



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 31

3rd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, March 5, 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
Thursday, March 5, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

I would like to begin the 2020 Spring Sitting of the Legislative Assembly by respectfully acknowledging all Yukon First Nations and also that we are meeting on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

INTRODUCTION OF DEPUTY SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

Speaker: I'm very pleased to be able to introduce Mr. Terry Grabowski, our new Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms. Terry was raised in Dawson and Whitehorse, has served in the Canadian Armed Forces, and continues to serve as a Canadian Forces Ranger and instructor with the Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron.

I ask members to welcome Terry to the House at this time.

Applause

INTRODUCTION OF PAGES

Speaker: It also gives me great pleasure to introduce the Legislative pages who will be serving the House during the 2020 Spring Sitting. They are Carson Kiesling, Everett Schwarz from F.H. Collins Secondary School, Ally Bonilla and Alissa Au from Vanier Catholic Secondary School, Hayley Fairclough and Agata Poltorasky from Porter Creek Secondary School, and Lang Honhorn and Aurora April from École Émilie Tremblay. With us today we have Hayley Fairclough and Aurora April. I would ask members to welcome them to the House at this time.

Applause

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as they are now outdated: Motion No. 8, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre; Motion No. 55, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King; and Motion No. 117, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek North.

As well, the following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as the actions requested in the motions have been taken in whole or in part: Motion No. 3, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt North; Motion No. 118, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge; Motion No. 93, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek Centre; and Motion No. 49 and Motion No. 92, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane.

Finally, Motion No. 167, notice of which was given by the Member for Whitehorse Centre on November 27, 2019, was not placed on today's Notice Paper as the motion is outdated.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Silver: I would like to ask all of colleagues in the Legislative Assembly to help me in welcoming the Council of Yukon First Nations Grand Chief Peter Johnston.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Today we are going to be giving tributes to the recipients of the Arctic Inspiration Prize, the award winners, and we have with us, from the Arctic Inspiration Prize National Selection Committee, Shelby Blackjack and Mathieya Alatini. From Yukon First Nations Wildfire, we have Chad Thomas, Telek Rogan, Wayne Risby, Colin Asselstine, and Angela Drainville. From Northern Nations Alliance, we have Corinna Yuill, Eileen Melnychuk, Carl Carpentier, Sharon Gardner, and Sharon Shorty.

I don't know — because I don't recognize them — but I heard them on the radio this morning — if we have our guests from Wallaga, New South Wales, Australia — if we could also welcome Fosters junior and senior — Warren Foster Jr. and Ngarrae Foster. If we could welcome them all, please, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I would like my colleagues in the House this afternoon to join me in welcoming the president of the Yukon Employees' Union, Mr. Steve Geick, and also, from Vancouver Island, my mom, Susan Mostyn. She is in the House this afternoon.

Applause

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I would like my colleagues to help me welcome some very special guests in the gallery today. I would like to start by welcoming Chief Rick McLean, one of our chiefs from the Tahltan Nation but also my fiancé. It's a big announcement, but I will just do it right here. Of course, my oldest son, Colin Dendys — thank you so much for coming today.

I would also like to welcome Sharon Shorty — a.k.a. Gramma Susie — to the House today, and Dan Shorty as well. Thank you so much. Also, I saw Kudawat Shorty come in.

Welcome, and thank you all for coming today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would also like to welcome Mr. Peter Turner, president of the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, as well as Mr. Mike Pemberton in his role as chair of the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce. He also plays a vital role as the chair of the Yukon Development Corporation.

I would also like to note that — although she was welcomed — Ms. Alatini is also playing a very, very important role as one of our leads in the independent panel on our mineral development strategy.

Mr. Adel: I would like my colleagues to help me welcome to the House today my wife, Barbara Adel, and our friend Donna Mimm.

Applause

Ms. White: I also invite my colleagues in welcoming some guests today. We have Paul Johnson and Deborah Turner-Davis from the Yukon Employees' Union. We have Murray Martin, who is not unfamiliar to the Chamber. We have Bonnie Dalziel, Sally Wright, and my friend Jake Hamilton, who is visiting for his first time. Please welcome them.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Someone who I have missed from my list but who I see here from Yukon College is Ms. Jacqueline Bedard.

Applause

Mr. Hutton: I would like to ask my colleagues in the House to join me in welcoming a couple of special guests — to whom I will be giving a brief tribute later on — Jim Snider and his daughter Neizha.

Applause

Speaker: It is my honour to welcome to the Assembly some House Officers and their valuable support staff. It gives me great pleasure to introduce: Annette King, the Child and Youth Advocate; Bengie Clethero, the deputy advocate; Rachel Veinott-McKeough, the intake and communications coordinator; Julia Milnes, the advocacy case worker; as well as Lynda Silverfox, the systemic analyst at that office — if we could recognize those individuals.

Applause

Mr. Kent: I just want to recognize that my wife, Amanda Leslie, is here, and friend and former colleague Elaine Schiman is also joining us in the gallery today. Welcome.

Applause

Speaker: Finally, as well, I have from the Yukon Ombudsman, Information and Privacy Commissioner and Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner office the aforementioned Elaine Schiman, who is the manager of communications at that office; Jason Pedlar, the director of intake and informal case resolution; and Aidan Bell, the investigator and compliance review officer — if we can welcome them as well.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any other introductions of visitors? Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Arctic Inspiration Prize — Yukon First Nations Wildfire resilience training and healing program

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It is my honour to rise today, on the first day of the Spring Sitting, on behalf of the Yukon government to pay tribute to Yukon First Nations Wildfire and their resilience training and healing program which was awarded an Arctic Inspiration Prize in early February.

The amazing Arctic Inspiration Prize is the largest award program in the country dedicated to Canada's north — and by the way, I was really pleased to see Mayor Curtis there at the award ceremony to announce that the Arctic Inspiration Prize will be coming back to the Yukon next year.

Prizes are designed to enable breakthrough northern initiatives, and I could not be more proud of this year's laureates. The resilience training and healing program was awarded \$410,000 for preventive and healing initiatives to support youth and Yukon First Nation wildland firefighters. It was great to see the Premier, our Senator, and our federal minister of Economic Development up to present this award to the Yukon First Nations Wildfire recipients.

Specifically, the program will address trauma through land-based healing and mentorship grounded in traditional knowledge. I want to congratulate everyone involved with this incredible program. Thank you to Grand Chief Peter Johnston for nominating the project, and thank you to team leader, Chad Thomas, and his team members, Shirley Adamson, Ben Asquith, Colin Asselstine, and Adrijana Djocik, Angela Drainville, Marge Kormendy, Nelson Lepine — I also saw Emily here — bienvenue — Jordan Profeit, Wayne Risby, and Lee Vincent.

We know that many wildland firefighters are exposed to events and situations that can contribute to challenges with mental wellness, addictions, and even suicide. Wildfire members may find themselves responding to devastating situations within their own communities. They may witness serious injuries or even deaths involving someone who they know personally — a family member, neighbour, or a member of their community.

They may also be asked to leave the comfort of their homes to fight dangerous fires at a moment's notice across the territory. This is a growing risk as the north experiences more frequent and extreme fires due to climate change. We rely on these dedicated front-line workers to step forward in our times of need.

To all of our amazing wildland firefighters from the government and First Nation crews, thank you from all of us as Yukoners. You keep us safe, healthy, and successful.

I hope that, through the resilience training and healing program, you receive the support you need to be safe, healthy, and successful.

I would also like to take a moment to recognize the partnership Yukon First Nations Wildfire has with Northern Nations Alliance, a newly formed charitable organization — formerly Tahltan Strong — working with Yukon and northern British Columbia First Nations to support communities in their

wildland fire efforts, empowerment, and healing. This partnership led two Yukon First Nations Wildfire leaders to visit Australia to work with indigenous communities impacted by fire.

Northern Nations Alliance just brought Australian aboriginal firefighters to the Yukon to keep sharing traditional knowledge and best practices on these important issues.

I understand Northern Nations Alliance will be hosting a “midnight sun down under” benefit concert for Australia on March 27 and 28, and I invite all Yukoners to participate and to support it. Congratulations once again to the resilience training and healing program team. Funding from the Arctic Inspiration Prize can be life-changing, and I look forward to following along as this program takes root.

