



Yukon Legislative Assembly

1st Session

33rd Legislature

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April 7, 2016 to May 26, 2016

NOTE

The 2016 Spring Sitting of the First Session of the Thirty-Third Legislature occupies two volumes

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1st Session

33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, April 7, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER — Hon. David Laxton, MLA, Porter Creek Centre

DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Darrell Pasloski	Mountainview	Premier Minister responsible for Finance; Executive Council Office
Hon. Elaine Taylor	Whitehorse West	Deputy Premier Minister responsible for Tourism and Culture; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Justice; Yukon Development Corporation/ Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Doug Graham	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Education
Hon. Scott Kent	Riverdale North	Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources; Highways and Public Works
Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Community Services; Public Service Commission
Hon. Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Minister responsible for Environment
Hon. Mike Nixon	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin	Minister responsible for Economic Development; Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Party

Darius Elias	Government House Leader Vuntut Gwitchin
Hon. David Laxton	Porter Creek Centre
Patti McLeod	Watson Lake

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

New Democratic Party

Elizabeth Hanson	Leader of the Official Opposition Whitehorse Centre
Jan Stick	Official Opposition House Leader Riverdale South
Kevin Barr	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes
Lois Moorcroft	Copperbelt South
Jim Tredger	Mayo-Tatchun
Kate White	Takhini-Kopper King

Liberal Party

Sandy Silver	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Floyd McCormick
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Rudy Couture
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Doris McLean
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, April 7, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

INTRODUCTION OF PAGES

Speaker: It gives me great pleasure to start this first day of our Spring Sitting and also to start with announcing that the following students will be serving the House as legislative pages for the 2016 Spring Sitting. I apologize in advance if I mispronounce their names.

They are: Sophie Janke, Cole Sinclair and Sana Javed from F.H. Collins Secondary School; Nila Stinson, Makala Ryles and Anthony Lundgaard from Porter Creek Secondary School; Andrew Smyth from Vanier Catholic Secondary School; and Vincent Aubert Ménard from École Émilie Tremblay. Today we have with us Anthony and Sophie. I would ask all members to welcome them to the House at this time.

Applause

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes that have been made to the Order Paper. The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as they are outdated: Motions No. 155 and 903, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition; Motions No. 312, 364, 548, 603, 800, 833, 1008, 1051, 1069 and 1102, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party; Motions No. 316 and 845, standing in the name of the Member for Mayo-Tatchun; Motions No. 652, 719 and 747, standing in the name of the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes; Motions No. 675 and 887, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South; Motion No. 877, standing in the name of the Minister of Health and Social Services; Motions No. 894 and 964, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin; Motions No. 952, 961 and 962, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake; and Motion No. 1073, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as the action requested in the motion has been fulfilled in whole or in part: Motions No. 20, 687, 1004, 1021 and 1022, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party; Motions No. 28 and 842, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South; Motions No. 123 and 246, standing in the name of the Member for Mayo-Tatchun; Motions No. 134, 682, 921 and 1056, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake; Motions No. 210 and 1032, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King; Motion No. 968, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition; and Motions No. 1060, 1063, 1070,

1083 and 1092, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Martin Kienzler, Outstanding Partner award

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise today on behalf of all of my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly to pay tribute to Dawson City resident and Yukon government employee, Martin Kienzler. Aside from his many contributions to the community, he was recently awarded the Outstanding Partner award by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

His efforts and institutional knowledge, for that matter — in partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Service — has contributed greatly to the management of the international Porcupine caribou herd. As the first hire for the regional wildlife technician for the northern Yukon region, Martin's efforts, both in the field and in the office over the last 18 years, have undoubtedly contributed to the Porcupine caribou herd's substantial population growth of almost 200 percent. His technical expertise and community engagement have fostered strong relationships and partnerships in both Canada and in the United States, in turn developing a strong and healthy Porcupine caribou herd, vital to the north.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent Martin and the many other community members who work hard to make the north prosperous and sustainable.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to rise to acknowledge a few people who we have in the gallery today. I would like to start by acknowledging that His Worship Mayor Dan Curtis is with us. Samson Hartland probably is in perhaps a dual role — I can't tell what your jacket says — as member of the Whitehorse council and also as executive director for the Yukon Chamber of Mines. We also have Peter Turner with the Yukon Chamber of Commerce here, and Mr. Jonas Smith, who is very familiar to this side of the House and I'm sure to the other side as well. Connor Whitehouse is here as well, and Conrad Tiedeman and Jonathan Preston. It's nice to see Jonathan Preston as well. I invite all members here today to welcome them to the House.

Applause

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge a number of people in the gallery today. With us today are: John Streicker, Liberal candidate for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes; Jeane Lassen, who has recently become the Liberal candidate for Takhini-Kopper King; and Don Hutton — I

don't know if Don made it today — no, Don did not make it. We also have Karlo Krauzig, who is a local businessman who is seeking the nomination for Porter Creek Centre. We have Laura Cabott, as well, who is here. She is the chair of the territorial campaign committee and also Devin Bailey, the president of the Yukon Liberal Association. I see Rose Sellars, as well, is here. She is representing the region of Copperbelt South and also Russ Hobbis, who is seeking the nomination as well for the region of Porter Creek South.

Also in the gallery is Brittanee Laverdure — I hope I pronounced that correctly — close anyway — who is no stranger to the Yukon. She is a national wrestling team silver medalist at the Commonwealth Games. I think she needs congratulations as well because she will be called to the Bar tomorrow as well. We also have Moira Lassen, as well, who is a volunteer at Sport Yukon. She is a member of the International Weightlifting executive and Mr. Speaker, the first woman elected to the executive.

So I would like to wish a hello to all and, to all the friends in the gallery, could everybody please say hello.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity to welcome people to the gallery as well — Marguerite Roberts and Rob and Mary Anne Lewis, who collectively have probably spent about 300 hours in this Legislative Assembly so far, watching Question Period, so thank you for that.

Gill Cracknell and Bonnie Dalziel — it's a pleasure to see you as well. Thank you for coming.

Applause

Mr. Barr: I would like to welcome to the House my friend, storyteller, MC extraordinaire and long-time comedian, Ms. Sharon Shorty — a good friend of mine — to the House. Welcome.

Applause

Speaker: Before moving on, I would like to acknowledge that, in the Speaker's gallery, I have some guests. They are: Yukon Ombudsman and Information and Privacy Commissioner and Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner, Diane McLeod-McKay with us, and also joining her is David Jones, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. Sitting in the front row is my dear friend and fellow Speaker, Sharon Shorty, a member of the Teslin Tlingit First Nation, but also the Speaker for the General Council of the Teslin Tlingit Council. Günilschish.

Applause

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: The Chair has for tabling the 2015 annual report of the Ombudsman, which is tabled pursuant to section 31 of the *Ombudsman Act*.

The Chair also has for tabling the 2015 annual report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, which is tabled

pursuant to section 47 of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

The Chair also has for tabling the 2015 annual report of the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner, which is tabled pursuant to section 43 of the *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act*. Members will note that this is the first annual report issued by the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner.

Finally, 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 April 7, 2016.

Are there any further reports or documents for tabling?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have for tabling the project charter for the assessment of the proposed Casino mine project.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 23: *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 23 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?

Bill No. 22: *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 22, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 22, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 22 agreed to

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to withdraw its support for the four controversial amendments to

the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*, and that the Government of Yukon commit to working with the Government of Canada and Yukon First Nation governments to expedite the amendments to YESAA necessary to restore the spirit and intent of YESAA as negotiated by the parties to Yukon First Nation final agreements.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to carry out their commitment to make Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday in Yukon, release a timeline for public consultation, and provide this House with an update on what work has been completed to date.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to commit to develop and invest in a national suicide prevention plan.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to reaffirm its commitment to pay equity under the *Human Rights Act* section 15(1) in recognition that female full-time Government of Yukon employees have not yet achieved wage parity with their male counterparts.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to conduct a socio-economic analysis of the potential job creation and economic benefits of developing a green renewable energy industry in the Yukon.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to uphold its election commitments to roll back Canada's ineffective and harmful mandatory minimum sentencing practices.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure healthy environments and resources for its citizens to encourage activity, good nutrition, and community wellness.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to inform Yukoners of:

- (1) how many of the last at least 10 deputies who have left the Government of Yukon in the last two years have received a severance package; and
- (2) the total amount of these severance packages.

Lastly, I give notice of the following motion for the production of papers:

THAT the House do order the return of all current applications for infrastructure funding that the Government of Yukon has submitted to the Government of Canada.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?
This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Economic growth

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, you know, just as April brings spring snowfalls, another year of Yukon Party governance has brought economic hardship for ordinary Yukoners. The Conference Board of Canada's statistics have again confirmed that Yukon's gross domestic product has declined for a third straight year.

Despite this, this government has said in this House that they have done all they wanted to do within their mandate. How many Yukoners recall seeing three years of economic decline in the Yukon Party's platform?

Yesterday, the Premier was asked to explain the assumptions he relied upon to project economic growth in Yukon for the next three years. That is a legitimate question, not just for the business community, but for all Yukon citizens. Unfortunately, the Premier was unable to answer the question yesterday. Now that he has had some time to think it over, how does the Premier respond today?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: It is unfortunate that the Leader of the New Democratic Party wouldn't understand the fact that, although we would like to control all of the factors that influence an economy, unfortunately we do not. One of the biggest factors influencing an economy is commodity prices. That has been the major challenge that this jurisdiction — and not only this jurisdiction, but many other jurisdictions that are resource-based — has struggled with in the past few years.

In spite of that, we have not sat still waiting for commodity prices to go forward. We continue to make record investments in infrastructure. We focus on the creation of the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining to train Yukoners for the next wave of Yukon mining. We focus on ensuring that we are going to improve our mine licensing and permitting, our regulatory processes, and create a mineral development strategy — all of that, of course, in conjunction with working with Yukon First Nations and with the mining industry.

Ms. Hanson: The Yukon Party has been in power for almost 14 years, yet they have still not grasped the basics of building a robust, durable, local economy. After more than four years of prodding and our positive suggestions for action to recognize and encourage the growth of Yukon-based businesses, the government has decided, mere months before an election, that it suddenly cares about supporting local Yukon businesses. Where was this thinking when earlier this year the Yukon government awarded the Faro mine remediation contract to a California-based multinational?

There is a clear disconnect between what the Premier says and what he actually does. Why has the government waited until an election year to make supporting Yukon businesses a priority?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: In fact, yesterday I was proud of an e-mail that was sent to every Yukon government employee in this territory that simply stated how important it is for our government to buy local when we can see products here that are competitive — to buy local because, not only do local companies employ local people, they also are very important parts of our society and of our community. These are the same companies that are ensuring that the kids who want to play hockey have a sponsorship — or soccer — or invest in things like the Rotary Music Festival. There is tremendous support in this community by the local businesses and it is in fact very important that this government recognizes that and ensures that, whenever possible, we support those local businesses.

Ms. Hanson: It is kind of ironic; those on this side aren't the ones who hold their biggest fundraisers of the year on a yacht in Vancouver harbour with Outside companies — so much for supporting local businesses.

We know that Yukon is facing hard times, but we also know that there are ways we can show leadership and rebuild our economy. Yukon is ready to rise to that challenge. Yukoners want to diversify our economy, build green infrastructure and join the rest of the world by looking at ways to harness the vast renewable resources in our territory.

Will the Premier listen to Yukoners and work with them to build a green economy, or is he content to wait for another round of the boom-and-bust cycle to repeat itself?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, it is quite simple. This is a government that is looking for sensible solutions to real problems. We are focused on real issues and not on ideology. I am very proud to be tabling a budget this afternoon that will have some very simple and focused areas that we will be investing in. We are going to continue to work at strengthening our economy and renewing our mining industry. We are going to focus on better education and creating more opportunities for our students. We are going to ensure that our families have the best health care possible. We are going to continue to invest in infrastructure that will create jobs today and ensure that we have valuable infrastructure that we will use for many years to come.

