Department of Highways and Public Works who are required to self-isolate, are they on paid or unpaid leave?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The conditions for self-isolation have been well broadcasted and well communicated throughout the Yukon government. If a government employee for the Yukon government left the territory on international travel and arrived back in the territory before the order to not leave the country had been given, then they are entitled to payment. If they leave after the order — if they left the country after that order went out — then they will be forced to use their leave. So, we're making sure that those who respected the order of the chief medical officer of health are not impacted by the order to self-isolate. That's where we're at right now, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Hanson: I'll look forward to having confirmation from all the ministers that similar information has been provided to all employees, and certainly when we get to the Public Service Commission, the minister can probably table with the House the information that has been provided — in his other role that he plays.

One of the things that the government has talked about is how it can develop a means of taking benefit of having a more standardized approach to doing things. In previous capital budgets, there was discussion of scalable generic designs for schools and health centres, and I would presume that Highways and Public Works would be involved in the assessment and development of those scalable generic designs. I'm curious as to what has happened to that. I don't see them represented anywhere, and I do see a number of capital projects for schools and health centres, but they don't seem to be representing anything generic. Maybe the minister can clarify that. Maybe I don't understand. I thought that the notion of "generic" was to try to find a way of moderating the expenditures, but perhaps

the minister could respond to what was expended on the development of these scalable generic designs for health centres and schools in 2018-19 and 2019-20 and where we would see that implicated or reflected in the capital projects for those kinds of projects — those two broad areas of projects — in the capital plan that is before us this fiscal year.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As the member opposite knows, we are building our very first elementary school in decades, Mr. Chair. This will be the first new elementary school built by the territorial government in a very long time.

We are working with our partners in both Health and Social Services and Education to work to define scalable functional plans that will then be used to design the schools. The schools themselves require a lot of work because the sites the schools sit on and the geology that the schools are built on may require very specific designs and foundations — that type of thing. We are working on a functional plan that will be applied to the school that is generic and applied to all schools going forward. It will help save money as we go forward.

Ms. Hanson: The minister's budget indicates that \$1 million to \$2 million has been spent on the Whistle Bend school this year. How does that relate to the previous year's budget? It is not an amount; they are just target amounts for this scalable stuff. How does that relate to what was in the previous capital budget plans? When we have asterisks as opposed to amounts in the capital plan, it is a little hard to figure out what was actually meant for the fiscal year that year. I am only going by what it said in the depiction.

This would be page 4 in a previous budget — the capital plan. It has an asterisk, but it doesn't tell me how much is that scalable plan. How much has been done so far on the scalable plans? Is that what we're going to have at the end of 2021 — a scalable generic plan? What is the cumulative total that has been spent on this scalable generic plan since it first started appearing in the capital plan?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I can report that the functional plans are done and they are using them. They're active.

Ms. Hanson: Thank you for the answer, and the second part of that was the cumulative total that has been spent on developing those scalable plans since they first appeared in the capital plan.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will have to get back to the member opposite with that number.

Ms. Hanson: I appreciate that. Mr. Chair, one of the questions I have — and I am mindful of the time — over the last number of years, we have raised the question with respect to placement of street lights along the highways. It seems to be kind of random, but my former colleague — Mr. Tredger, when he was Member of Mayo-Tatchun — many times raised the question, at the behest of his constituents, of the placement of a street light at Stewart Crossing.

Now, I happen to have frequent travels along the south Klondike Highway and then turning left on the secondary road toward Tagish, and I can tell you that it is like a highway interchange. There are — well, I would say dozens, but the minister, I am sure, can correct me — many, many, many street

lights that have been suddenly erected there. So, I am wondering: Do we have a street light at Stewart Crossing yet?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will get back to the member opposite. I think that, at this time, we do not have street lights equivalent to what they are at the south Klondike Highway intersection in that community.

Ms. Hanson: Nobody is asking for an equivalency. I would suggest, quite frankly, that it is overkill at that corner; it is blinding. I don't know what it is for. Actually, if we looked at where the Highways camp or office is — it is around on the Tagish Road; it is not on that corner there. It is just blasting lights into firewood. It has nothing to do with the highway. I am not sure what the resistance is.