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the Arctic Inspiration Prize award teams and projects. The AIP awards have come a long way from the first awards held in 2012 and have become known across Canada and the north as the Nobel Prize of Canada.

To say that the co-founders Arnold Witzig and Sima Sharifi are amazing people is an understatement. I personally know the challenges and the work that both have given to their passion for our north. To willingly give your wealth to complete strangers and regions unknown is to be commended and lauded. They are unassuming and do not want the glory. They want to see success and happiness for the people of the north, from Yukon to Labrador.

From the first Yukon award winners in 2015, the Tri-Territorial Recreation Training project, which received \$600,000, to our current winners from the ceremony just held in Ottawa: well done. We give our congratulations to the resilience training and healing program, with their team leader Chad Thomas, for their prize of \$410,000. The goal is having healing and trauma programs, along with a remarkable component of financial competency, for youth and wildland firefighters.

To make matters even better, the federal government, through the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, or CanNor, not only matched but exceeded the prize award for an additional \$622,000. Over \$1 million gives the team the ability to purchase equipment and materials that will make their training and growth easier.

The other Yukon project was a Yukon Youth Healthcare Summit, with team leader Geri-Lee Buyck, which was awarded \$90,000. This project is interested in ensuring that Yukon post-secondary students get an opportunity to be exposed to various areas of the health care field by visiting and seeing the actual hospital work environment.

So, Yukoners and businesses, please become ambassadors or funding partners, as ambassadors are the only entities that can submit applications for the prize. So, champion, mentor, and encourage teams to get their ideas in order and submit for a chance for an Arctic Inspiration Prize.

Congratulations to both teams. We wish you much success, and we will be following your stories with interest.

Applause

Ms. White: It would take an entire afternoon to celebrate each of the eight teams in the three prize categories who were awarded just over \$2.6 million at this year’s Arctic Inspiration Prize award ceremony in Ottawa. Teams whose ideas and innovative plans to inspire change and improve the lives of people living in Canada’s north will be felt for years to come.

It’s an honour to stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to speak about just one of the 2019 Arctic Inspiration Prize laureate winners. Mr. Speaker, we speak at length in this Chamber about reconciliation and resiliency. We talk about self-determination and economic development. I would suggest that, while we talk in here, outside these walls, true action is taking place.

In 2013, what started as an idea from the Da Dagahy Development Corporation, with support from the Ta’an Kwäch’an Council, has since grown to be a movement that we here in Yukon, across Canada, and as far away as Australia now know as Yukon First Nations Wildfire.

Yukon First Nations Wildfire has a clear vision to use innovative strategies that incorporate traditional knowledge to provide employment opportunities for Yukon and First Nation youth, all with the ultimate goal to be the best wildland firefighters in Canada.

It’s no surprise that, with the help of an incredible group of people as team members, team leader, and nominator, Yukon First Nations Wildfire submitted a proposal for a resilience training and healing program to the Arctic Inspiration Prize committee. Like everyone in this room and across the territory, we’re so pleased they won.

This project will respond to challenges with mental illness, addiction, and suicide among youth and wildland firefighters. It will employ a holistic approach to wellness, all based on a foundation of traditional knowledge that can be tailored to each participant that will address trauma through traditional practices, land-based healing, and mentorship.

It will include a financial literacy component, ensuring that all participants have bank accounts, understand credit and budgeting, and know how to access financial advice.

Mr. Speaker, the key output of this project is healthy, educated, and skilled future leaders who have an understanding of how to access resources where and when they are needed.

The resilience training and healing program project received \$410,000 from the Arctic Inspiration Prize. We know, having already seen how far Yukon First Nations Wildfire has come, that they are best suited for the task ahead because they bring with them a personal understanding of the real struggles faced by wildland firefighters. I think that a post they shared on their Facebook page on March 1 of this year illustrates this best, so I am going to share it now: “A firefighter with PTSD fell into a hole and couldn’t get out. When a civilian walked by, the Firefighter called out for help, but the civilian yelled back, ‘Suck it up, dig deep, and drive on,’ then threw down a shovel. The Firefighter followed directions and dug that hole deeper.

“Another stranger went by and the Firefighter called out for help again. The stranger said, ‘use the tools and online

training that has been given to you”, then threw down a bucket. The Firefighter used the tools and he dug the hole deeper still and filled the bucket.

“A psychiatrist walked by. The Firefighter called, ‘Help! I can’t get out!’, so the psychiatrist tossed down some drugs and said, ‘Take this. It will relieve the pain and you will forget about the hole.’ The Firefighter said, ‘thanks’, and followed his advice, but when the pills ran out he was still in the hole.

“A well-known psychologist rode by and heard the Firefighter’s cries for help. He stopped and asked, ‘How did you get there? Were you born there? Did your parents put you there? Tell me about yourself, it will alleviate your sense of loneliness.’ So the Firefighter talked with him for an hour, then the psychologist had to leave, but he said he’d be back next week. The Firefighter thanked him, but was still in the hole.

“Another Firefighter happened to be passing by. The one with PTSD cried out, ‘Hey, help me. I’m stuck in this hole!’ and right away the other Firefighter jumped down into the hole. The Firefighter with PTSD started to panic and said, ‘What are you doing? Now we’re both stuck down here!’ But the other Firefighter just smiled and replied, ‘It’s okay. I have been here before... I know how to get out.’”

So, Mr. Speaker, this is a beautifully simple explanation of how it is often those with lived experiences who can best help those in crisis.

So, we thank all of those who had the vision and were willing to put the hard work into bringing this important resilience training and healing program closer to becoming a reality in Yukon.

Applause

In recognition of Arctic Inspiration Prize — Yukon Youth Healthcare Summit

Mr. Hutton: On behalf of the Yukon Liberal government and the NDP caucus, it is my honour today to rise to pay tribute to the organizers of the Yukon Youth Healthcare Summit initiative, which was awarded an Arctic Inspiration Prize this past February.

Thank you specifically to the summit’s team leader, Geri-Lee Buyck from Mayo, and the award nominator, Shelby Maunder, who is the executive director of BYTE — Empowering Youth.

The Arctic Inspiration Prize is designed to enable breakthrough northern initiatives, and I could not be prouder of this year’s laureates, including two winning teams from Yukon.

The Youth Healthcare Summit is an incredibly important program that is meant to inspire young indigenous Yukoners to consider post-secondary education and specifically an education in the health profession. The initiative involves recruiting high school students around the territory to travel to Whitehorse, where they will take part in workshops led by working health care professionals.

Participants will have the opportunity to learn within the new clinical simulation centre at Whitehorse General Hospital and will receive a standard first aid certificate, among other learning opportunities. The goal of this summit is to help continue increasing indigenous representation within our health

systems workforce. Our dedicated nurses, doctors, and other health care staff continue learning and adapting to remove cultural barriers, ensure equitable access, and ensure patients feel safe and welcome. This amazing program supports that effort by offering youth a closer look at the potential for a successful career in health care.

I would also like to take this moment to congratulate Northern Compass for their award as well. Jim Snider and his team are working hard to address problems that prevent northern youth from succeeding in post-secondary education or starting careers. They are assisting northern youth with transitioning to post-secondary education and ultimately onward to more fulfilling and prosperous careers and futures.

The collective work of these two organizations are carving new paths in preparing for education and careers for our youth. The success of these organizations will reverberate through our communities for generations to come as they lay new foundations for assisting our youth in some of the most challenging decisions they will make in their lives.

Thank you to both the Yukon Healthcare Summit and Northern Compass for your contributions to our society. Congratulations on your much-deserved awards. The youth you inspire today will bring us brighter futures tomorrow. Mahsi’ cho. Thank you.

Applause

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under tabling returns and documents, the Chair has for tabling the *Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from Sittings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees*, dated March 5, 2020. This report is tabled pursuant to the direction of the Members’ Services Board.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Today, I have for tabling a legislative return regarding the number of licensed physicians and nurses in the Yukon in response to a tabled question asked by the Member for Watson Lake on November 27.