Question re: Procurement policy

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, since this government has been elected, we have been getting more and more calls from Yukoners who are concerned about procurement practices that fail to ensure that government purchases benefit Yukon businesses. The government has heard these calls too, and after pressure from Yukon businesses and the Yukon NDP they established the Procurement Advisory Panel. Yesterday, at the Chamber of Commerce luncheon, the Premier unveiled his solution for Yukon's procurement woes: a few tweaks to the procurement system and an e-mail that he sent to all Yukon government employees asking them to buy local.

Mr. Speaker, why does the Premier think that an e-mail to Yukon public servants is an appropriate solution to the serious problems facing Yukon procurement?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, our government has supported and will continue to support the principle of open competition and encourage responsible contracting practices that are fair and open to Yukoners and Yukon businesses. The member opposite raised the Procurement Advisory Panel that I as minister, with the support of my colleagues, established in November of last year. We would expect a report to come from that advisory panel in the coming months that I will table in the Legislative Assembly during this Sitting. Since that time, we have had a procurement forum hosted here in Whitehorse that was very well-attended. I believe that over 200 registered delegates attended that forum — an opportunity for a reverse trade show there as well.

I think it is important to note that of the \$294 million spent on services and construction contracts in the 2014-15 fiscal year, 74 percent of those contracts went to local companies. In that same year, 82 percent of the service and construction contracts — 3,600 of 4,400 — went to local companies as well, and 19 of the 20 largest contracts awarded in 2014-15 went to local contractors. We are doing a good job. Yukon contractors are doing a great job of competing when it comes to bidding on contracts. We will continue to work to advance the procurement process so that it does offer opportunities for local companies.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, I would say it is clear that this government realized that it hasn't done enough when it comes to supporting local businesses and contractors through local procurement. Just before their term is up, they are searching for a last-minute solution. Lucky for them, the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce has launched a great buy-local campaign that the government decided to piggyback on. To be clear, the Premier requested that Yukon government employees buy local if possible. There was no mention that he would be making changes to the procurement directive or supports for management to make good on this buy-local campaign. As far as pre-election stunts go, this takes the cake.

Mr. Speaker, what specific changes to Yukon's procurement directives has this government made to ensure that the "buy-local" the Premier talks about in his e-mail actually happens?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, of course the government recognizes that local businesses — small businesses — contribute immensely to our Yukon economy. I mentioned stats in my previous answer — 74 percent of the \$294 million spent on service and construction contracts in the 2014-15 fiscal year went to local companies; 19 of the 20 largest contracts awarded in 2014-15 went to local contractors. Mr. Speaker, that is 95 percent of the contracts awarded in that year.

There has been a lot that we've undertaken on procurement. I certainly recognize that, as minister, as a focus and something that we need to move on. The previous Minister of Highways and Public Works made the good decision and a popular decision to establish the Procurement

Support Centre. That was done under this government in order to assist Yukon government and our contracting community with identifying challenges on the procurement side of things.

We have done an awful lot when it comes to procurement, but we recognize that there is more work that can be done. Over the past week, the Premier, the Minister of Economic Development and I hosted community conversations with two groups of local contractors so that we could hear directly from them on what their concerns are. Again, when the Procurement Advisory Panel report is ready later on —

Speaker: Order, please. Final supplementary.

Ms. Moorcroft: To be clear, an e-mail to Yukon government employees asking them to buy local if they can is an embarrassing response to Yukon's procurement woes. This government is scrambling to fix problems that they themselves created. It is this government that removed local hire provisions from the procurement directive. It is this government that is enforcing the parts of the *Agreement on Internal Trade* that prevents them from giving preference to Yukon businesses. An e-mail isn't going to reverse those losses, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday the Premier said that his party relentlessly stands up for Yukoners when it comes to procurement. That simply isn't true. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier acknowledge that Yukon's procurement policy has become less favourable for Yukon businesses under his watch?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I won't repeat the statistics that I provided in earlier responses, but they certainly speak to the competitiveness and the ability of local contractors to compete, not only against each other within the Yukon, but against companies that are from other jurisdictions. Again, when it comes to procurement, we have done an awful lot. I mentioned the establishment of the Procurement Support Centre. We continue to work on issues when it comes to procurement, and some of the themes, of course, that emerged from the Procurement Advisory Panel work and engagement with Yukon businesses are around local purchasing and local contracting.

So again, it's something that we want to make sure we get right. We also want to make sure that we're responsible with taxpayers' dollars. We're a party and a government that stands up for business. We're a pro-business government, but we also want to recognize that those businesses here can and do compete against other businesses and we have a responsibility to spend taxpayers' dollars wisely and we'll continue to do that and continue to find ways where local companies can be successful in bidding on government contracts and where government purchases are involved.

Question re: Territorial formula financing

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, this year the annual transfer payment from the Government of Canada to the Yukon is on the rise again. It's at a record level, in fact. We received \$21 million more than last year and we continue to rely on Ottawa for more than 80 percent of our budget.

Despite years of promises from the Yukon Party, we remain as dependent as ever on Ottawa. The Yukon Party promises to make Yukon a net contributor to Canada and we are failing in that regard. Despite yet another increase, the government is still unhappy and wanted more from Ottawa. The changes should come as no surprise to the Premier because he and a former federal Conservative Finance minister signed the agreement that we have in place now. Changes that were implemented last fall are part of that agreement, and the government has known about these changes since 2012, and certainly since 2014.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier confirm for the record that the transfer payment from Ottawa is up some \$21 million over last year?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, I guess I can only describe that as Liberal math. It's quite clear what we have here, and it was very well-articulated to all Yukoners back in December when, in December, we were notified by the federal government that they were going to reduce the territorial formula financing by \$23 million. This is a very articulate, comprehensive formula that clearly states what the amount of the transfer payment should be. Only a Liberal could come, stand up in this House and say that it was an increase. It was an increase, Mr. Speaker, of the total that we received the previous year. It was a cut to what we were supposed to receive, Mr. Speaker. That is the Liberal math.

Mr. Silver: I guess, from that answer, Mr. Speaker, it's up and it's down. We received more money than last year, Mr. Speaker; that is a fact. The current agreement was signed by the Premier and the former Conservative Minister of Finance. I will be tabling a timeline outlining the history of the changes that the Premier now says he knows nothing about. It shows clearly that this government has known about the changes since 2012 and was even provided estimates about the financial impact.

The only thing that changed is the fact that the new government in Ottawa is red instead of blue, and the Premier seems to not like that. Attacking the new Finance minister as disingenuous, as the Premier did, is hardly a way to build a new relationship or get along with another level of government, Mr. Speaker.

Instead of making this political, he should have simply gotten down to work, as many others did. Why did the Premier insist on making a political statement about the future of the federal transfers instead of admitting that he knew about the changes three years ago?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, I will stand up in this House every day and defend Yukoners, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I guess not only was I wrong, but so were the Finance ministers and Premiers of Nunavut and Northwest Territories, who themselves also said that this was a cut from what we were supposed to receive. This is the truth. Math — Liberal math — is always what it is, Mr. Speaker. What the people of Yukon know is that the Yukon Party speaks only for Yukon. We are the only party in this territory that is not encumbered to be the little sister of their federal political party. We will continue to stand up for Yukoners.

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, the changes we are discussing were set in motion by the former Conservative government. They are part of an agreement that the Premier signed. To try to blame the federal Liberals is just politicking as we go forward into a fall election.

Now, attacking the federal Finance minister as disingenuous is just another example of this government's inability to work with anybody else, other than Conservatives. It is also counterproductive, considering the issues that are ahead of us — the work ahead of us with the Government of Canada in areas such as infrastructure spending, Mr. Speaker.

The document that I will table shows that the government has known about this for three years now. Instead of being open and accountable about it, the government tried to pretend that it was a total shock. The drop in corporate income tax and our shrinking economy is a much larger issue, but you don't hear the Premier talking about that. \$14-million less than last year — that's Liberal math.

Why won't the Premier admit that he knew about these changes three years ago?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Liberal Party is absolutely wrong. The changes that occurred were as a result of Statistics Canada making a methodological change to how they looked at the data. That became obvious in December. As a result of that, the federal government notified us that we would be receiving \$23 million less than what was agreed to. We were just finishing the second year of a five-year agreement. My conversation with the federal minister was that the end of that agreement would be the right time to have a discussion about making such changes.

I will acknowledge the work that was done by the federal Finance minister to see that we got \$16.5 million of the \$23 million eventually. However, that still left us \$6.5 million short of what was articulated and laid out in the territorial formula financing agreement.

Question re: Mental health services

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, when the federal mental health strategy for Canada was launched in Whitehorse in 2012, this government promised a territorial mental health strategy. Yukoners have been promised one every year, and Yukoners have been waiting many years. In its 2014-15 annual report, the Yukon Hospital Corporation's chief of medical staff identified psychiatry and the care of the mentally ill patient as the largest gap in services in the Yukon. The most recent Yukon Health and Social Services Council annual report repeated the same thing.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government finally act and adopt a mental health strategy with clear goals, timelines and measurable outcomes?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for this question, particularly as it gives me an opportunity to highlight the good work done by not only government, but non-profits around the territory, including Many Rivers and other organizations. It gives me an opportunity to highlight the work done by many communities and First Nation partners as well as business like Northwestel

and Bell through their Bell Let's Talk program. The member opposite is well aware that we announced a \$1-million increase in services and supports for mental health over this next year. We just announced that this morning and are looking forward at some great work throughout the territory in that regard.

We know that mental health issues are important. They are very important to this government, but mental health services aren't just a responsibility of government. They are a responsibility of communities, First Nations, businesses and local non-profit organizations. We do look forward to the collaboration with those organizations and the Yukon Medical Association, as well as the Yukon Hospital Corporation on a move-forward basis.

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, a million dollars is not a mental health strategy, and it is not very much money. Communities and organizations are frustrated by the lack of a strategy that supports them to do the good work that they try to do. Meanwhile, Yukoners, including children, youth, adults and seniors, are falling through substantial gaps in service. Yukoners experiencing a mental health crisis are sometimes admitted to the secure medical unit at Whitehorse General Hospital — an inadequate facility for those with a mental health crisis. Others end up at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

Mr. Speaker, can this government confirm that they will come out with a strategy with goals, timelines and measurable outcomes for all Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, again, I thank the member opposite for this question. It is a true honour and a privilege to stand on the floor of this Legislature and talk about the collaborative efforts that are taking place within our territory. I mentioned earlier the relationship that we have with Bell and Northwestel through Bell's Let's Talk program, through organizations like Many Rivers, Teegatha'Oh Zheh and Challenge — and the list truly does go on.

I just announced this morning \$1 million, which is a significant investment in mental health — over this next year throughout our territory and we do look forward to those initiatives being rolled out. I can tell members of this Legislature that there are a number of programs and services offered by non-profits and by government, such as: FRIENDS, which is through Bell funding; mental health first aid; Living Life to the Full through the Mental Health Association — a very important partner — and we look forward to working collaboratively with that organization as we move forward and prepare to roll out the mental wellness strategy.

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, I think I heard a mental wellness strategy in that answer. I hope it's true. Hopefully this plan will fill in some of the substantial gaps in service. But as far as demonstrating true concern for mental health by this government, it's simply too late. People are frustrated by the lack of service. I talk to individuals who have long wait-times or who are not able to receive the services they require in Whitehorse and in the communities.

Yukoners continue to be sent Outside to facilities to address their immediate or long-term needs. These people are separated from family and from their communities and often when they return, it's to the same situation. Millions — many millions of dollars — are spent on these individuals.

Mr. Speaker, why has this government continually neglected to put resources where they have long been needed to fix these gaps?

Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her question. There is some important work that is taking place in the territory. This work has been taking place for the last number of years. The mental wellness strategy isn't a starting point; it's a continuation.

As minister, I am very grateful for the supports and the feedback that we have received from the NGO community, from the business community, and from organizations like the Hospital Corporation and the Mental Health Association of Yukon on the particulars around the mental health strategy and a number of other reports that have been conducted over the last number of years.