So, could the minister also explain why there is a dark patch as we approach the Carcross Cut-off to turn right to go down the south Klondike — the paucity of lighting there?

How is it determined? How do you determine how many lights you need at one corner — a way down the south Klondike Highway approach — not even in the Village of Carcross? I'm sure they don't want that much light pollution — whereas at the corner, people have complained to me that it's not well lit. This is approaching to turn right on the Carcross Cut-off — so where the mailboxes are.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This is the very first I'm hearing about the dark patch at that intersection. My officials will certainly investigate.

Mr. Cathers: I have a few questions for the minister. They do relate to an issue where I do find myself in agreement with the Member for Whitehorse Centre about the declining information that is contained within the budget. The budget highlights — as the minister will be well aware since I've raised this many times in the past — have shrunk down dramatically from what they used to be. They used to typically be a list of major projects, including highway projects, that we just don't see in the budget now. So, I'm left then having to resort to asking the minister questions here in the Legislative Assembly or else trying to get that information via letter, instead of just being able to read it.

The minister will recall that there's a planned project to upgrade the Alaska Highway on either side of the Mayo Road intersection — or the north Klondike Highway intersection if you prefer — and that the project has gone through YESAB. It would widen two kilometres of the road. It would create, through that section, two lanes in each direction and would have the resulting effect of longer turning lanes and a through lane through that intersection.

As the minister will recall, the project was originally planned to begin construction in the summer of 2018 and has not proceeded to date. When I wrote to the minister last year regarding this project, he indicated that the project might proceed this summer, subject to budgetary approval. Of course, that is a project that I support going forward and that would address safety concerns that have come up many, many times from my constituents regarding this intersection.

Can the minister please tell me: Is there funding for that project at the corner of the Mayo Road and the Alaska Highway

in this year's budget? If so, can he indicate what the expected timelines are for that project?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: In the interest of time, I'm not going to repeat myself, although I guess I will have to, because I answered this question for the Leader of the Official Opposition about an hour and a half ago. It's \$5.4 million for the north Klondike intersection. It is being done this year.

Mr. Cathers: I'm pleased to hear that there is funding in the budget for that. I had missed the minister's reply earlier, so I am glad to hear that. That will be welcome news.

Another project that the minister will recall that I have written to him about and I have written to the Premier about — and we have discussed it many times here in the Assembly — is that there continue to be ongoing concerns from my constituents about safety issues related to the Takhini River bridge on the Mayo Road. There have been issues in the past, including one rather serious collision that also shut down the highway for quite some time one winter day.

As the minister is aware, I have asked the government to look at options such as replacing the bridge with a wider bridge, as well as, at the tail end of the last government, there had been planning work done to add a pedestrian walkway as an interim measure onto the bridge to allow pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians, and others to be able to safely cross instead of going across the main deck of the bridge, which puts them at some risk.

Can the minister indicate whether there is funding for the Takhini River bridge in this year's budget? If so, what improvements to it are currently planned?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: To expedite this answer, I will say that an engineering review by bridge engineers confirmed that the Takhini River bridge and the existing highway alignment are safe. Highways and Public Works repainted the centre line of the bridge to increase safety and visibility following a vehicle accident. Some deck potholing was observed this year, which has been repaired and has improved driving quality. A strengthening project was completed in September 2017 to improve the bridge's capacity for supporting heavy loads, and we will continue to monitor traffic on the bridge to inform any requirement for future maintenance.

If I could impose on my good colleague across the floor to please speak up; I am having a very hard time hearing him this afternoon.

Mr. Cathers: I will attempt to speak up if I was not talking loudly enough for the minister to clearly hear me.

What I think I heard the minister indicate is that there is no funding in the budget for the bridge and that the addition of a pedestrian walkway on the bridge — is that something that there is any funding for, or has the minister or Cabinet decided not to include funding for that in this year's budget?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: There are no plans.