Mr. Speaker, I further have for tabling a legislative return regarding the Government of Yukon’s new website and visual identity initiative in response to a question asked by the Member for Watson Lake on November 27, 2019.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling the *Sixteenth Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees*.

Speaker: Are there any further reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 201: *Third Appropriation Act 2019-20* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 201, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2019-20*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 201, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2019-20*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 201 agreed to

Bill No. 202: *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2020-21* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 202, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2020-21*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 202, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2020-21*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 202 agreed to

Bill No. 203: *First Appropriation Act 2020-21* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 203, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2020-21*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 203, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2020-21*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 203 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House acknowledges that the Yukon Liberal government has become the first-ever territorial government to win the annual government waste award for their decision to spend taxpayers' money to pay Instagram celebrities to fly to Yukon, go horseback riding, and pan for gold.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon Liberal government to provide a detailed accounting of how much money went to out-of-territory consultants, public relations reps, and photographers to support their decision to spend taxpayers' money to pay Instagram celebrities to fly to Yukon, go horseback riding, and pan for gold.

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

THAT this House urges the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to respond in the affirmative to the December 12, 2019, letter from the Yukon First Nations Chiefs Committee on Education requesting an opportunity to appear before the Public Accounts Committee regarding the June 2019 Auditor General of Canada report on kindergarten through grade 12 education in Yukon.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to initiate upgrades to the two Alaska Highway crosswalks in Porter Creek to include pedestrian-activated flashing lights to address safety and visibility for both pedestrians and motorists.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to improve communications infrastructure in rural Yukon, including partnering with the private sector to expand cellular phone coverage to people without service in areas including Grizzly Valley, Deep Creek, Fox Lake, Ibex Valley, Junction 37, Champagne, Mendenhall, and the north Alaska Highway and improve services in areas with coverage gaps.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to improve highway safety at the intersection of the Mayo Road and the Alaska Highway by moving forward with a project that was supposed to begin construction three years ago, including widening two kilometres of the Alaska Highway on either side of the intersection, lengthening the turning lane, and adding a through lane.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to ensure that parents who choose to home-school their children have the option of using paper-based curriculum instead of being forced to use online video courses from the Aurora Virtual School.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to upgrade Takhini River Road by taking actions, including improving the road surface and the ditches.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to take action to reduce the wait times Yukoners are currently facing for appointments with visiting and local specialists, surgeries, and other medical procedures.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to initiate upgrades to the two Alaska Highway crosswalks in Watson Lake to include pedestrian-activated flashing lights to address safety and visibility for both pedestrians and motorists.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with First Nations, municipalities, local advisory councils, and the tourism industry to ensure a coordinated approach to minimizing the risk of the coronavirus outbreak in the Yukon and prepare for appropriate actions if a suspected case is detected.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to alert the travelling public of unsafe road conditions between kilometres 1491 and 1502 of the Alaska Highway by ensuring proper placement of portable electric signs and installing property signage.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to tender seasonally dependent contracts by March 31 of each year, as promised in the Liberal platform.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to use its 2020-21 budget to build turning lanes at the entrances of the Takhini and Mendenhall subdivisions.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to listen to the views of Yukon hunters and take action by:

- (1) cancelling the Minister of Environment's proposed adaptive moose management regulations; and
- (2) using the government's 2020-21 budget to conduct moose surveys in areas of reported concern, especially in areas where the most recent data that is being used is outdated.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to follow the recommendations in the 2018 Employment Standards Board report and increase the minimum wage to over \$15 per hour by April 2021.

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

THAT a Special Committee on Electoral Reform be established;

THAT the Hon. Jeanie Dendys, the Hon. John Streicker, and Paolo Gallina be appointed to the Committee;

THAT the members of the Committee also be comprised of two MLAs from the Official Opposition caucus selected by

the Leader of the Official Opposition and one MLA from the Third Party caucus selected by the Leader of the Third Party;

THAT the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Leader of the Third Party inform the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of the names of the selected MLAs from their representative caucuses no later than seven calendar days after the appointment of this motion by the Assembly;

THAT the Chair of the Committee has one vote on each matter before the Committee;

THAT the Committee be mandated to write a report to:

(1) consider and identify an option or options for the Yukon elections voting system;

(2) make recommendations on what question or questions would be placed on a referendum ballot to obtain Yukoners' views on the option or options identified for the Yukon's electoral voting system; and

(3) make recommendations on the thresholds for voter turnout and for the identified option or options that would need to be achieved to make changes to the electoral system;

THAT the Committee conduct public hearings for the purpose of receiving the views and opinions of Yukoners;

THAT the Committee have the power to call for persons, papers, and records and to sit during intersessional periods;

THAT minutes of Committee meetings be made public within 48 hours of each meeting;

THAT, during the drafting of the final report, the Committee should conduct its business in a consensus decision-making manner to the greatest extent possible and that, should unanimity not be achieved, the report should show the majority and the minority views of the Committee members;

THAT the Committee report to the Legislative Assembly in writing on its findings from public hearings and any recommendations that it might have on matters covered in those public hearings no later than August 31, 2020;

THAT, if the House is not sitting at such time as the Committee is prepared to present its report, the Committee Chair shall transmit the Committee's report to the Speaker, who shall transmit the report to all Members of the Legislative Assembly and then, no more than one day later, release the report to the public; and

THAT the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly shall be responsible for providing the necessary support services to the Committee.

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

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, the novel coronavirus, or COVID-19, has been spreading rapidly across the globe. Canada's health minister stated yesterday that the federal government is anticipating an outbreak of coronavirus in Canadian communities.

Now, Canada is fortunate to have a strong health care system, but there are always going to be areas for improvement

when faced with an illness that we still don't know everything about. Further, Yukon needs to be clear about our outbreak preparedness should coronavirus appear here in the territory. To date, the Minister of Health and Social Services has been completely silent on this issue.

Over the past couple of years, Whitehorse and community hospitals have dealt with over-capacity and understaffing — and that is without any pressure from major health events. So, can the minister tell us what plans currently exist for Yukon to contain and mitigate a community outbreak of any kind and what resources have been put toward this particular virus?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am pleased to rise today to respond to the question. I know that the coronavirus certainly is at the top of mind for all Yukoners and all Canadians. It is an important subject matter certainly as we speak about risks in the Yukon and across Canada and take into consideration the resources that we have available in the Yukon, ensuring that we have the necessary supports here.

Health and Social Services is working very closely with the chief medical officer, Yukon Communicable Disease Control, the central Yukon Hospital Corporation, and the Emergency Measures Organization on the coronavirus situation and of course emergency responses. We will continue to work very closely with our federal counterparts and to have those dialogues with our provincial and territorial partners.

Mr. Hassard: A major issue that has arisen over the past week is the warning of a severe global shortage of personal protective equipment for health care workers. This includes materials such as face masks, gloves, gowns, and respirators. The World Health Organization has stated that the lack of access to these materials is now putting doctors, nurses, and front-line health care staff at risk of contracting not only this virus, but other illnesses as well.

Health care workers need to be able to get to their place of work and help those in need without being at serious risk of contracting an illness. Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us what measures she has taken to ensure that all Yukon health centres have an adequate supply of personal protective equipment for health care workers and what plans are in place in the event of a supply shortage here in Yukon?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would say that, in the Yukon, we certainly are prepared. We have been, as I indicated, working with our federal and provincial counterparts. We look at specifically our health authorities here in the Yukon, and we continue to update Yukoners with respect to the coronavirus and the assessments that are currently taking place.

The government departments and agencies are currently working together to prepare and ensure a coordinated and effective response. The chief medical officer is leading all activities related to the coronavirus preparedness activities — simple things like washing your hands and not touching your eyes or nose. The information goes out from the chief medical officer — we have ensured that she has corresponded with all Yukoners. We are working diligently with our health centres and we will continue to do that to ensure that every Yukoner is protected.

Mr. Hassard: So, while other provincial and territorial health ministers have been giving daily or weekly updates on this issue as it evolves, Yukon's Minister of Health and Social Services has been silent.