I for one look forward to the completion of the Sarah Steele alcohol and drug services building with the expanded youth programming that we just announced earlier this week. The member opposite indicated that there are youth being transferred Outside for services and she is correct in that manner. What we want to do is bring those youth home and keep Yukon youth in the territory through this expanded service at Sarah Steele.

Again, I look forward to working with all of our stakeholders as we move forward in services for mental health and the release of the mental wellness strategy.

Question re: Hotels, long-stay

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, a tenant is a tenant is a tenant. Whether they rent an apartment or a house, or stay in a hotel room over the winter, they are supposed to have rights.

Mr. Speaker, the long-awaited *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* and regulations came into effect on January 1 of this year. Yukon government continues to use hotel rooms as a stop-gap measure due to a lack of affordable housing.

This government has spent tens of thousands of dollars every year to have Yukon citizens live in hotel rooms over the winter. These same Yukoners are also asked to leave each and every spring to make room for the territory's visiting tourists. Last fall, the government was unsure about where long-stay hotel tenants should go if they had problems with their unit or their landlord. So could the minister now tell long-stay hotel tenants who they should turn to in the first six months of their tenancies to have their rights upheld?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: This is an issue that is very familiar to those of us in the Legislature. We debated it thoroughly during the passage of the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* in 2012, and we had subsequent debates on this very topic numerous times.

What the fundamental policy question is at hand is: At what point does a person go from being a long-term-stay

client of a hotel to a tenant under the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*? As I have explained previously, under the act and regulations that we've put forward, we've set that threshold at six months. That is the point upon which an individual goes from being a long-stay guest at a hotel to a tenant under the act.

Now, I believe the member is asking about those first six months. So when a person is a guest at a hotel and they're finding their accommodations unacceptable, obviously they can go to the hotel. In the case of a client of Health and Social Services who is having their room paid for by the department, they can go to the department and talk to them about it. But if it's a more general residential tenancy question, they can come to the Residential Tenancies Office, which was established under the act in 2012 and is now open for business and taking inquiries from the public — from landlords and tenants alike — throughout the Yukon.

Ms. White: Yukoners living in hotels deserve the same housing rights as anyone else, but the government's new regulations only kick in once someone has lived in a hotel for six continuous months. This means that there is a class of Yukon tenants who can't count on a secure place to live year-round and who are left in a unique situation where they can't access the same resources as other tenants, and in many cases, these people need the help the most.

It would be great if the Premier or any other minister stood up for Yukoners living in hotels, like he says they do for every other citizen of the Yukon. Where are people who live in hotels during the winter months supposed to go when they are asked to leave their place of residence every spring?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Again, as I explained, I appreciate that the NDP and Yukon Party have different positions on this particular issue and that the members opposite disagree with our policy decision around the six-month threshold. For individuals who are without adequate accommodations, there is a range of housing options. This government has made considerable investments in housing throughout the territory over the last number of years. Those options are numerous, and I'm proud of the investment that the Yukon government has made in housing options for those in need of that kind of housing.

But again, to circle back to the criticism about the act and the regulations, this is simply a disagreement between our parties about what the appropriate threshold is. We have made a decision that it's six months. The NDP have criticized us for that, but haven't offered an alternative. If they do have an alternative to the six months, I would be interested to hear it. They haven't expressed that previously.

So again, we are proud of the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* that we brought forward. We're proud of the regulations and the Residential Tenancies Office that has been established now, which is functioning and available to landlords, tenants and others who have interests and inquiries about the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* and those laws that apply to tenancies in the territory.

Ms. White: I was hoping that the minister would have some suggestions of where long-stay hotel clients could look for housing.

I would like to state for the record that Yukoners shouldn't be sent to hotels for long-term stays in any circumstance by the Yukon government. They deserve appropriate housing like everyone else. They pay a security deposit, monthly rent and play by the rules, but they are denied the same rights as other tenants. That people are forced to live in hotels as their home is disgraceful. It's even worse that these people are being denied basic tenant rights.

There's a financial case to be made for fixing this problem. If this government had used the money it spent on long-stay hotel rooms since the Yukon Party took power in 2002 to actually invest in appropriate housing for these clients, there's no doubt that their situation would be better today. So, Mr. Speaker, my question is this: Is it fair that the government has been dragging its heels for 14 long years while people who live in hotels over the winter months are asked to leave their hotel rooms each and every spring?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, certainly the member opposite and this government are well aware that addressing homelessness is a challenge for Yukon. It is a challenge for every jurisdiction across Canada. Yukon is not alone in this endeavour. Aside from the fact that the member opposite hasn't understood the investments that we have made — there have been significant investments that this government has made through the Yukon Housing Corporation. Specifically through Health and Social Services, we have invested in a 14-unit complex for individuals with FAS. We have invested in a 22-unit facility for transitional housing that will be operated by the Salvation Army. Mr. Speaker, in the coming weeks, we'll be opening the St. Elias group home that provides support and services for those with a wide range of cognitive disabilities.

The member opposite, in her assertions that this government has not made those investments in homelessness, is simply incorrect. We will continue to invest in Yukoners and I am very proud of our record, Mr. Speaker.

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. 23: *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 23, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Pasloski.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to present the 2016-17 budget for the fifth time as the Minister of Finance. While the budget is tabled by the Finance minister, I want to acknowledge the tremendous work and effort of every Yukon Party MLA. I am truly honoured to lead an incredible team and I'm very proud of everyone's efforts. This is our budget.

Mr. Speaker, this is a plan that will give Yukoners confidence that our government's focused and principled approach to fiscal management is working. I hope it is also a plan that will make them proud — proud to live in a place where we look out for each other and we take care of our most vulnerable. I'm proud to see continued investments in areas that matter most to families in job creation, health care and education.

Mr. Speaker, I am tremendously optimistic about the future of this territory. Yukoners have big ideas; they have ambition and they have their eyes on the future. They want to build something great and, like our government, they want to position the next generation to build something even greater.

I hope all Yukoners see themselves, their families and their hopes in this budget. After all, they are the people who made it possible. They are taxpayers, caregivers and volunteers in this territory. They are the people who get up every morning, pull on their work boots and head into our mines, put on their scrubs and take care of our patients in our hospitals, or put on their aprons and serve food in our restaurants. Whether you are working in private industry or in the public service, I want to say thank you. Our success is possible because of your hard work; because you give back to your communities by paying taxes, employing other Yukoners and providing an essential service.

Our business owners are no different. They are the people who took the risk to start something here; who looked at Yukon and saw opportunity, got a business number, hired employees and went to work. Like your employees, you give back to your territory in so many ways and you pay taxes too, and those taxes help to make public services possible. So I want to thank you all for your contribution, your sacrifices for the greater good of everyone who lives here and for placing your trust in our government to make sure your contribution goes toward the people and the projects that need it most.

Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to table the 2016-17 Yukon budget in the Legislature today. Today I'm proud to stand here and tell all Yukoners how we are investing their money and how those investments will help make Yukon an even better place to live, work, play and raise a family. The choices we are making are informed by what we heard from Yukoners in our pre-budget consultations. We travelled to every corner of this territory. We did 60 consultations and we spoke to hundreds of people. We wanted to know what was important to them and what was keeping them up at night — the aspirations they had for their children and their grandchildren and for their mothers and their grandmothers. This budget would not be possible without their input, so from the bottom

of my heart and on behalf of all of my colleagues, I thank them for taking their time to contribute.

I remember a few of them exceptionally well. Betty Skoke Burns is a teacher who also runs a toy boutique and retail shop. Her children grew up here. She cares about this community and at our community conversations this past fall, Betty spoke with pride about her staff and all that they do to make Yukoners feel valued and well-served.

I remember Chris Lane, the owner of Make IT Solutions, who spoke passionately about growing his company so that he could employ local people and show the world that Yukoners can be at the forefront of software development. I remember Hillary Aitken from the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre talking about the transformative impact their work, in partnership with other NGOs and like-minded organizations, has made in the lives of local women and how government investments have helped in that effort.

When I think about our job as government, I think about conversations with people like Betty, Chris and Hillary. All of them expect us to manage responsibly, to plan for the future and to maximize every single dollar so that we can invest government funds in a way that benefits all Yukoners. That is the principle that forms the backbone of our focused economic plan — make every dollar count.

I am proud to tell you that, for the fifth year in a row, we are doing just that. I am pleased to tell the Legislature that we are tabling a surplus of \$9.483 million. This is as governments across the country are tabling budgets in the red. In fact, not only are we introducing a budget with a surplus, we are also increasing spending to ensure that we can deliver our most important services to people who need them the most. This year, the increase to our operation and maintenance budget is \$30.7 million, bringing it to a total of \$1.085 billion, an increase of approximately three percent. Within that increase is a major boost to health care funding. I am looking forward to highlighting how we are better supporting Yukon seniors and patients later in the speech.

While achieving our surplus required some very tough decisions, they were the right decisions. There is an old saying that you hear around the government every so often: "If you have 50 priorities, you have no priorities." You hear it because it is true. We have prioritized new spending to areas where it is needed the most. It is focused and targeted. It makes every dollar count. Today, you are going to hear about: our focused and principled approach to fiscal management and how it is working for Yukoners; how we are investing in our economy because it is fundamental to the future of our territory; how we are investing in education because we want our young people to succeed; how we are increasing spending in health care so our families get the right supports; and how we are spending on infrastructure that will strengthen our communities. A strong economy allows us to have the best public services.

Since being sworn in as Premier and Finance minister, our team has never run a deficit and we have never raised taxes. In fact, the average family of four is paying up to \$777 less per year in taxes than in 2011.

I want to put our achievement in context. In this year's budget, we are increasing spending to sectors that need it the most. We are maintaining the incredible quality of life that Yukoners enjoy. We are doing more to support our businesses, and we are tabling a surplus because we believe that is what the people of Yukon deserve and expect. We are doing all of this with absolutely no debt. I will repeat that. The Yukon government continues to have no net debt. This is at a time when the Canadian Federation of Independent Business estimates that, as a whole, all of Canada's provinces and territories are carrying almost \$600 billion in net debt. That is billion with a "B". To put that into context, it is enough to fund Yukon's total budget for more than 400 years. Not only that, but other provinces and territories pay interest on that debt. There is a line in their budgets that is devoted to paying the long-term interest costs, and every dollar they are using to pay off that debt and pay interest on that debt is a dollar they aren't putting toward programs and services.

It's a dollar they cannot invest into families or better health care or supporting businesses or innovation. It's a dollar they aren't using to reduce taxes like we did last year here in Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, all Yukoners should be incredibly proud to know that we have money in the bank. Our investment income exceeds any interest charges we face, meaning that no money is diverted from serving Yukoners to servicing debt. Because we have a focused, principled long-term fiscal plan, we are extremely well-positioned for the years to come. We are a small economy and vulnerable to external forces. We need to be resilient, and ensuring that we are debt-free provides us with more choices and more independence. It means we have to reduce waste any chance we have. We know we can avoid debt because our government has always done that. It's a choice; it's a principle. It's something my colleagues and I stand strongly behind. Debt is easy and it's insidious in a small economy like ours. If you don't stand up for a debt-free Yukon, you don't stand up for Yukoners. I believe that we should never put our economic future at risk or that we should have any right to ask our children or our children's children to pay for the cost of our emergency room visits or the social services we all use today. Instead, we should do everything we can to grow the economy and create good, high-paying jobs so that our kids inherit a territory full of opportunity.

Maintaining our principled and focused approach to fiscal management is crucial. That's why this year we'll be launching an initiative we're calling "innovative budgeting". It's pretty simple, really. Together with our public service, we're going to look closely at our budget and ask ourselves one simple question: Can we get more for our money? Every Yukon family is looking at their bills and trying to figure out how to squeeze a little bit more out of their paycheques. I want Yukoners to know that we are doing the same thing in government. It goes back to the principle of making every dollar count. We need to make sure the rationale for spending isn't — and I quote: "because that's the way we've always done it".

To use an analogy, we shouldn't be investing in a horse and buggy if we can get a hybrid car for the same price. Just like families, we should always be looking for ways to get more for our money. We need to challenge ourselves to do things smarter, and over the next year we will be doing just that.