Mr. Cathers: That was certainly not the news we were looking for. I would point out that the fine print on the minister's technical review, I am sure, includes the fact that currently the bridge is not officially rated for pedestrians and others to use it, but pedestrians — and cyclists especially — do use the main deck of the bridge because there is no proper

walkway for them. Many of my constituents feel that it is just a matter of time before a serious accident happens there. I will leave it there in the interest of time. Obviously, if it is not in this year's budget, it's not in the budget.

Another issue that I have corresponded with the minister about and raised many times in the House is the condition of the Takhini River Road. As the minister will recall, the road was never properly built. It resulted from what originated as a Cat trail that has had work done to it over the years, but it has never had a proper roadbed or proper ditches to allow for the right drainage. Typically, several times a year, it turns into a rather soupy surface. Due to the increasing number of people who live down the road and increasing traffic — both residential and commercial related to farms down at the end of the road — it creates an unsafe situation. I have had several constituents tell me that they have had to spend thousands of dollars of repairs to their vehicles — everything from their shocks being damaged to needing to have the alignment redone multiple times due to the road surface deteriorating, with the potholes and washboard conditions causing problems.

As the minister will recall, in the past, I have asked him to make repairs urgently when there were problems. Some of that work has occurred. I have also asked the government to invest in major upgrades to the Takhini River Road to improve the ditches, develop a proper roadbed, and improve the surface. Can the minister indicate whether there is funding for Takhini River Road in this year's budget and, if so, what that funding is intended for and the amount?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: My good colleague across the way — we have corresponded an awful lot about this constituency issue that he has brought to my attention on several occasions. I'm happy to discuss it again on the floor of the Legislative Assembly during this budget debate.

Yukon highways connect us to our families and friends and they bind our communities together. Across the territory, our government is making investments to make these critical links safer and more efficient. When a culvert froze and caused a major washout on the Takhini River Road in the spring of 2018, the Yukon government responded immediately, completing repairs to re-establish access to both lanes. In the 2018-19 fiscal year, we invested \$263,000 in repairs and maintenance of the Takhini River Road in my good colleague's riding to improve the drainage and driving surface of the road. In 2019-20, a further \$25,000 was invested in order to complete some additional repairs. The required repairs to the road failures are complete and no further work is planned at this time.

Highways and Public Works will of course continue to monitor the Takhini River Road and provide maintenance where and when required.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the minister reading his notes on that, but I would just mention to him that I am being quite serious when I say that I've heard from multiple constituents who had to repair their vehicles at the cost of thousands of dollars because of the condition of the road. This is an issue that comes up regularly from constituents. There's a substantial number of properties down that road, and it is as large as some Yukon communities.

This road is quite important. It is also, at times, including last year — there were times when, if there was a fire at someone's home or an urgent situation that required emergency medical services, the road would not have been passable down to the end of it for people who needed either an ambulance or fire, and the same could happen affecting police. This is a major concern for my constituents.

I would also point out to the government that it's a major liability issue for government if an event of that type occurs and emergency responders are not able to get to the home of one of my constituents when they desperately need it due to the government's failure to invest in Takhini River Road.

So, clearly, the money is not in the budget now, but I would urge the minister to reconsider the government's position on this and recognize that this road is in serious need of work to be brought up to a proper road standard for the number of people who live down it and the amount of traffic.

Another area that I will ask the minister about — again, we have corresponded on this matter. I had it raised with me by someone who is concerned about the IMPACT program that a number of the people who go through the Driver Control Board had previously been mandated to take. Due to the cancellation of funding by the Yukon government, there is now a gap in services. I appreciate that the minister just responded to me in a letter about it, but I would note that, in sharing that with the Driver Control Board, they remain concerned that the services are not in place to fulfill the services required for this board and the orders that it has issued for Yukon drivers, pursuant to its mandate.

I would ask the minister to indicate what work is being done to fill the gap that currently exists and if he could indicate when they intend to have a solution in place that will allow the required services to be there for Yukon drivers who are under the order of the Driver Control Board to have that order of the Driver Control Board fulfilled.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I provided a fulsome written response to the member just last week. Nothing much has changed in the intervening four days.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. McPhee that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

May the House have a report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 203, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2020-21*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: 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 now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:29 p.m.