The World Health Organization has suggested that, if you find yourself experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, you should self-isolate at home and refrain from going to work or other public areas. For health care staff and front-line workers, staying home from work means one less person providing an essential service to Yukoners. Canada's health minister has stated that the country is anticipating an outbreak of coronavirus in Canadian communities.

In the event of a community outbreak, numerous health care workers could be out of commission or isolated in their homes at the same time. So, if an event like this occurs, what plans are in place to ensure that there are no staffing shortages for essential health care services?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would respond by saying that systems are in place to conduct surveillances and to identify if there are diagnoses. Right now, in the Yukon, we don't have any cases of the coronavirus, and we are managing in the Yukon — as indicated, the chief medical officer is the lead on the file, and we are taking direction from the chief medical officer.

All activities associated with coronavirus preparedness are being managed by the Yukon public health emergency operations centre, with Dr. Catherine Elliott — who is the acting chief medical officer — as lead. Health and Social Services and the office of the chief medical officer of health — as part of several FPT committees on this issue — are receiving regular updates, and we will continue to work with our health professionals in Yukon to ensure that Yukoners have the necessary supports if and when they need them.

Question re: COVID-19 coronavirus

Ms. Van Bibber: Thanks to global precautions targeted at reducing the spread of COVID-19, it's clear that there is a widespread awareness of the risk of international travel at this time. International airlines have imposed restrictions and warnings about the most affected areas, but with the appearance of COVID-19 on every continent, it has not been enough to stop the spread entirely.

Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport brings in flights from across Canada and the world. Some of the countries heavily affected by coronavirus fly directly into the territory during the summer months.

What are the current screening procedures at the Whitehorse airport, and will there be increased screening and monitoring during the summer months for the higher volume of international visitors?

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I thank the member opposite for this very important question. Certainly, it is an area that my department is working closely on. Yukoners are absolutely proud to share our territory with the world. We know that this is a very serious issue throughout Canada. The department is actively monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on Yukon's tourism industry and is working with our local industry partners, Destination Canada, and the Yukon chief medical

officer, as our minister has indicated today, to assess the situation.

Tourism Yukon officials are participating in bi-weekly conference calls convened by Destination Canada with federal, provincial, and territorial counterparts to receive the latest data from federal government departments dealing with COVID-19 and to share provincial/territorial-specific data on the impacts of the virus within the tourism industry and in all regions throughout Canada. The Public Health Agency of Canada has put in place measures to detect and contain this infection. These include information and health screenings at multiple Canadian and international airports. Currently, the risk within Yukon is low.

Ms. Van Bibber: COVID-19 is having a significant negative impact on the global economy. The UN Conference on Trade and Development is reporting a \$50-billion drop in worldwide manufacturing exports in February alone. There is significant damage within the travel and tourism trade. International airlines have been cancelling flights and imposing restrictions from certain affected areas. Many destinations that rely solely on tourism are taking a major hit. Media is reporting that Canada is already seeing a massive decline in foreign visitors compared to this time last year. Many of our local businesses in Yukon survive on their tourism business, as well as the cruise ship industry.

Has the Minister of Tourism conducted an economic impact analysis of coronavirus on the tourism industry? Are there preparations being made to address a potential drop in tourism and investment this coming season?

Hon. Mr. Silver: As the member opposite did note, certain affected areas are reducing travel. Again, this is not the time to panic. This is the time to make sure that we're prepared. That's exactly what the Yukon government is doing right now.

All activities associated with coronavirus preparedness are being managed by the public health emergency operations, as the Minister of Health and Social Services has spoken to earlier. Health and Social Services is collaborating with Community Services, Emergency Measures Organization, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, Yukon Emergency Medical Services, and also our emergency response planning.

What we're doing, Mr. Speaker, is we are organizing together with the guidelines from the World Health Organization, we have adapted Public Health Association of Canada guidelines in the Yukon context, and we are working very closely with the BC government as well.

Members opposite and others talk about the tourism industry. We do have the Arctic Winter Games coming in 2020 and more than 4,000 participants from nine different areas from March 15 to 21, and we are prepared. The Yukon's chief medical officer, again, being the lead on this — what we're seeing here is a whole-of-government response from all of the ministers and departments to make sure that our industries thrive and continue.

Ms. Van Bibber: We have also seen a response from organizations of international events and that the risks around transmission of COVID-19 large-scale events and conferences are being cancelled and rescheduled. The United Nations

Commission on the Status of Women had to significantly scale back their annual conference. There have been international calls to the IOC to postpone the 2020 Summer Olympic Games in Japan. Much of this is due in part to the volume of people contained in one place and the capacity of hosts to deal with a major health event.

As was mentioned, we are hosting the Arctic Winter Games, with participants from Canada, Alaska, and international countries, and our understanding is that there will be direct international flights as well.

Steps and protection — could you please tell us what is being taken to protect athletes, visitors, and Yukoners during the games?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Indeed, the games are starting in a little over a week. We are working very closely with the chief medical officer of health, as the Minister of Health and Social Services stated. There has been a risk assessment done. I'm reading here that the Yukon's chief medical officer of health has assessed the risk for the Arctic Winter Games and COVID-19 as low. There always is concern around games and the health of our kids.

The Arctic Winter Games Host Society put out a statement at the beginning of this week — and I will make sure to table it for members opposite — where they discussed a whole list of ways in which they are working under the direction of the chief medical officer of health to make sure that risk is low and to keep prevention as high as possible.

The reality is that the folks from the games — at every games that I have gone to — they always work with young athletes, and often there is some concern around health, and so they actually prepare for this from a long time out — long before we ever heard of COVID-19. They just made sure to work with the chief medical officer of health around COVID-19.

I am happy to table the letter that was released from the Arctic Winter Games Host Society.

Question re: Dawson City waste-water treatment facility

Ms. White: Last week, the government announced that it had reached an out-of-court settlement with Corix, the company that was given the contract for the troubled Dawson City waste-water treatment plant. According to the press release, the lawsuit was dropped, and the company and government no longer have obligations toward each other. This means that the \$40-million lawsuit that the government started against the company to recoup the millions of dollars that Yukoners poured into this project is no more.

Mr. Speaker, how did this government go from believing that Yukoners were owed \$40 million for this failed infrastructure project to thinking that all is good and letting the company walk away without consequence?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I don't think that either of those things are where I have stood. I think that, from the beginning — the waste-water treatment plant went into operation in 2012, and it has never worked. It is meeting its standards at just a bare minimum, but all along, it has been costing way too much

money for Yukoners. It is nearly \$1 million to operate, and this is roughly 10 times what it costs the City of Whitehorse to operate their waste-water treatment.

The real question — I was not here in this role at the time when the government decided to go down this path and choose this plant. It is a costly piece of infrastructure. I think that Yukoners deserve a government that is responsible with the taxpayers' money. I think that Yukoners deserve a government that considers the full cost of the infrastructure that it builds, and Dawsonites certainly deserve a functioning and affordable sewage treatment option. So we are working closely with — and with the full support of — the Dawson City Council to pursue a lagoon for waste-water treatment.

Ms. White: Just a reminder that this was public money that was spent on the project, and the government has a responsibility to be transparent about the cost of this fiasco, even if it doesn't disclose details of the legal agreement.

I appreciate that the minister wants to move on, but if it was his own money that was sunk into this infrastructure project, I'm not so sure that he would see it this way.

If you hire a contractor to work on your house and the contractor's work needs to be redone immediately after and it caused a whole bunch of extra cost, I think that most Yukoners wouldn't just move on. They would want the contractor to pay to fix the mess that they created, especially if it is a multi-million-dollar mess.

Yukoners are getting fleeced, Mr. Speaker, and the minister prefers to move on, rather than seeking a fair deal.

How can the Premier or the minister sit on their hands knowing that Yukoners sunk millions and millions of dollars into the failed Dawson City treatment plant, which already needs to be replaced, and simply say, "Let's move on"?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I didn't say, "Let's simply move on." We reached a settlement with Corix. Well done.