This year's budget shows \$2 million toward end-year savings under innovative budgeting initiative. This will be accomplished with zero job loss and no reduction in services. We look forward to meeting or exceeding that goal by relying on the government's best resource, the public service itself.

Mr. Speaker, a strong economy allows us to have the best public services. This government firmly believes that when it comes to economy, the government's job is to make it easier for business. Government needs to support the economy, not become the economy.

So, Mr. Speaker, as a government, we are doing everything we can to empower our businesses so that together we can grow the economy. First, we are positioning the mining sector for the inevitable rebound. Now more than ever, we need to support our resource sector. It's an opportunity to make sure that we're training Yukoners so that high-paying mining jobs go to people trained at home. We're asking more companies to work with the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining to make sure we're getting the right training to the right people.

It also presents a chance for us to modernize our mining regulations to create greater certainty, regulatory streamlining and a more integrated approach to permitting, and to continue to engage First Nations around how we can improve mine licensing.

It's an opportunity to work with our mining partners to promote the industry. The Government of Yukon is providing support to the Yukon Mining Alliance for a \$1-million mining attraction initiative to be undertaken over the next three years. Combined with its own contribution, the mining alliance will design, deliver and manage the promotion of our mining sector to key markets in Europe, Asia and North America.

Closer to home, we're investing \$335,000 toward the north Yukon regional economic development initiative, a project aimed at developing an even more vibrant north Yukon economy. This year's commitment is \$150,000 and represents a partnership between our government, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Vuntut Gwitchin First Nations and the City of Dawson.

We're also moving aggressively to support our tourism industry. This government does not see it as an either/or choice when it comes to mining and tourism. We believe we need both these sectors to be vibrant and strong. That's why we want Yukon to be the world's worst-kept secret. Every tourist who enters our borders spends an average of \$82 per day in the summer and \$151 per day in the winter. That's new money that flows directly into our economy, driving job creation and creating a better quality of life for our families.

Tourism has always been a key sector for Yukon, and it continues to be a big part of the economy. That's why we will continue to invest in the sector with this budget. This includes

a \$100,000 increase in annual funding to the First Nation culture and tourism association, up from \$60,000 to \$160,000 annually. That's why this government has repeatedly increased investments in our museums, such as our recent contribution of \$450,000 to the MacBride Museum to help them plan their expansion. In this budget, there is \$1.84 million for museums and First Nation cultural centres. That's greater than a 300-percent increase in funding since 2002. These facilities are a key part of Yukon's tourism infrastructure, and we believe supporting them is an important investment in the tourism industry's present and future.

On a broader scale, in this budget, we are recommitting to funding the incredibly successful Yukon Now campaign. It's the single largest tourism marketing campaign in Yukon history. This campaign is running nationally using home-grown talent, and we know it's having an impact. Since our campaign began, traffic to our tourism websites has increased by 26,216 hits — almost nine percent. Our government has committed to another three years of funding at \$900,000 a year. Hopefully the federal government will match our funding as they did last time, but if they do not meet that need, we will. This initiative is too important to our economic future for us to ignore.

Mr. Speaker, standing up for our economy means taking a clear stand on carbon tax. Our government has stood firmly against any sort of new carbon tax. Put simply, up here a carbon tax is a consumption tax. It has different implications for us Yukoners than it does for the people who live in downtown Toronto. We don't think a one-size-fits-all solution is the answer. A carbon tax would force our families and our businesses to pay more, and it would put our economy at a disadvantage. We know climate change is real and we are doing our part to address it. The Yukon and the north are harder hit by climate change than anywhere else in Canada, but it should be noted that the Yukon has reduced emissions since 1990 while much of the rest of Canada has increased.

We have a climate plan that is working. By focusing on efficient energy systems, reducing emissions in government and providing incentives to individuals, we are protecting the environment while supporting the economy. While some provinces derive most of their energy from fossil fuels, we are 95-percent hydroelectric. That is why this budget includes another \$2 million for continued investment in the development of next generation hydro. If we can find a way to create more hydro power, we can get the territory off home heating fuel and onto clean electrical heat. What doesn't work for the Yukon is a carbon tax. It doesn't work for the northern way of life. We will not raise the barriers for northerners getting to and around the Yukon. We will not make the cost of heating homes more expensive. We will not make the cost of food, clothing and practically everything else more expensive. Finally, we are not going to punish our resource industries and place them in an uncompetitive position.

We are the only party that has a made-in-Yukon solution that puts the focus on results and not on ideology. The NDP and the Liberals both support a carbon tax. They follow the line of their federal parties. Proposing carbon taxes may make

the Liberals and the NDP feel warm at night. For the rest of us, it is our furnace.

Besides avoiding a carbon tax, we are protecting tax credits that help our Yukon families. The recent federal budget eliminated the children's fitness tax credit and the children's art tax credit. But we know these credits are making an impact here in the Yukon. They meant parents had the supports they needed to enrol their daughter in swimming or their son in piano lessons. We think that inspiring children to stay healthy through sport or to grow their minds through the arts is too important to walk away from. That is why we will be preserving these tax credits in Yukon and continuing to pay parents the territorial portion of that grant. Our children are future Olympians, composers, NHL players and JUNO nominees. We want to make sure that they can continue to strive for those dreams. Our government believes that we need to invest in our children and make sure that they grow into adults who are ready to take on the world, get well-paying jobs and have families of their own. That is why this budget includes a number of new spending initiatives around education. For starters, we are going to take some stress and strain off every parent in the Yukon by making the first day of school a little bit easier.

This budget includes \$520,000 to defray the costs of school supplies for every single child in the Yukon. That means we'll be able to provide \$100 of school supplies for every child in the system this September. That's \$100 per student parents won't have to spend. For those who struggle to afford supplies, it is one small thing they won't have to worry about.

Beyond these kinds of smaller investments, our government is continuing to invest to ensure the long-term educational success of our children. Last year, I stood in this House and I talked about working toward a new made-in-Yukon education system. A year later, we are well on our way to making our new vision for education a reality. By combining work that was already underway with engagement from First Nations and stakeholders, we know we are building a system every Yukoner can take pride in. Last year alone, our government signed accords or MOUs with four First Nations — Kluane, Kwanlin Dün, Carcross/Tagish and Selkirk — that focus either solely on education or include education components. These agreements will help us in partnership with First Nations to address issues as diverse as language proficiency, student attendance and staffing. In the years ahead, we will be including Yukon context and First Nation culture in every grade level from K to 9; as well, specifically develop coursework for grades 10 to 12. We will build a curriculum and an approach to education that allows each community and each First Nation to include locally appropriate content. There's a long way to go but we are well on our way and it is an exciting path that we are charting.

Beyond curriculum, we are investing in education assistants in every Yukon community. Since 2011, we have increased the number of assistants from 159 to 220 and we have increased the funding by just over \$3 million. That means children are benefiting from an additional 59,780 hours

in the classroom. At the same time, we are working to improve our schools through infrastructure investment. We just opened a brand new one in Whitehorse this January. Now the new F.H. Collins has 639 bright minds in its classrooms every day.

When our kids graduate from our public schools, we want to make it easier for them to pursue a post-secondary education and we want them to be able to do it closer to home. We know that if our students study here, we are more likely to have them stay here, raise a family here, start a business here, and give back to the economy. That's one of the reasons we're contributing \$1.5 million over three years to Yukon College to help them develop into a Yukon university. By providing these funds, we're able to help the dedicated college staff move toward a university, while giving them the resources to ensure that vital community programming is preserved. It's also why we're making some significant changes and adding \$376,000 in overall funding to our student financial assistance program. We are removing administrative burdens and reducing disincentives for studying here at home through Yukon College. The minister will share more details once we table the necessary legislative changes, which I look forward to all parties supporting.

This is a major reform to our grant system. I hope it's one that will encourage more students to pursue post-secondary education. As a government, we are committed to giving our young people the tools to succeed in tomorrow's economy, and I think this budget takes some very important steps toward that goal.

We also want to make sure that our young people are inheriting a strong health care system. After all, having a strong health care system is an important part of our economic strategy. It makes businesses more likely to want to invest here. It means families don't have to worry about how to juggle everything and take months off work when grandparents fall in need of round-the-clock care. It allows our youth, who might be struggling with addiction and mental health issues, to get the supports that they need so they can go back to school or get jobs. Investing in health care is the right thing to do and it just makes good economic sense.

Health care is an issue that is at the heart of our government. It's about caring for our society's most vulnerable people. That's why we opened new hospitals in Dawson City and Watson Lake. It's also why we're building the new Sarah Steele facility for alcohol- and drug-addiction programs for adults and now for youth. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to tell you that this year the facility will receive \$2.048 million in operational funding. That means more than 300 additional detox admissions per year and an increase for in-patient capacity from 90 clients a year to more than 250. With 50 beds, we have more than doubled the capacity at Sarah Steele so Yukoners, beginning at age 13, can access services. Our government committed to the Sarah Steele enhancement and we are following through. Families are counting on it.

We're also following through on the rebuild of the St. Elias group home. We're committing to supporting Yukoners

with cognitive disabilities. The home will open its doors soon and, with the \$487,000 operating budget from the Government of Yukon, it will have twice as many beds and service twice as many adults in need.

Mental health is another area where we recognize there is a major need that government can help address. That's why the Minister of Health and Social Services will be tabling a mental wellness strategy later this session. This budget includes \$1 million for implementation of this strategy because, once it has been tabled, we want to move quickly. This new funding is in addition to the millions we already spend every year in this area, but it's an important needed investment and one that families are counting on, just like they are counting on their hospitals and emergency health care. It is why, together with the Yukon Hospital Foundation, we opened Canada's first MRI north of 60. It's also why we are working to improve the emergency room department at the Whitehorse Hospital campus. We hope most Yukoners never have a reason to use this investment but, for those who do need emergency care, we want to make sure that they get it in a modern, state-of-the-art facility. To do this, we have committed almost \$22 million for 2016-17 and another \$18 million for 2017-18 to complete this project.

When it comes to health care, we recruited more doctors, trained more nurses, and this year's budget will increase the number of hours of home care available to Yukoners as well. In fact, our government has funded nearly 22,000 additional hours of home care since 2011. That's nearly 1,000 full days of additional care for our seniors, and when home care is no longer enough for some seniors, we want to make sure that they can continue to get the very best supports.

We are moving ahead with the construction of the Whistle Bend continuing care facility. The 150-bed home will be located right here in Whitehorse, and it will provide support and care around the clock for seniors and others with complex health care needs. Along with the replacement and expansion of the McDonald Lodge in Dawson City, we are going to be far better equipped to care for our seniors. We need to be. It is anticipated that, by 2031, Yukon residents over the age of 65 will make up almost 20 percent of the total Yukon population, doubling the population share of seniors since we began planning this project in 2013.

In a time when we are making careful choices about how we spend Yukoners' tax dollars, we are investing more in health care than in any other sector. This year, the total health budget is increasing by over \$11 million, or nearly nine percent. We already spend more per capita than any Canadian province, and we do it because we want to make sure that the people of Yukon get the care they need. Nobody can legitimately claim that this government does not invest extensively in health care for Yukoners, and I would not have it any other way. The health of our children, our mothers and our grandfathers is too important. When faced with a family member in need, who among us would say, "Spend less"? Health spending comes down to more than dollars and cents. It comes down to compassion, to quality of life and, in some cases, to life itself. We are going to continue to invest in

health care by increasing operational spending and capital spending because we know it is important to Yukoners and their families.

As I outlined our commitments in health care and education, I emphasized a number of new infrastructure projects that do, or will, make a tremendous difference in the lives of Yukoners. But our commitment to infrastructure spending goes far beyond those two sectors. As I outlined to the Chamber of Commerce yesterday, this year's budget includes the largest ever single-year investment in information technology. This year, we will inject an additional \$3 million to IT projects. This will bring our total IT investment to \$9.5 million, an unprecedented amount in the Yukon. That doesn't even include all of the hardware and other technology investments that we make. This is on top of our planned investment to ensure the completion of a fully redundant fibre loop and our five-year, \$760,000 investment in bringing 4G to our communities. Already our government has invested to bring 4G service into 17 Yukon communities. We are making these investments because we know that these initiatives matter to our families and to our business, as do our roads and bridges. A well-maintained transportation network is an essential part of a strong economy. Infrastructure is a key driver of local job creation across this territory and prosperity for our homegrown companies. That is why this budget supports related work for highways, roads, bridges and airports totalling almost \$56 million. Significant investments include: \$12 million related to Shakwak; \$11.4 million for Campbell Highway; \$3.2 million for the Dempster highway, and territory-wide works totalling just over \$29.4 million. In fact, in total, the current capital investment targeted for 2016-17 through our budget is over \$300 million.

That \$300 million is spread across the territory with investments being made in all corners — in Beaver Creek, in Carcross, in Dawson City, Faro, Haines Junction, Keno City, Mayo, Old Crow, Pelly Crossing, Stewart Crossing, Swift River, Tagish, Watson Lake and Whitehorse — and the list goes on.

Mr. Speaker, our budget also includes just over \$40 million to jump-start a new Yukon/Canada partnership under the Building Canada infrastructure program. We've had tremendous success with attracting Building Canada dollars to the Yukon. We are looking forward to having further discussions with the federal government to ensure it will continue.

Mr. Speaker, before I close, I want to take a moment to address our relationship with Ottawa. Much has changed since our last budget and since the Building Canada program was first introduced. There is a new government in Ottawa, but while the Prime Minister and I may represent different parties, as Premier it's my job to work together with the federal government when they are putting the Yukon's interests first. It's also my job to stand up and speak up when the Yukon will not benefit. We want this new federal government to know that their partnership matters; that their commitment to helping us build our roads and bridges is something Yukoners expect. We are forging a new relationship. I hope it is a

productive one and a strong one; one that recognizes just how important this territory is to Canada, to its economy, to its sense of identity and to its future.

Mr. Speaker, our voice in Ottawa will be unwavering and resolute. We will be clear about Yukoners' hopes for this territory and we will pursue every opportunity to talk to the federal government about growing the economy so we can create more prosperity and build more infrastructure. While we'll never stop advocating for Yukoners, we won't be shy about sharing our successes either, especially when they are models the rest of this country can look to, learn from, and emulate.

Mr. Speaker, we are already seeing our advocacy paying off. I was encouraged that the Government of Canada listened to our advice and continued the mineral exploration tax credit for another year. It's important to our industry and provides an incentive for junior mining companies to invest in high-value projects like those found throughout Yukon. We will work hard to ensure we have an open and productive dialogue with the new federal government and Prime Minister Trudeau and all provincial and territorial governments across Canada. In fact, I look forward to having all 13 premiers here in July for the Council of the Federation meeting, the first time this event will ever be held north of 60. Yukoners will have a chance to showcase our territory, not only to the provincial and territorial leaders, but also to Canada's national media — through them to Canadians. It's an opportunity to show and tell them about some of the things we are most proud of, like the work we have done to build relationships with First Nations.

Mr. Speaker, every Yukoner is proud of the fact that we are one of Canada's leaders in the negotiation of modern treaties. Eleven of 14 Yukon First Nations have modern treaties and self-government agreements. To put that into perspective, there are only 29 modern treaties and self-government agreements in Canada. The Yukon final and self-government agreements have proved to be one of the most significant and effective means to reconciliation and positive change for all Yukoners. We are working with Yukon First Nations on implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action.

While we still have work to do, we have made some significant strides. As mentioned earlier, we are working together to improve education outcomes. We have collaborated around child welfare and we have taken leadership when it comes to seeking answers around missing and murdered indigenous women. In fact, through the partnership between our government and First Nation leaders, Yukon has become a national model of how to approach this very difficult topic.

I look forward to working with Yukon's First Nation communities to do more to strengthen our relationship and to build a future where all Canadians and Yukoners are treated justly and equitably. There is always more we can do.

Mr. Speaker, I'm tremendously energized and optimistic about the road ahead. The targeted investments we are making today, along with our commitment to principled and focused

fiscal management, is setting Yukon on the course for prosperity. We are forging ahead and taking the right steps for the future of the territory. We are going to maintain our focus on strengthening the economy and renewing our mining sector, giving our students a better education and more opportunity, ensuring our families have access to the best possible health care and investing in infrastructure, and we are going to do it all while ensuring we never spend beyond our means, that we make every dollar count and that we never lose sight of the tremendous possibility that exists in this place we call home.

If you live in the Yukon, you know what that potential is. We are as ambitious as we are resilient and we dream big. I'm beyond proud to live in this great territory and honoured to have the privilege of tabling a budget that reflects our values and helps shape the future. I look forward to hearing the feedback from my colleagues in the Legislature and from all Yukoners. Working together, I know we can turn the 2016-17 budget into a road map for the Yukon's future success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, 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. 23 agreed to

Mr. Elias: 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 2:29 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled April 7, 2016:

33-1-194

Yukon Ombudsman — Action changes things — 2015 Annual Report (Speaker Laxton)

33-1-195

Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner — Privacy management coming into focus — 2015 Annual Report (Speaker Laxton)

33-1-196

Yukon Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner — Whistleblow with confidence — 2015 Annual Report (Speaker Laxton)

33-1-197

Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from Sitings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees (April 7, 2016) (Speaker Laxton)

The following document was filed April 7, 2016:

33-1-124

Project Charter for the Assessment of the Proposed Casino Mine Project (January 5, 2016) (Kent)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 251

1st Session

33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, April 11, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER — Hon. David Laxton, MLA, Porter Creek Centre

DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Darrell Pasloski	Mountainview	Premier Minister responsible for Finance; Executive Council Office
Hon. Elaine Taylor	Whitehorse West	Deputy Premier Minister responsible for Tourism and Culture; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Justice; Yukon Development Corporation/ Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Doug Graham	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Education
Hon. Scott Kent	Riverdale North	Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources; Highways and Public Works
Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Community Services; Public Service Commission
Hon. Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Minister responsible for Environment
Hon. Mike Nixon	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin	Minister responsible for Economic Development; Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Party

Darius Elias	Government House Leader Vuntut Gwitchin
Hon. David Laxton	Porter Creek Centre
Patti McLeod	Watson Lake

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

New Democratic Party

Elizabeth Hanson	Leader of the Official Opposition Whitehorse Centre
Jan Stick	Official Opposition House Leader Riverdale South
Kevin Barr	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes
Lois Moorcroft	Copperbelt South
Jim Tredger	Mayo-Tatchun
Kate White	Takhini-Kopper King

Liberal Party

Sandy Silver	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, April 11, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will now proceed with the Order Paper. Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of the Battle of Vimy Ridge

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Canada's victory at Vimy Ridge. The Battle of Vimy Ridge took place on April 9 to 12, 1917. Today, across our great country, flags are at half-mast to honour the 99th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Today is a day to recognize all of Canada's First World War veterans for their significant contribution, their courage and their sacrifice.

Although Canada came together as a Confederation in 1867, many look to the battle for Vimy Ridge — some 50 years later, and an ocean-removed from our country — as the moment when Canada truly became a country.

The battle for Vimy Ridge, which began on April 9, is the moment where Canadian bravery and valour led to the tremendous victory for the entire Allied force and is considered by many as the turning point to World War I. By succeeding where the British and the French had failed and by succeeding despite terrible, terrible losses, Canadian troops established themselves in this battle as principled, innovative and professional warriors in their own right. Because of their sacrifice, Canada was recognized as a legitimate country in our own right. Canada's successes were due to a combination of factors like dedication, leadership, preparation, innovation, determination and individual valour. Together they demonstrate that Canada was a fully capable, competent country.

Men from all regions of Canada, including Yukon, were present for this battle. It's amazing to think that more than 600 Yukoners from such a small population rallied to the cause — left their families, their homes here in the territory, many to never return again. More than 100 Yukoners lie buried in the graveyards of France. They volunteered and they faced death because of their dedication to the fundamental rights and freedoms that Canadians hold dear.

Due to the leadership of the Canadian Corps commander, Sir Julian Byng, and Sir Arthur Currie, the commander of the First Canadian Division, Vimy marked the first time all four Canadian divisions attacked together. Canada was prepared. We had access to over 1,000 artillery pieces and a seemingly limitless supply of reliable ammunition. Trusting that the artillery shells wouldn't fall short, the commanders were able to plan on the infantry following them. Canada demonstrated our innovation by the use of a new technology like exploding-

on-contact fuses for their artillery shells and through new tactics like coordinating and infantry tack with creeping artillery barrage. Individual Canadians distinguished themselves through acts of gallantry and bravery. The stories of Canadians singlehandedly, with bayonets fixed, charging machine gun nests like the one on Hill 145 where the Vimy monument now stands, resonated across the world.

By reading the individual stories, we can appreciate the heavy cost — 3,598 Canadians killed and another 7,004 wounded. When Joe Boyle's efforts to enlist were rejected because he was too old, he personally financed and outfitted a machine gun company of volunteers — the Yukon Motor Machine Gun Battery, First Motor Machine Gun Brigade. Although he left the Yukon by 1917, former Yukoner Sam Steele was there. As Michael Gates reminded us last year, Yukoners were there at Vimy. There are stories of individuals like Howard Grestock, the first Yukon man to enlist when the war broke out. He died in the prelude to the battle for Vimy Ridge. From Mr. Gates' article we learn about Neil McCuish, Felix Boutin, Bert Lawless and Morris Anthony.

It's encouraging to think that individual valour and bravery is still remembered a century later. Vimy became a symbol for the sacrifice of the young Dominion. In 1922, the French government ceded to Canada in perpetuity Vimy Ridge and the land surrounding it.

Unless we stop and reflect, it is easy to miss the significance of this event. As we reflect on what it was about the battle for Vimy Ridge that made Canada a nation, I think it is more than just individual valour or preparation. Vimy is an excellent example of a nation coming of age through brilliant leadership, preparation, innovative use of emerging technology and personal bravery. But the Battle of Vimy Ridge represents more than that.

As I prepared for this tribute, I thought about the fact that Vimy Ridge is in France. I thought about the young men who left their homes. I thought about their wives and their families who remained. How does anyone explain a decision like that to a young family? What would make so many young men from Yukon leave to fight in a faraway continent for a nation many had never even visited to defend people many had never met? The people of Canada were given a choice of confronting evil or ignoring it. Even though the cost was exceedingly high, Vimy represents a moment where the professional use of force in the principled defence of liberty combined to secure freedom for the world and accord great honour to our nation.

I am proud that our nation has always stood for those who love freedom and who love peace. Canada's commitment to our fundamental rights and freedoms includes coming to the aid of those around the world who also cherish these values. Our soldiers fought then and fight today because of these principles. We also recognize all of those who have served and given their lives on our behalf in Canada's Armed Forces since then.

As Canadians, we are indebted to our Armed Forces. As we stand before you in this Chamber today, Mr. Speaker, men and women are fighting on our behalf in the name of freedom

and democracy. We all owe our precious freedom to those brave men and women. I ask all Yukoners to join us today in reflecting on their contribution.

In recognition of Daffodil Month (Cancer Awareness Month)

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to the individuals in our society working in the field of cancer research and, more importantly, tribute those individuals who raise money that goes toward research and support services for those living with or affected by cancer.

The Canadian Cancer Society has chosen April as Daffodil Month. During Daffodil Month, the Canadian Cancer Society puts on an extra effort to raise money to fund research, promote the prevention of cancer and provide support services. For the first time in several years, Yukon once again participated in the daffodil campaign and volunteers were out selling bright daffodils and daffodil pins. In fact, our very own Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and Highways and Public Works and our Minister of Community Services were out delivering daffodils just a couple of weeks ago. I would like to thank them for that.

All of those proceeds go directly to the Jean C. Barber Lodge in Vancouver where many Yukoners stay during treatment. I thank everyone who bought either flowers or a pin to show their support for Canadians living with cancer. I understand the campaign raised about \$26,000 in sales.