The member opposite is suggesting that we are not interested in protecting taxpayers' money. No; we absolutely are. In fact, the challenge — as I have always said in this Legislature — is that beyond the dollars that were first invested into that plant before I ever arrived here, we worked first and foremost to make sure that plant was meeting its standards, as is our responsibility to do, and after that, we are working to get an affordable plant for Dawson and for Yukoners. That is exactly right, and I support what the member opposite says there.

We will be working — in fact, I think it was a year ago this past January when I put out a press release saying that we were working with the City of Dawson to develop a waste-water treatment facility because, unfortunately, the plant cost too much money to operate and we can see that it will continue to cost too much money over time.

So we recognize that we have to begin on a sustainable solution now, and I am very thankful to be working with the City of Dawson toward that end.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for mentioning a settlement — a settlement, of course, of which details have not been made public, and Yukoners don't know the extent of it.

The government's carelessness in looking after Yukoners' interests on this issue is staggering. They went from one day believing that Yukoners should get nearly \$40 million in compensation from Corix to walking away without a penny in hand. Not only will Yukoners have to pay to get a new sewage treatment system, but until then, the government has given up any recourse against the company for the exorbitant cost of running the facility. As we were told by the minister, it cost nearly \$1 million a year to operate the same facility.

Mr. Speaker, at the very least, will the government commit to some transparency by making public the complete and total cost of this mess? That includes the total cost of the building, the operating expenses, and the cost to replace this failed sewage facility.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I disagree with the assumptions that the member opposite is making. I will say — and have said openly and publicly — that the overall cost of the sewage treatment facility was \$30 million. I have said — and continue to say — that the ongoing operation and maintenance cost every year is just under \$1 million. I think that, this year, it's around \$950,000. It's way, way, way too expensive. I would like to thank the City of Dawson for putting in \$210,000 each year toward that operation.

We recognize that the plant is not sustainable. We need to change it out — absolutely. That's regardless of the relationship with Corix. We know that this plant was not a good choice. It was a wrong choice for us as Yukoners, and we're working to change it with the City of Dawson.

Question re: Climate change strategy

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, 2019 saw a rise of climate change action all over the world, including here in the Yukon. Municipalities, First Nations, and youth are forcing governments to take action and every sector is affected. Whether it was at the Mineral Exploration Roundup earlier this year or at any number of recent events, industry leaders have been clear — they know that they need to adapt their business model to the reality of climate change.

Just a few weeks ago in Alberta, a major tar sands project was cancelled because of the Alberta government's failure to reconcile resource development and climate change. Despite clear signs that industry is ready to act, this government's climate change strategy misses the mark and gives a free pass to the mining industry by setting intensity-based targets.

Why does this government insist on giving the mining industry a pass when the industry itself is ready to tackle climate change?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, Yukoners are calling for action to address climate change, and our government is absolutely listening. It is important that we take part in the global shift to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to build a green economy, and to fuel our lives with clean and reliable energy. As we work to address climate change in ways that ensure that our energy needs are met and that we have a thriving green economy that benefits all Yukoners, one thing is clear: We need to work together. What I saw — as we returned from the PDAC conference in Toronto — the minister did a fantastic

job of representing this jurisdiction as being a jurisdiction that has the mineral resources to fuel a green economy.

Ms. Hanson: Unfortunately, the minister did not address the issue of emissions. Yukon's total emissions could literally double under this government's draft plan and the government could still meet its target. This is not what a climate emergency calls for.

Another critical issue for the mining industry is housing. The lack of affordable housing in Whitehorse and in the communities makes it harder to recruit and retain staff for mining companies. This issue was even addressed by the Yukon Chamber of Mines executive director last year when he said — and I quote: "Housing is the number one issue and it needs to be addressed."

The fly-in/fly-out model that results is bad for the environment, bad for the economy, and bad for all Yukon.

What is this government's plan to increase the stock of rental accommodations and lot availability in Yukon communities so that the industry can stop relying on fly-in/fly-out models?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We will address both parts of the question. We will start with the output-based pricing systems. Mr. Speaker, the *Yukon Government Carbon Price Rebate Act* enables the development of those regulations to allow for rebates for output-based pricing systems — covered facilities — provided that the rebates support the reduction of emissions and of greenhouse gases. We are and we will be continuing to consult with industry to see how a rebate program can be designed for them that does support the lowering of the industrial carbon emissions.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to energy-intensive, trade-exposed sectors like mining, we must make sure that we are competitive with other jurisdictions and also understand that prices in these markets are set internationally. The federal OBPS is designed to recognize this disadvantage for miners, and they are unable to pass on the cost to their customers as well as the business sector can. We will continue to monitor the federal government's implementation of the OBPS, and we will continue to work with industry stakeholders here in the Yukon to make sure that this government continues to adhere to those commitments to having both the economy and the environment considered in all of our directions.

Ms. Hanson: We will continue to model the failed federal approach to this emissions control.

Mr. Speaker, while mining can be done responsibly, Yukoners are all too familiar with what happens when things go wrong. The Wolverine mine reclamation will cost at least \$25 million, an amount for which Yukoners are now on the hook. We are lucky that the federal government is responsible for the remediation cost at Mount Nansen and Faro, but every new mine since 2003 is Yukon's responsibility. While the government is trying to recoup some of the Wolverine remediation costs through the courts, Yukoners want to make sure that they won't be stuck with paying for the remediation of future mines. A report by PricewaterhouseCoopers made several recommendations to prevent these issues from happening again.

Has this government implemented any of the recommendations from that report — January of last year — since the Wolverine mine closure to guarantee that Yukoners won't be on the hook again for pricey remediation costs?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, we continue to work with PricewaterhouseCoopers, the receiver of the Wolverine mine site, to maintain focus on protecting the environment and human health and safety.

We are targeting a sale on this property as well, which I think is important for Yukoners to be aware of, in 2020, pending approval of the Supreme Court of Yukon.

The Government of Yukon has taken action to manage water issues at the site, including installing a plant to treat water in the tailings storage facility, which is currently within safe operating levels. I want to thank the Ross River Dena Council for their work as well as Alexco Environmental.

Costs associated with the receiver's administration of the mine and the upcoming sales process are covered by the Government of Yukon. I want to thank the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources for their leadership on this by bringing in a third party to do a review and analyze the history of this file, which is known to many. I want to thank them for ensuring that they implement the protocols that were identified in that plan so that we don't see a situation like this occurring again and that we protect Yukon taxpayers' money in situations such as this.

Question re: Alaska Highway corridor upgrades

Mr. Hassard: On November 13 as well as November 27 of last year, the Minister of Highways and Public Works was asked whether or not the government was in discussions with the Salvation Army about their property along the Alaska Highway where the Adult Resource Centre is located.

The minister stated that the government was only looking at the Airport Chalet; however, it turns out that the minister was wrong, as the YESAB documentation for the project specifically states that the government has been in discussion with a number of groups — Salvation Army included — about this project since February of 2019.

Why, when asked about this in November, did the minister not provide the House with accurate information? Was that intentional, or does he just not have a handle on his files?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the opportunity to address this issue on the floor of the House this afternoon.

What we're talking about is the highway improvements that this government has undertaken along the Alaska Highway through Whitehorse. These are necessary improvements to make sure that the highway meets the needs of the territory going forward. This is one of the busiest stretches of highway in northern Canada. The Yukon government has worked very, very hard with the community groups and business owners along the highway to make sure that the improvements that we're doing along this stretch of highway actually meet their needs.

Yes, the Yukon government has met with the Airport Chalet. That is the only building in the highway right-of-way. That's where the negotiations are going on.

As far as the other stakeholders, businesses, and whatnot, we have actually had conversations to tell them how the highway improvements are doing and how they're going to be executed. That's really where we stand.

In the process of having those discussions about how the driveways are going to change along the Alaska Highway, the Salvation Army came and said that they would like to talk to us about acquiring the property there. We haven't arranged any price or finished negotiations there. As a matter of fact, I was there at the Salvation Army's request.

Mr. Hassard: So, the proposed project does not see any overlap with the Salvation Army project in Hillcrest. Could the minister explain why they would have been in discussions with the Salvation Army with respect to this property going back potentially as far as February of last year? Is the government looking at putting a quarry or gravel pit in that area?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: No.