Here in Yukon, in addition to the Canadian Cancer Society, there are many groups and organizations that raise money for cancer prevention, education and research initiatives. Next month, Run for Mom will host its 18th annual fundraiser — a Mother's Day run — an event that raises money for local initiatives to do with breast cancer. Funds raised this year will go toward the purchase of a new digital mammography machine and a breast ultrasound machine. I understand the Minister of Tourism and Culture and the Minister of Education will join me for the run this year.

Another local fundraiser initiative is Mardi Bras, which raises money for Karen's Fund. It was established in 2000 in memory of 37-year-old Karen Wiederkehr who died of breast cancer after months of treatment in and out of Yukon. Her two wishes were for patients to have access to a quiet, comfortable place for their chemo treatments and financial assistance to women undergoing treatment for breast cancer.

Other local events include Ride for Dad — and I have ridden my bike in that rally for the last several years. Ride for Dad is held each June to raise money toward prostate cancer; also of course the Terry Fox Run in September, which supports cancer research. The Yukoners cancer care fund also hosts events to fundraise money that stays locally to support Yukoners and their families facing cancer challenges.

While Daffodil Days are now over, I encourage all during this month and indeed other times of the year to support the fundraising efforts of the many organizations that raise money toward cancer research, prevention and support. I would ask the indulgence of all members in the Legislature today to join

me in welcoming to the gallery Ms. Geraldine Van Bibber from the Yukoners cancer care fund.

Applause

Ms. Stick: I too rise to pay tribute to Cancer Awareness Month. It's my privilege to stand and speak to Cancer Awareness Month, or Daffodil Month. As was mentioned, we are all impacted by cancer and it just seems as we get older maybe more and more. I don't think I know a single person who hasn't been touched by it, whether it's a family member, a friend or themselves personally. The numbers are growing and it seems the likelihood of any of us having some form of cancer in our lifetime is rising, so I would like to acknowledge the professionals who work with individuals with cancer: the researchers, the physicians, the nurses and, most importantly, the volunteers. We need to recognize the work they do to continue to advocate for funding to raise funds for research and to provide real support to individuals and their families when facing cancer here in the Yukon. These funds are also important because they raise cancer awareness and remind us of what we need to do.

When we wear our daffodils, we need to remember that it is the symbol of strength and courage and, when we buy this pin or the daffodils that were on sale recently, we are showing our support for Canadians who are living with cancer today.

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I stand also to pay tribute to Cancer Awareness Month, known as Daffodil Month. This is when Canadians show their support for cancer research and prevention and those currently fighting cancer by wearing a daffodil on their collar. The bright, happy daffodil represents hope for those who are on a cancer journey.

Cancer affects us all. It is the leading cause of death in Canada, accounting for 30 percent and the Canadian Cancer Society is working hard to eradicate it and prevent further cases. By purchasing a daffodil or contributing your time, you are helping the Canadian Cancer Society to fund cancer research, prevent cancer, educate and inform Canadians and advocate for a healthy lifestyle for all Canadians.

The Canadian Cancer Society is supported by door-to-door campaigning and fundraising events like the Daffodil Dash. Their goal is to eradicate cancer while enhancing quality of life for those fighting the big fight. I would like to thank all those who work to fight against cancer, both nationally and locally, for their support and volunteer time — donors and volunteers putting in tireless hours, giving all they can for this journey and giving empowerment to people to make sure they know they're not alone. If we work to support community members fighting cancer and promote healthy living, together we can help to eradicate cancer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Are there any further tributes?

In recognition of the Bridge Building Competition

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the 23rd annual bridge building competition, which

was held last Saturday at the Porter Creek Secondary School. This popular annual competition is hosted by Science Adventures at the Yukon Research Centre at Yukon College and the Association of Professional Engineers of Yukon.

Each year, the event challenges students to try their hand at applying structural engineering principles. Using only wooden stir-sticks, glue and dental floss, competitors construct model bridges that span a distance of some 700 millimetres. For those of us still on the old system, Mr. Speaker, that's roughly 28 inches.

The objective of the students is to build the lightest bridge that can support the most weight. This test pushes the bridges to their breaking point, to the great dismay of the builders and to the glee of the assembled competitors. Students from grades 3 to 12 form teams of up to four participants in their grade categories. An open category is also available for teams of up to four students in kindergarten to grade 12, with minimal assistance from adults.

This year, the organizers introduced an exciting change: more flexible rules to encourage even more activity. The ALL-CAN category is open to both adults and teams. ALL-CAN teams can use power tools; their bridges can be anchored to the testing station with up to 1,000 millimetres of masking tape — I worked that out myself, Mr. Speaker: that's one metre, which is just slightly less than 40 inches — and there are fewer height restrictions.

Although all the teams begin with the same materials and rules, they approach the challenge in many different ways. Building a winning bridge requires creativity, collaboration, communication and critical thinking, four areas of skill that today's learners need to succeed beyond school.

This year, more than 343 bridge builders registered, with a total of 165 bridges. Mr. Speaker, part of that — or a great deal of that — is due in large part to Heather Dundas, who is here with us today. We appreciate all the work that you have done over the years.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Graham: Also with us, Mr. Speaker, is John Streicker, who has emceed the bridge building competition for a while, and I understand he made excuses or apologized on my behalf yesterday, knowing full well that, after my encounters with a hockey puck on Friday night, I was unable to attend. I appreciate that, John, and I appreciate all of the work that is done, not only by these two, but by many people involved in the program.

Special thanks — I think Heather wanted — were to go out to Ben Malone, who has been helping out for more than 20 years with the bridge building competition. We would like to indicate or pass on those congratulations as well.

This, as I said, is the highest number of competitors in the last decade. I would also like to pass out my thanks to Science Adventures and the Association of Professional Engineers of Yukon for providing this very exciting opportunity for Yukon students. I congratulate all of the participants on their teamwork, their fair play, and the effort they expend in creating beautiful, well-crafted and sturdy bridges.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all of the competitors, the organizers, the volunteers and, as well, the teachers for their commitment to the competition and their hard work in making this event so successful in the territory year after year. Thank you very much, and please pass on our congratulations to all the others.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Yukon Liberals and also the Official Opposition, I also would like to tribute the bridge building competition and thank the minister for his tribute.

I am going to specifically make a special recognition to Robert Service School's Clive Betts. This is the 17th year that Clive has sent grade-4 bridges to the competition. It is the 23rd annual this year, so that means that there have only been six years in which Robert Service School and Clive Betts haven't participated.

Students enjoy the hands-on activity, as it makes science — physics — and math — measurement and geometry — real for the students. Now, Mr. Betts has been teaching drafting as part of the lesson as well, since blueprints are made before they start building. In his life before teaching, Mr. Speaker, Clive was also a draftsman, so that definitely helps.

Innovators had the most grade-3-to-5 entries ever at 57 bridges this year. This year, Robert Service School registered 14 bridges in that competition. All students who made a bridge received some cool entry prizes, which change every year. We have also had lots of winners over the years of second place and fourth place, but Aaron Woods has been the only student from Dawson to ever get a first prize and to have his name on that trophy and, of course, the \$100 that comes with it.

I would like to do a shout-out please, Mr. Speaker, to Dawson bridges that did not win any of the big prizes but they did place: 11th place, Seth MacDonald Bell; 13th place, Teagan Ewing; 14th place, Jesse Amos; 15th place, Tess Morin; 16th place, Sasha Popadenic; 17th place, Magen Bundt; 18th place, Calvin Cibert; 20th place, Nico Soliguen; 24th place, Darnel Taylor; 31st place, Orion Fage; 51st place, Nathan Van Every. There were also bridges that were not tested that were given by Aeon Perucho, Liam Henry and Beezy Duncan. Congratulations to all those students.

Mr. Speaker, those who know Clive know that he's a master of puns. In the spirit of puns, I hope this competition was friendly and did not create any arch enemies. Congratulations to all who participated and thank you to Clive Betts and to all the volunteers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Elias: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask your indulgence and all members of the Assembly to help me in welcoming a famous Yellowknife radio broadcaster and

personality across the north. Mr. William Greenland is in the Assembly today.

Applause

Mr. Barr: William Greenland — also a colleague in the entertainment business — is visiting us.

Welcome, William.

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Silver: I have for tabling a document outlining Statistics Canada's communication with the territorial government with regard to the federal transfer, dating back to October 1, 2012.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 95: Student Financial Assistance Act, 2016 — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Graham: I move that Bill No. 95, entitled *Student Financial Assistance Act, 2016*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Education that Bill No. 95, entitled *Student Financial Assistance Act, 2016*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 95 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Elias: I rise to give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to recognize the importance of encouraging families to adopt healthy lifestyles by fully reinstating the children's fitness and art tax credit.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America to recognize the 141st meridian as the offshore northern maritime boundary between Canada and the United States of America.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to explain why monthly tourism visitation numbers have not been released since July 2015.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: First Nations/government relations

Ms. Hanson: On Friday, representatives of the Government of Canada, Yukon First Nation governments and the Yukon government met and signed two memoranda of understanding to address concerns raised by Yukon First Nation governments. Of particular interest: the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs committed to removing four unilateral amendments to YESAA contained in Bill S-6, two of which this Yukon Party government suggested in the first place.

This marks an opportunity to reset the relationships that were upset by actions taken by this government — in particular, by this Premier. Will the Premier now acknowledge the damage that his unilateral attempts to undermine the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* caused, and apologize to Yukon First Nation governments, Yukon businesses and Yukon citizens?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, Friday was, indeed, a very good day, where we held both a Yukon Forum and an intergovernmental forum — the first intergovernmental forum, I believe, since back in 2010. There was a very good discussion on a myriad of issues such as housing and infrastructure, a real acknowledgement by the federal minister of the leadership that exists when it comes to murdered and missing indigenous women and girls, the leadership that Yukon has taken within this country — the same when it comes to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, where we went forward with a joint proposal for the federal government, laying out the work that has been done and, again, how Yukon continues to be a leader.

When it comes to the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*, as I have said in this House many times, that is federal legislation for which the Yukon government has provided its comments and recommendations. The federal government now chooses to make further amendments to that legislation and, as we have also said in this House, we will not be a barrier to those amendments.

Ms. Hanson: You know, Mr. Speaker, the Premier refused to accept any responsibility for his government's role in pushing through amendments that violated the spirit and intent of the First Nation final agreements. Despite the fact that both the federal minister and the Yukon MP of the day contradicted him, he continued to say it was Ottawa's fault, but the responsibility is his and his alone. Now the Premier has been given an opportunity not often afforded to people in his position — a chance to sit down with First Nation governments and repair the damage his government has done. For 13 years the government has refused to fulfill its obligations to develop the successor resource legislation contemplated in the devolution transfer agreement.

When will the Premier commit to meeting with Yukon First Nation governments to begin a real process of living up

to this commitment to create successor Yukon resource legislation as set out in the DTA?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, as I have said as well numerous times in this House, the Yukon government is looking for an assessment process that is consistent with other jurisdictions allowing this jurisdiction to remain competitive when it comes to the opportunity for resource dollar investment to create good paying jobs in this territory. When it comes to mining, we know that the NDP is very supportive of mining so long as it does not occur in Yukon territory.

Ms. Hanson: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister did not listen to the question. Well, let's go back to reconciliation. He speaks often about it. It appears reconciliation, to the Premier, is a box to be checked or a duty that can be met through seeking increased federal funding, but reconciliation is not solely about money. It is an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships.

Last week, a Yukon First Nation government stated that Yukon has failed to live up to the commitment made in the DTA. It outlined key areas where the Yukon government, contrary to signed protocols has pushed through — and I quote — pushed through: "... an unscientific wetland policy designed by people with a vested interest in mining wetlands and a policy to provide residential title to placer miners." Further, the statement said: "... that Yukon government is not acting in good faith."

When will the Premier take action and work with Yukon First Nation governments and stakeholders to develop successor resource legislation designed for Yukon in the 21st century?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the NDP talks about truth and reconciliation and, as I stated at the beginning of this Question Period, Yukon and Yukon First Nations are showing leadership, not just in this territory, but indeed across this country, which was reaffirmed by the federal minister during her meeting here on Friday.

There has been much work done by the public government and we have shared that with First Nations. We have said that our vision is to have First Nations lead the path when it comes to the calls to action on truth and reconciliation, and indeed there are many paths to reconciliation. I will give an example of one that occurred very recently. That was the 39th annual Native Hockey Tournament that the Minister of Education and I — I think we refereed 12 or 13 games each. We have for many, many years. It's an important part of this territory and it's certainly a celebration of sport that we look forward to every year.

My point is, Mr. Speaker, there are many paths and pathways toward reconciliation and we will continue to work together with the First Nations as we move forward in that continued journey.

Question re: Stewart-Keno transmission line

Mr. Tredger: Late last year, this government announced plans to spend \$5.3 million in the planning phase to upgrade the Stewart-to-Keno electrical transmission line. In a recent submission to the federal government that laid out the

Yukon Party's capital project priorities, they estimate that it will cost \$86 million to build this line.

Mr. Speaker, fewer than 15 people live year-round in Keno. There is no doubt that this project is not intended for them. Mr. Speaker, why is this government proposing to spend \$86 million to upgrade the Stewart-to-Keno transmission line?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: In fact, the Yukon government, through Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation, provided money for planning the infrastructure between Stewart and Keno City. In doing that, this area of line is one that is in fact past its anticipated lifespan. As part of that project, a look was taken at whether, through enhancing the capacity of that line, there could be opportunity for hooking up to current and future mines within the area and potentially providing the basis for growing those needs.

One of the things that has come in is that the cost of the line is more than originally anticipated and various options are being looked at, including focusing on more critical needs, but, as part of what we've been doing, we have also been looking at seeking federal investment in energy infrastructure, just as we've done successfully with previous projects such as the Mayo B expansion and connecting what was previously the Mayo-Dawson grid and the Whitehorse-Aishihik-Faro grid together to provide one connected Yukon electrical grid.

Mr. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, if this was about Keno residents, the money would be better spent providing Keno with a clean and reliable community well.

In its submission to the federal government, Yukon government says that the return on investment will come from mines in the area. Mr. Speaker, the Keno mine is closed and Victoria Gold has not raised the capital to open. When the Carmacks-to-Stewart transmission line was constructed, Minto mine had a signed power purchase agreement and paid to build the spur line. It was a good example of how good infrastructure projects can help Yukon residents as well as Yukon industry, but where are the guarantees in this case that Yukon Energy will have customers and get a return on its investment?

Has this government signed any power purchase agreements with these mines or are they merely upgrading the transmission line on speculation?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I think the member is misunderstanding the stage that this is at. I would point out that as part of replacing this line — which is in fact, I believe, the oldest line within the Yukon energy system — there are parts of it that are more than 60 years old and need to be replaced. There are sections where there have been significant issues around power outages and there is a need to replace that line.

As part of doing that, one of the things that Yukon Energy did was look forward to the future and the opportunity for potential economic activity in the area. There was a look taken at the option of building a line with a higher capacity to a 138-kilovolt capacity instead of 69 kilovolt, and looking at whether that incremental increase cost would be worth doing

at this point versus putting in a 69-kilovolt line now and potentially then replacing it at some point in the future.

Again, at this point, a final decision on what option to do has not been taken. We have looked at whether there is an opportunity to seek federal investment in this area, but again there is a need to invest in this electrical line, not just community wells in the area as the member has referred to. In fact, we will be doing our due diligence and there will be an effort made to choose the best path, being mindful of both opportunities and the cost to Yukoners.

Mr. Tredger: Upgrading infrastructure for industrial development is important, but Yukoners deserve assurances that such development will in fact go ahead and benefit Yukon. The power purchase agreement with Minto mine is a good example of return on investment. The proposed \$86-million upgrade is not. Far too often this government has invested public time and money without conducting any business case analysis to ensure that there will be a return for Yukoners. This Yukon Party government has ignored repeated requests from Yukon communities for local infrastructure projects. This money could be better spent on identified needs.

How can this government justify speculating with \$86 million in public money on this transmission line without any firm assurances or agreements from potential customers?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I just want to again reiterate to the member that the decision on whether to simply replace the existing assets as well as rerouting a section of line that is problematic or whether to upgrade it to 138 kilovolts from the existing 69 kilovolts has not been made. We're looking at a range of options. The cost of going to the higher option that would allow more capacity in future years for economic growth was looked at, but recognizing the costs, there are also other options that are being considered by Yukon Energy and the government. I would note to the member that, in fact, while a final decision hasn't been made, it's unlikely that without federal investment the more expensive choice of upgrading the transmission would be taken instead of simply replacing more critical assets.

I am pleased to see the member supporting the model that we used in the case of the Minto mine of a power purchase agreement and capital being provided by the mining company toward upgrading the line extension north. I would again note to the member that what we're doing now is simply looking at options and doing our due diligence. Without doing that planning work and doing a detailed study of options, we're not in a position to make an informed choice, so that is the work that is ongoing right now. Again, I would note that planning for the future and planning for future energy growth is an important part of what government needs to do.

Question re: Economic growth

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, we know that one of the defining accomplishments of this government has been to ratchet up uncertainty for investors, particularly in the resource sector. The uncertainty was reflected in the rankings of the latest Fraser Institute mining report. It was also reflected in mining exploration in the territory, which is down

again this year by 18 percent. It has actually dropped almost every year that the Yukon Party 2.0 has been in office.

Now ongoing court battles with First Nations and regulatory uncertainty have tarnished our reputation as a good place to do business. A perfect example of this is the Yukon Party's botched attempt to amend Bill S-6, or YESAA.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier now take responsibility for the regulatory uncertainty raised by this government's failed YESAA review?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I'm happy that the Leader of the Liberal Party wants to talk a little bit about money, because I want to talk about the fact of how Yukoners were really disappointed that, on the first day of this Sitting, the first opportunity that the Liberal leader had to ask a question of the government, what he did, Mr. Speaker, was stand up and defend cuts to expected funding to this Yukon government, Mr. Speaker. He stood up and defended the federal Liberal Party. Mr. Speaker, that says a lot about the Liberal leader and, in fact, the Liberal Party, because Yukoners know that the Yukon Party is not affiliated with any federal political party and that we will continue to stand up for the interests and the priorities of Yukoners every day.

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I don't think I heard one iota of an answer in that response. Regulatory uncertainty is a huge problem right now in our resource sector. It comes up when I meet with mining companies and with oil and gas companies that want to do business here. This is one of the reasons that our economy has shrunk for three years in a row. It is one of the reasons why we continue to drop in the Fraser Institute's mining rankings. It is one of the reasons exploration has dropped off every single year that this government has been in office, and it wasn't that long ago that the Premier was singing the praises of YESAA. This is him in 2013 — and I quote: "Frameworks like YESAA enable us to harness the momentum of the past decade and turn it into sustainable economic growth..."

Why has this government been unable to deliver on economic growth that it promised just three years ago?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the regulatory side of things with resource industries, our government is leading a cooperative effort with assessors, regulators, First Nations and industry to improve the timeliness, clarity, transparency and effectiveness of the mine licensing process. This work is designed to establish common standards, simplify the processes and clarify the roles of regulatory agencies to provide certainty for companies that want to do business in the Yukon.

We are proud of the fact that our government stands up as a pro-resource and pro-business government. All members on this side of the House recognize the value of the mining industry and the oil and gas industry, not only to the social fabric of the Yukon but to our economy moving forward.

We will continue to do the hard work when it comes to improving our regulatory regime, investing in infrastructure and investment attraction as done by the Minister of Economic Development and his department. There is a lot of work that needs to be done and we will continue, as I

mentioned, to do that hard work in these down commodity times so that when the commodity prices come back, as they always do, we will be in a better position coming out of this current slide than we were going in. We will be able to attract those Outside investment dollars that will help to drive the economy of the Yukon and our resource industries.

Mr. Silver: I actually appreciate an answer from the minister, which is different from the Premier who is ducking his responsibility for the role that he has played in creating the only economy in Canada that has shrunk three years in a row. They were singing the praises of YESAA to anybody who would listen back just three years ago.

With regard to the government blaming low mineral prices, here is a quote from Yukon Party 1.0 — and I quote: “Yukon’s climb to the top of the rankings has absolutely nothing to do with world mineral prices; it has everything to do with us — this government — making the changes necessary to restore investor confidence in the Yukon.” Mr. Speaker, when things are good, the Yukon Party wants to take credit and when they are bad, they blame world mineral prices; or in this case, YESAA.

Last week, the new federal minister was here to start cleaning up the mess left by this government after the YESAA review. Mr. Speaker, what role, if any, will this government play in fixing this mess — one which it created?

Hon. Mr. Kent: As I mentioned in my earlier response to the member opposite, we’re excited about the work that is underway to address some of the regulatory inefficiencies that we have and it is work that is being led by our government but has full participation from assessors and regulators and First Nations as well as industry.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to certainty in the resource industry, there are a number of factors that the government does control. Obviously there are policy factors that are controlled by the government and this is a government that, as I mentioned, does believe in responsible resource development and our policies are very reflective of that. The work that we do on the ground with First Nations and industry and our other partners is also reflective of that.

Mr. Speaker, we can talk about a royalty regime. You need to have a competitive royalty regime in place. We saw the New Democrats in their last platform seek to raise royalties and establish some sort of a fund that they would use from additional royalties. We have to be competitive when it comes to royalties and taxation. That’s something that our government is very committed to.

As well, Mr. Speaker, infrastructure — the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, in a previous question here today, asked the Minister of Yukon Development Corporation about taking the transmission line from Stewart to Keno City to shovel-ready. Those are the types of things that we need to continue to invest in. That’s what Outside investors are telling us when we’re in Toronto and Vancouver and other places. We’ll continue to listen to those who have the dollars and resources to put into our industry.

Question re: Community nursing

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, in the last Sitting, I questioned the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services on the failure of this government to manage the operational needs in community nursing. By the government’s own admission, 11 of 32 community nursing positions were unstaffed at the time. Community nursing was experiencing prolonged position vacancies, chronic recruitment and retention problems and the departure of committed, long-term employees.

After pressure from the NDP, the Yukon Employees Union and media scrutiny, the government reached an agreement with the union to hire permanent, part-time rotational nurses to fill positions in Yukon’s community health centres.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us how many new community nurses have been hired and how many positions remain vacant?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I am certainly pleased to answer the member’s question. There are a number of good things and good work being done in the territory specifically around community nursing. It gives me a chance not only to highlight that good work, but to thank those who are willing to take on those roles in a number of Yukon communities.

As the member opposite is fully aware, Yukon is competing with all jurisdictions across Canada with regard to recruitment of nurses for an expanded-scope type of health centre. Community nursing has responded to the challenges through development of its advanced orientation and mentorship program. The department works continuously to be creative with its recruitment and retention strategies for staffing

To the member opposite’s question, we are pleased to continue our positive relationship working with a number of the nursing organizations in Yukon and certainly thank those who take on those roles in community nursing.

Ms. Stick: I didn’t hear any numbers mentioned there as to how many new and how many positions remain vacant.

I asked this question because, despite this government’s stated intention to address recruitment and retention in community nursing, we continue to hear of unsafe working conditions for the hard-working community nurses. We continue to hear of nurses who are leaving their positions. For some, it’s a choice and they are working in other territories — better pay, better working conditions and better treatment. Denial of vacation time, extended periods working alone and excessive amounts of on-call hours continue to make it difficult for nurses to remain in community nursing. Auxiliary-on-call nurses continue to be used to meet the basic requirements of staffing. This is not good, Mr. Speaker.

What concrete steps has the minister taken to address this shortage of personnel in community nursing since the agreement with the Yukon Employees Union was signed?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Again, I thank the member opposite for the question. Certainly community nursing is something that is very important to this government and through the Department of Health and Social Services we continue to work with those individuals around the territory, providing

that expanded scope practice for people that are living in the communities.

In my first response, I had talked a little bit about the recruitment and the member opposite has brought that up. Health and Social Services attended recruitment fairs in Edmonton and Vancouver in September 2015. We posted a full-page ad in *Canadian Nursing Magazine*, running monthly from January 2016 to June 2016. We have: implemented part-time rotation agreements inclusive of paid flights in November 2015; attended a recruitment fair in Ottawa in January of this year; and attended a recruitment fair in Toronto also this year.