Mr. Hassard: So, I guess we're not sure if that no was whether the minister would explain or whether the government is putting a quarry or gravel pit in there. Maybe the minister can elaborate a little bit as to what the no was about in the last question.

Mr. Speaker, as we have discussed previously, the Liberal government's plans to put as many as eight lanes in certain areas through Hillcrest means that they will have to expropriate certain properties along the highway. This includes the Airport Chalet, which the government is currently in negotiations with about financial compensation. Can the minister tell us how much the government is projecting the cost for this compensation to be?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yukoners expect this government to do the right thing when it comes to highway improvements, and we are actually doing that. We are doing necessary highway improvements through Whitehorse to make sure that the residents who about the highway have safe access to the trail system and to the facilities downtown. They also ensure that the highway traffic can get through that safely. We're taking action; it's the responsible thing to do.

As to the Airport Chalet, the member opposite seems to suggest that we're going to conduct negotiations in public on the floor of this Legislative Assembly, and I'm not going to do that, Mr. Speaker. I'm not prepared to do that. We will inform this House when we have completed negotiations with the Airport Chalet owners. Those negotiations are underway. Once I have something to report, I will certainly come before the House.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

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

Clerk: Second Reading, Bill No. 203, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 203, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2020-21*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 203, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2020-21*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the Deputy Premier for asking me if I need glasses. I think I am good.

I am very pleased to present our government's fourth budget, the main estimates for the year 2020-21 fiscal year. This budget 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. It represents a vision of a territory with a vast and rich landscape that is managed responsibly for future generations. It signifies our government's enduring commitment to improving the lives of Yukoners. While they are technical in nature, budgets are ultimately successful when they improve the lives of those whom they are intended to serve.

Creating a comprehensive and measured budget is a challenge, but it is a critical task. One must manage a range of interests and priorities, provide support where it is needed, and ensure that sound investments are made that build on our progress while laying the foundation for a stronger, more sustainable future.

It also requires a dedicated team of people. I am deeply grateful for all of those who have contributed to the creation of this vision for a bright future for all Yukoners.

This year, we are very proud to be tabling a budget with a surplus of \$4.1 million. Our total estimated spending is \$1.62 billion, with a capital budget of \$369.7 million and \$1.25 billion for operation and maintenance. True to our commitment to Yukoners, we have balanced the budget, and we have done so a full year ahead of schedule. Returning to a surplus reflects our commitment to sound fiscal management and making responsible financial decisions for the benefit of all Yukoners.

For the third consecutive year, the main estimates are being tabled along with a five-year capital plan. This reflects our government's commitment to openness and transparency and to supporting First Nations, municipalities, and the private sector to coordinate and plan to meet the needs of Yukoners in all communities.

We remain focused on procurement strategies and ensuring that we take advantage of our limited construction season. This year, our government is issuing tenders worth over \$130 million at the right time to maximize our northern building season. This is an increase from last year, and it is the result of improvements to our whole-of-government approach to capital and procurement forecasting.

We are also releasing a fiscal and economic outlook for the Yukon that shows a territory experiencing the benefits of a strong, growing, and diversified economy.

This budget builds on our recent progress that once again puts Yukoners first. For the past three years, our government has been working hard to put Yukon's finances on a stable path

and to create an environment for Yukon people and also the Yukon economy to thrive.

Though we have accomplished much, there is always more work to do. This year's budget is not about flash; it's about substance. It continues our work to serve all Yukoners and build the foundation for an even stronger future for the people of this territory.

Our government is committed to providing programs and services tailored for Yukoners so that they can live healthier, happier lives. We are proud to be supporting recreational activities across the territory so that Yukoners of all ages can live active lives in their communities.

Our government is excited to be partnering with the City of Whitehorse to host the 2020 Arctic Winter Games and to mark 50 years of this international celebration of northern athletes and excellence in sports. We have contributed nearly \$2 million so far toward hosting the games, and we look forward to seeing Yukon athletes test their mettle against the best competition from across the north.

Earlier this year, Dylan Cozens made our territory extremely proud when he helped Team Canada win the world junior hockey championship. That same month, Brandon Cormier won the snowmobile freestyle gold medals at the X Games Aspen 2020. Both of these Yukoners have set a shining example of how far you can go when you put in hard work and follow your dreams. Both continue to be an inspiration to the next generation of Yukon athletes.

This year, we are investing nearly \$3.75 million to complete the new arena in Carmacks. This energy-efficient facility will provide a tremendous opportunity for residents to come to together year-round to participate in recreational activities, whether it is hockey, skating, curling, concerts, or community events. We are also putting more than \$2 million toward upgrading the arena in Mayo.

We have included money in this year's budget for new pools in Pelly Crossing and Ross River.

In Dawson City, we are planning for a new recreation centre and supporting a new Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in youth centre that will promote traditional activities and provide programs for youth. We have also allocated money to reconstruct the Whitehorse skateboard park. This overhaul has been a long time coming and it will support the park's increasing diversity of users, including those who ride skateboards, rollerblades, bikes, and scooters. The park will remain at its current location in Riverdale, next to three schools, providing additional recreation facilities for our students.

This year's budget includes money to finish the state-of-the-art track and field facility at F.H. Collins Secondary School, as well as for a basketball court at the school.

We are also proud to be investing in upgrades to the Polarettes Gymnastics Club and the Biathlon Yukon facility on Grey Mountain.

Investing in our territory's recreation infrastructure demonstrates our people-centred approach to wellness, which is helping Yukoners thrive.

One of Yukon's most defining features is its vast wilderness. There is much to explore and our government

continues to make Yukon parks more accessible to all. We have allocated money for playground equipment and improvements to boat docks and launches across the territory.

Our work on the Yukon parks strategy will set the long-term direction for a sustainable territorial park system and ensure that all Yukoners and visitors can continue to enjoy quality outdoor recreational opportunities.

As Yukoners know, our territory is growing. More learning spaces are needed to support families choosing to raise their children in Yukon, and we need to modernize our educational facilities to support the success of all Yukon students. We have included money this year to advancing planning of the new elementary school in Whistle Bend through engagement with neighbourhood residents, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and the City of Whitehorse.

We have also allocated funding for continuing engagement and planning with the Kluane First Nation for a school that meets the needs of their community.

We will continue to invest as necessary to ensure that the Ross River School remains safe while we work with the Ross River Dena Council to build a new school for their community.

We have included funding for a new French first language secondary school, which is ahead of schedule and poised to be completed this fall. Such diverse planning is long overdue, and we believe the strategic investments in our children will contribute to healthy, vibrant, and sustainable communities.

With a strong economy and a low unemployment rate, now is the right time to invest in Yukon's future, including the health and social services that Yukoners need to lead healthy, happy lives. This year, we will begin implementing actions from the independent comprehensive review of Yukon's health and social services systems. This review continues to be a timely exercise that has engaged Yukoners in an open, honest conversation about how to ensure effective integrated health care that responds to the needs into the future.

Mr. Speaker, this budget contains funding to implement 1Health, a modern integrated health information system for Yukon's hospitals and health facilities that will update the nearly 30-year-old Meditech system. 1Health will enable Yukon's health practitioners to be instantly and securely connected throughout the territory, improving the quality care and health outcomes for Yukoners.

As we have every year since coming into office, we are also including funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation so that it can continue to provide acute care for Yukon citizens in addition to programs such as medical imaging, lab work, surgeries, and chemotherapy. More than \$3 million is included to support Yukon's new expanding orthopaedic surgery program.

With two resident surgeons, this program has already improved accessibility and continuity of care for patients, while reducing travel time and costs. Of the 450 surgeries last year, 150 were cases that previously would have been sent to hospitals outside of Yukon. We are looking forward to continuing this trend to better serve Yukoners.

As part of our commitment to ensuring a more collaborative and integrated health care system, we continue to

support the nurse practitioner program in Mayo. This new model of collaborative care has received much support from the community and improved access to care for Mayo and area residents. This successful initiative will now be built into the community nursing program with a view to expand it to other communities, such as Carmacks, in the coming years.

We continue to work with partners to develop regulations and a model of care for midwifery in Yukon. This budget includes money to support the development of an implementation plan so that birthing options are increased for Yukon families. Introducing midwifery in Yukon remains a priority of our government, and we appreciate the commitment of our partners who are collaboratively working together to make it a reality within Yukon's unique health care system.

In our conversations about aging in place in the Yukon, our seniors have been very clear. They want to stay at home for as long as possible, rather than leave their home communities. Our government will continue supporting seniors to age in place. That is why we have budgeted an additional \$500,000 this year to expand the home care program to continue to provide services and supports to Yukon seniors where they want them.

Since our government took over operations last year, the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter has provided critical support for our most vulnerable and marginalized citizens. We have worked with our community partners to introduce changes to give more individuals access to a broader variety of the services that they need. While this initiative continues to evolve to better serve clients, we have already seen a reduction in visits to the emergency room and a reduction in the use of the arrest processing unit of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre as well. We will continue to provide these essential services to Yukoners in need.

We have also included money for renovations to the shelter to better integrate it into the neighbourhood, promote the safety and privacy of clients and staff, and support surrounding local businesses and residents. Supporting our most vulnerable and marginalized citizens includes ensuring that they have a safe and secure place to live and to call home.

Last year, we completed construction of Yukon's first-ever Housing First residence to provide permanent housing for those who are experiencing homelessness. This is an incredibly important initiative that marks a major shift in how Yukon provides housing and supports to those in acute need. Funding in this year's budget will ensure that this facility operates effectively to support Yukoners. We remain committed to the Housing First approach to address homelessness and have also included money in this budget to plan the introduction of a Housing First model for services in Watson Lake.

Supporting Yukoners when and where they need it means helping those who have experienced violence and sexual assault. We are providing funding this year to complete the implementation of the sexualized assault response team, reaffirming our commitment to deliver integrated wrap-around services focused on victims' needs. This includes a 24/7 sexualized assault support line that will help ensure that anyone who experiences sexualized assault and chooses to speak to

someone or access services receives the supports that they need in a constant and coordinated manner.

This budget includes funding to support the delivery of the Yukon strategy on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls along with the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues.

In addition, we are supporting violence prevention initiatives in Yukon communities through prevention of violence against aboriginal women funding. We will also be proposing legislative changes this Sitting to give victims of family or domestic violence additional leave to get the help that they need.

This is vital. It is very vital that we ensure that our territory is inclusive and free of discrimination. This is why our government will introduce legislation this Sitting to ban conversion therapy in Yukon.

We are also developing an LGBTQ2S+ action plan based on engagement with Yukon's LGBTQ2S+ community and providing operational funding to Queer Yukon Society. This will support capacity development in this sector and ensure local feedback and review of the LGBTQ2S+ action plan.

Mr. Speaker, our government is also making significant investments across Yukon's housing spectrum. We have budgeted \$9 million this year for the 47-unit mixed-use housing project in downtown Whitehorse. This initiative and project will increase the availability of affordable housing while promoting social inclusion.

We also continue to support the Challenge Disability Resource Group by including funding for their Cornerstone project, which will provide affordable and supportive housing to Yukoners in need. This budget also includes money to plan for the new multi-unit mixed-use housing projects in Old Crow and Carcross and will help meet community needs and support aging in place.

We have included \$3.6 million for the housing initiatives fund, which has supported over 350 new housing units across the territory since its introduction in 2018. It will continue to support First Nation governments, development corporations, developers, contractors, community organizations, and individuals to build new affordable housing. The budget for the municipal matching rental construction grant is also increasing to \$2 million this year to expand rental housing in Yukon.

Yukon's strong economic growth is generating increased demand for land in our territory. We have budgeted \$27 million this year to develop residential lots in Yukon communities. In Whistle Bend, we anticipate releasing more than 200 lots this year, including the first commercial lots in that neighbourhood.

This year's budget includes money for the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Marshall Creek subdivision — that development in Haines Junction. We have also worked with the Teslin Tlingit Council and the Village of Teslin to support lot development in the Lone Tree area and planning for a mixed-use subdivision near the airport in Teslin.

In the past three years, our government has released nearly 300 lots across the territory, with many more to come this year. We will continue to work in partnership with municipalities to support rural land development throughout the Yukon.

We will also be proposing legislative changes to allow for more registration of category A and category B settlement land in the Yukon Land Titles Office in a manner that does not impact aboriginal rights and title. In 2018, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation received the first certificate of title for category A settlement land from the Yukon Land Titles Office. Our government is committed to supporting more First Nations to register settlement land in order to increase opportunities for land and economic development across the territory while supporting the economic self-determination of Yukon First Nations.

Mr. Speaker, Yukon's economy is strong. We have had the lowest unemployment rate in Canada for the last three years. Whether it be through the new pilot in the Yukon nomination program, which allows workers to have multiple part-time jobs in Yukon communities, working with Yukon College — now Yukon University — to raise awareness of Yukon job opportunities for international students, or engaging directly with foreign governments, like the Republic of the Philippines, to support immigration programming, we recognize the importance of supporting the private sector. We continue to experience record tourism numbers, including increased border crossings, overnight visitations, and air arrivals. Rentals, sales, and tourism sector revenues continue to climb.

Tourism contributes 4.4 percent to Yukon's gross domestic product, the second highest of any jurisdiction in Canada. Our government recognizes the value of tourism as part of a strong, growing, and diversified economy. We are proud to be working with our partners to implement the new *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* to support the sustainable growth of the industry for the benefit of all Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, our mining sector's prospects look bright. Victoria Gold's Eagle Gold mine is forging ahead at a record pace after pouring its first gold bar in September 2019, and it has now increased both its reserve and annual production projections.

Pembridge Resources' Minto mine has reopened, milling its first copper in October of 2019. We have several more projects with significant potential in our vast territory, including Alexco's Keno Hill silver district, BMC Minerals' Kudz Ze Kayah, and Golden Predator's Brewery Creek projects.

To continue to engage development activities, we have budgeted \$1.4 million for the Yukon mineral exploration program to minimize investment risk and to support the exploration industry. Our government is proud to be working to create a mineral development strategy for the Yukon in full partnership with First Nations and alongside industry. An independent panel is currently conducting an engagement process to enhance Yukon's mineral investment climate, while respecting the rights and traditions of Yukon First Nations and upholding environmental standards. Additional important initiatives like Invest Canada North at the Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada in Toronto are also leveraging partnerships to raise our mineral industry's profile on a global stage.

In January 2020, our government signed an agreement with the Liard First Nation for upgrades to the existing Nahanni Range Road as part of the Yukon Resource Gateway project. This agreement will provide the Liard First Nation with important capacity training, employment and business opportunities for years to come, as well as supporting mineral activities in this area. This follows an agreement already in place with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation for the Carmacks bypass project.

The Yukon Resource Gateway project will see hundreds of millions of dollars invested in infrastructure that will support mineral development in the Yukon. Mr. Speaker, the minister also reported from PDAC this week an exciting deal also with the Ross River Dena Council for the Yukon Resource Gateway project.

Over the past few years, the Yukon has increasingly been recognized for supporting innovation and entrepreneurship. This budget will see \$500,000 invested with Panache Ventures, a national technology venture capital fund. Working in partnership with Yukon First Nation investment corporations, this investment will go toward developing an entrepreneurial and investor capacity-building program for the territory, investment in our knowledge sector, and help to identify our economy and build the foundation for a stronger economic future.

\$23 million is included in this year's budget to begin construction of the Dempster fibre project. This significant and long-awaited project will help create a more modern and accessible Yukon, while improving Internet redundancy and supporting resilient communities throughout the territory and across the north.

Our government is working hard to ensure that Yukon's private sector can flourish. This year, we will be fulfilling two significant commitments that we made to Yukon businesses: cutting the small business tax from two percent to zero; and modernizing the business investment tax credit.

Cutting the small business tax will save Yukon businesses \$2 million per year, and expanding the business investment tax credit will enable more investments to support businesses — Yukon businesses like Air North. Encouraging a stronger private sector with new opportunities remains a priority of our government, and we are very proud to be delivering on these commitments.

Our government is also working hard to make life affordable for Yukoners. We will be proposing amendments to the Yukon basic personal amount under the *Income Tax Act* to align with recent changes made by the Government of Canada. Phasing in over four years, these changes will result in Yukoners saving around \$2.4 million in taxes per year, up to \$9.6 million in total by 2033. These changes, geared toward low- and middle-income earners, will mean more money in the pockets of those who need it the most.

Yukon's minimum wage will be increased on April 1, 2020, from \$12.71 per hour to \$13.71 per hour. This increase will support Yukoners who need it most, while ensuring that Yukon businesses remain competitive in a tight labour market. Overall, Yukon workers' average weekly earnings have

increased over the last few years, reaching a record high for Yukon in the fall of 2019, and are now the fourth-highest in Canada.

From decreasing taxes on small business to putting more money in the pockets of Yukoners who need it the most, our government is working hard to make life more affordable in Yukon and to help Yukon businesses flourish. We remain committed to supporting a diverse, growing economy that provides good jobs for Yukoners in an environmentally responsible way.

Mr. Speaker, our government continues to reduce red tape and streamline operations to make it easier for Yukoners and businesses to access government services. We are modernizing our systems, including the Yukon corporate online registry, the new YuDriv licensing system, and the digitalization of our land titles system.

We have allocated money this year for the new e-procurement system that will enable businesses to submit bids online, reducing red tape and costs for businesses. This modern system will improve our ability to analyze spending across government and focus our efforts on where it maximizes economic benefits for Yukoners.

We will continue to find innovative ways to make lives better for Yukoners and Yukon businesses.

Mr. Speaker, our government has built strong government-to-government relationships that foster reconciliation for the benefit of all Yukoners. We recently completed the Nares bridge in Carcross — a project that set a template for how governments can collaborate with First Nation governments on infrastructure development.

The amount of \$2.5 million is allocated in this year's budget for the Nisutlin Bay bridge project in Teslin, which will follow the same template of collaboration.

We are prioritizing community-driven projects because we can see the positive impact that they have on Yukoners. This budget continues funding for a community centre in Old Crow and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation community hub in McIntyre as well.

We have budgeted money for energy retrofits to the Watson Lake administrative building and also for a new public works and fire hall building in the town. This building will consolidate city services and help meet the needs of Watson Lake for many years to come. We will also be retrofitting the Old Territorial Administrative Building in Dawson to support the Dawson City Museum and help preserve this important heritage asset.

Each Yukon community is unique, and each community knows best what they need. Our government will continue to work collaboratively with communities all across the territory to identify local solutions and advance community-driven priorities that benefit Yukoners.

Our government is committed to infrastructure projects that contribute to healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities across the territory. While some of them are not glamorous, they have lasting positive impacts on our communities. This year, we have budgeted money for upgrades to the lagoon in Old Crow and to finalize the new lagoon in Ross River. There

is also funding to upgrade water and waste-water infrastructure in Dawson City, improvements to Faro's water, sewer, and road networks, and the Pelly Crossing water distribution project. We have, as well, included money for the public works facility in Mayo and for Teslin's public works facility.

We are also making significant improvements to the north Klondike Highway to improve safety and increase capacity on one of the territory's busiest highways. This initiative will see \$157 million spent over the next 10 years, including more than \$13 million in this year's budget — the largest single capital project in Yukon history.

Living in the north, we know that climate change is much more than a theory. It is the cracks in our highways and the shifts in the foundations of our buildings. It has real impacts in the communities that we call home. Our government recognizes the urgency of this climate change crisis. This is why we are supporting the creation of climate-resilient communities through funding for energy retrofits and infrastructure that can withstand changing permafrost and extreme weather events.

Following extensive public engagement, we are finalizing a climate change, energy, and green economy strategy for Yukon. This strategy is ambitious, and it is absolutely necessary. We have budgeted \$1 million to begin implementation of this 10-year strategy, in addition to \$29.6 million for climate change, energy, and green economy projects. Our government will spend more than \$120 million over four years, starting in 2019, for energy-efficiency retrofits for residential, commercial, and institutional buildings throughout the Yukon. This works out to an average of \$30 million annually and means that our government has achieved a vital goal that we set forth for ourselves in 2016.

Our retrofit programs are delivering measurable benefits by relieving pressure on our energy generation needs, reducing our collective greenhouse gas emissions, and creating green jobs that stimulate Yukon's economy.

Still, we need to do more. This budget includes funding for several specific projects that will help communities move toward this goal, including green energy retrofits for the Teslin municipal centre and energy upgrades for the city hall in Whitehorse. We are also helping communities to support active transportation, including more than \$2 million to improve the public transit service in Whitehorse as well as expanding the city's compost facility.

Our government is changing the way that we fund wildland fire management to make sure that we can access the funds and resources needed to fight longer and more intense fire seasons, as we saw in 2019. We are investing more toward prevention. This year, \$5 million in new funding is allocated for wildfire suppression in addition to funding for fuel management, fire mitigation projects, and to extend the season for First Nation crew members. We have also started developing wildland fire protection plans with Yukon communities. By being proactive, we can mitigate forest fire risk while creating jobs in communities in areas such as timber harvesting and supporting Yukon's growing biomass industry.

The community of Teslin presents a great example of this. They are now heating 13 major buildings in the community

through a district heating system with 10 biomass boilers fuelled by locally harvested waste wood. This has also created employment opportunities for 18 people in the community. What a great example of community-driven solutions with positive impacts that reach beyond their community.

Our government is also prioritizing biomass as a heating option for government buildings. This year's budget includes \$3.7 million to expand the Whitehorse Correctional Centre's existing biomass heating system. This will be the largest biomass project yet in Whitehorse, with another major step toward supporting Yukon's biomass industry.

As we work to address climate change in a way that ensures our energy needs are met and we have a thriving green economy that benefits all Yukoners, one thing is clear: We need to work together. A historic moment for Yukon took place this summer on the banks of the Stewart River. The Peel watershed regional land use plan was finalized after 15 years. Leaders from four First Nations came together with the Yukon government to celebrate this incredible accomplishment — a huge step toward reconciliation for Canada. We are proud to include money in this year's budget to implement this historic plan together with our partners.

Mr. Speaker, our government is focusing in on what matters: supporting Yukoners of all walks of life in all communities. This budget reflects our government's priorities — Yukoners' priorities. We are taking a people-centred approach to wellness to help Yukoners thrive. We are making strategic investments that contribute to healthy, vibrant, and sustainable communities. We are strengthening government-to-government relationships with First Nations to foster reconciliation.

We are supporting a diverse, growing economy that provides good jobs for Yukoners in an environmentally responsible way. We are delivering on these commitments by listening to Yukoners, identifying local solutions, supporting community-driven projects, and working in collaboration with our partners. We continue to lay the foundations for a stronger future for Yukon and remain committed to doing so in a fiscally responsible way.

We committed to supporting Yukon businesses, and we are delivering on that commitment by cutting the small business tax rate and increasing the business investment tax credit.

We committed to providing \$30 million toward retrofits to help Yukoners and Yukon businesses make their homes and facilities more energy efficient, and we are delivering on that commitment. We committed to taking action to address Yukon's climate change emergency, and we are doing that by investing in an ambitious climate change, energy, and green economy strategy, developed in partnership with municipalities, First Nations, and most importantly, Yukoners.

We committed to returning to a balanced budget in 2021, and we are surpassing that target by tabling a surplus budget today. We committed to improving the lives of all Yukoners, and we continue to deliver on that commitment with this budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mahsi' cho. Günilshish. Merci.

Motion to adjourn debate

Mr. Hassard: I move that debate be now adjourned.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition that debate be now adjourned.

Motion to adjourn debate on second reading of Bill No. 203 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 2:49 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled March 5, 2020:

34-3-30

Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from Sitzings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees (March 5, 2020) (Speaker Clarke)

34-3-31

Sixteenth Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees (March 5, 2020) (Adel)

The following legislative returns were tabled March 5, 2020:

34-3-15

Response to Written Question No. 3 re: licensed physicians and nurses practising in Yukon (Frost)

34-3-16

Response to Written Question No. 4 re: website and visual identity costs for the Department of Health and Social Services (Frost)