Mr. Speaker, as I talk to individuals who are working in this field, they continue to reiterate to me that the word-of-mouth advertising is probably one of our strongest advertising models and certainly the nurses and medical professionals in the territory continue to reach out to their colleagues and fellow students across our country.

Again, I thank the member opposite for this question. It gives me an opportunity to highlight some of the good work that is being done in the territory.

Ms. Stick: Still no numbers on how many vacancies remain in the communities. When we talk about word-of-mouth advertising, unfortunately it works both ways. Community nurses are unhappy and are leaving the community nursing centres in the Yukon and it's serious. When we do not ensure that our community health centres have sufficient nursing staff, we put our nurses and our communities at risk. Nurses work hard in their communities, treating the ill, doing preventive work, monitoring our elders and seniors, meeting emergencies, but still these hard-working nurses are being asked to do more and more with less support.

Mr. Speaker, what is being done today to ensure the safety of our nurses and the patients in our communities?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Again, I thank the member opposite for giving me the chance to highlight some of the good work that is being done in the territory.

As I mentioned in my previous responses, the challenges for recruitment in Yukon is certainly amplified by the required rural and northern rural skillset that we certainly seek for our Yukon nurses.

To the numbers that the member opposite had asked for, I can report that the 11 primary health care centres currently have 2.5 out of 24 community-based positions vacant. There are an additional 2.45 out of the 4.45 float positions that are currently vacant — these positions typically provide coverage for scheduled leave — and 36 auxiliary on-call nurses provide the coverage throughout rural Yukon for current vacancies and leave. We expect to be fully staffed for the summer.

I certainly thank the member opposite for bringing this issue to the floor of the Legislature. It gives me an opportunity to highlight some of the good work that is being done in the department.

Question re: Waste management strategy

Mr. Barr: In 2015 this government missed its promised 50-percent waste-diversion target and it still has not given clear direction for Yukon's waste-management plan.

This January the Association of Yukon Communities came together, recognized the need for leadership and released their own solid-waste management plan. In the absence of the Yukon government taking a lead on a waste management strategy, the AYC has taken action of their own.

If this government will not show leadership when it comes to waste management in Yukon, will they at least provide support to those who are?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the record we have when it comes to solid-waste management and when it comes to the development and encouragement of recycling in this territory.

Of the levers available to Yukon government — I believe we are pulling all of them. First of all we are investing in infrastructure. We are working with Yukon municipalities, both through the AYC and directly bilaterally with municipal governments, to improve their own sites. We're also improving our sites that are operated by Yukon government by making diversion more of an option both in our municipal sites and Yukon government-run sites.

We're making regulatory changes as well. Those are coming forthwith and they will be in place soon with changes to the designated material regulation as well as the beverage container regulation to improve the opportunities for recycling a number of new products in the territory.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, we're making significant investments in solid-waste management and recycling in the territory. Yukon government has taken a lead role in providing diversion credits to the processors here in Whitehorse. That's something that we do in partnership with the City of Whitehorse, but the Yukon government contributes significantly more financially to that project.

You will also see in the budget this time around a significant increase to the amount available for diversion credits and other recycling initiatives. That was tabled on Thursday in our budget.

I look forward to working with the AYC, Yukon municipalities and other community groups as well as the processors and handlers in this territory to see enhancements to those programs as well.

Mr. Barr: The government's lack of leadership on this issue is being felt throughout the Yukon. The Marsh Lake transfer station is filling up fast and it is quickly running out of room, as is the much larger Whitehorse waste management facility. The City of Dawson is under so much pressure that they have to reconsider the way they do business. Action needs to be taken and quickly to support Yukon's transfer stations and landfills.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister acknowledge the pressure faced by Yukon's transfer stations and landfills and explain how his government plans to support them?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I have explained the number of ways the Yukon government is working with

municipalities and other groups to improve our solid-waste practices in the territory. All of the problems addressed by the member opposite are issues that we are aware of and each has a different solution, so it's impossible for me to outline all three of those particular scenarios in one short answer today. What I will say is that we are working very closely with Yukon municipalities, with community groups and with processors and recyclers through the territory to provide infrastructure, to improve the regulations and to make significant investments in recycling and solid-waste management in the territory.

Of course this is not something we can do alone. We rely, of course, on municipal governments to operate their own sites, but in sites that are run by Yukon government, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the changes that have been made. You only need to look around at some of the sites that we have improved in the last year or so to see the significant improvement, whether it be in Marsh Lake, in Mount Lorne or out on the north Alaska Highway. We've closed some old sites and we've improved the operations of a number of other ones, so we're making infrastructure improvements and we're making regulatory changes and significant investments that will benefit not only Yukon's recycling processors, but all Yukoners who want to play a role in recycling and improving our own solid-waste management, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Barr: Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Yukon Party's leadership, leaders of Yukon communities have filled the void. They have seen AYC release their own proposed solid-waste management plan; we have seen the Mount Lorne transfer station exceed its 50-percent waste-diversion target. The operator himself applied for funding to share this expertise with other Yukon communities who had been requesting support, only to be denied.

Mr. Speaker, now that the government has missed its 50-percent waste-diversion target, what is the next move? Is there a new target and, if not, how will the government measure if their actions have any impact at all?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: As members know, we have a *Yukon Solid Waste Action Plan* in place that we're working with our partners in the communities to implement. I'm glad the member opposite noted the site that's owned by Yukon government, which is achieving some great things in Mount Lorne. Other sites like that — that are owned by Yukon government — throughout the communities play an important role for rural citizens in improving their own solid-waste management practices.

Now, Mr. Speaker, with regard to our plan, we have been very clear. We have a *Yukon Solid Waste Action Plan*. I've outlined some of the highlights of it in my responses here today, but what continues to be apparent is that the members opposite have no plan at all. They continue to criticize; they like to take shots and say that they could do better or that they would do something different, but not once have they ever explained an alternative, not once have they ever explained what they would do differently. All that they've done, Mr. Speaker, is sit and criticize and never present any other

options for Yukoners, which is disappointing to anybody, I think, who is listening to this.

Mr. Speaker, I've been very clear about our priorities, about the actions we've taken, and I'll leave it to members opposite to come up with their own ideas.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 23: *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17* — Second Reading — *adjourned debate*

Clerk: Second Reading, Bill No. 23, standing in name of the Hon. Mr. Pasloski; adjourned debate, Ms. Hanson.

Ms. Hanson: I would like to say at the outset that I am pleased to be able to stand in the Legislative Assembly today to speak in response to the Budget Address from the Minister of Finance last Thursday.

I also would like to say at the outset just a few words about the responsibilities and the pleasure and privilege that I have to serve the riding of Whitehorse Centre — a riding that I have talked about a lot in the past because of my pride in this riding and my recognition of how diverse and complex Whitehorse Centre is. We know that it's complex, not just in terms of the geographic span. It's a small riding in many ways because it only encompasses — relative to many of the ridings of the members opposite and on this side — a relatively small geographic riding; however, it certainly covers a broad range of interests and goes from the south access road out to Marwell. As we know, as we traverse that terrain, we see the light-industrial area in Marwell, which is a mix of businesses and as I said, light industrial and some commercial/residential.

It's really a riding with a very dynamic mix of social, commercial, residential, government — the seat of the territorial government, the Ta'an Kwäch'än government, the municipality of Whitehorse — many recreational organizations, cultural organizations, and many, many small businesses that are based throughout this riding. It's a riding that's probably going through more rapid change than any other riding in the territory in terms of its evolution from an historic sort of sleepy downtown area — “sleepy” as in “moribund” if we looked at it 30, 40 years ago — to the very vibrant core of a modern capital city. That evolution is also bearing witness to the growing inequality gap that Yukon faces.

So as the Official Opposition caucus and myself as the leader of that Official Opposition review and debate this fifth budget presented by this Finance minister — the 14th by a Yukon Party government — we do so through the lens of how it serves to create a fair, more equal Yukon — a Yukon that is for all Yukon citizens. We'll be looking at how this proposed budget and the budget initiatives that are set out in this budget will further the common hope of all Yukon citizens for a robust, durable and local economy — an economy that

because of its diversified nature, would be resilient to the impact of commodity price swings of the boom-and-bust cycle that has been a feature of the Yukon's economy since contact.

Mr. Speaker, the 2016-17 budget does not speak to these aspirations. I had hoped that perhaps, after finally realizing the benefits of the practice followed by the Official Opposition of going to communities and of opening doors to say to any and all Yukon citizens — to First Nation and local government representatives, small-business owners, industry, arts and cultural groups — when talking with them about their hopes and aspirations for Yukon, that the Yukon Party's much-vaunted and advertised community consultation would have netted some results.

I guess the difference is the objective. On this side, the opportunity to engage with Yukon citizens is not a photo opportunity nor is it a tick on a long list. It is an opportunity to actively engage with and listen to Yukon citizens. After 13, almost 14, years as government, it is clear that the Yukon Party does not get the notion of governance. The irony is that this government was handed an amazing toolbox for good governance when it was first elected back in 2002. It is important to look into that toolbox to pull out the tools and to ask why the government has refused to use them. I am speaking of course about the First Nation final and self-government agreements and the devolution transfer agreement. By entering into these agreements, the Yukon government entered into a new era of governance; an era limited only by imagination and political will or, as we have seen, lack thereof.

The tools in the First Nation final and self-government agreements enable both Yukon and First Nation governments to shed over 100 years of colonialism and to jointly develop a new, mature relationship founded on a shared vision. The opportunities include the ability to redesign and rework how government best serves all Yukoners, First Nations and non-First Nations alike. It was never intended that the negotiated agreements were to be interpreted in terms of winners and losers. It was not a zero-sum game. Yet, at times the public statements of members opposite appear to reflect that base view.

Another key tool in that box is the devolution transfer agreement. The territorial formula financing agreement just didn't grow like Topsy because the federal government of the day was run by a bunch of nice guys. The devolution transfer agreement saw a significant transfer of both human and financial resources to the Yukon government; financial resources that, when indexed over time, have provided the Yukon government with a level of financial certainty not afforded to any of the Premier's provincial counterparts at the federal-provincial-territorial table. With the assumption of provincial-like responsibilities, one would assume that a government would also put in place measures to ensure that the fiscal resources that the Legislative Assembly is charged with stewarding on behalf of all Yukon citizens are expended in the most effective, economic and efficient manner.

Public accounts committees in other jurisdictions meet on an ongoing basis to ensure that the decisions voted on by the

Assembly are in fact carried out as intended. As chair of Yukon's Public Accounts Committee, I can attest to the fact that this has not been the practice in Yukon. My experience suggests that until and unless the Premier — a premier, a future premier — recognizes the importance of the work of the Public Accounts Committee for more than the occasional review of the occasional Auditor General report on a Yukon department or agency, that will remain the case.

When we were first elected back in 2011, I assumed that a new premier would want to engage in the business of making sure that citizens had the best information possible about the expenditure of their resources and that he would be interested in best practices gleaned from other Canadian jurisdictions. After all, we are relatively new at the full gamut of provincial-like responsibilities.

I was and remain disappointed at the Finance minister's rejection of the discussion of ideas that emanate from the Parliamentary Budget Officer or the Canadian Council of Legislative Auditors regarding means of ensuring that all members of the Legislative Assembly have a thorough understanding of their role vis-à-vis Public Accounts. After all, it's one of the key parts of the job description of a member of a parliamentary democracy.

So we were pleased to see that this budget finally recognizes that results-based budgeting is actually a function of government. Citizens can be forgiven for wondering why it took the Yukon Party 13 years to figure it out, and they can also be forgiven for being a bit suspicious that this sudden discovery of innovative budgeting was really a desperate reaction to the fact that the Finance minister has all but disappeared a healthy budget surplus he started his mandate with. Mr. Speaker, I'll come back to that.

Over time, we expect the Yukon government — even the Yukon Party — to fully grasp the potential of actually acting as if the Yukon is a real government, rather than an extension of the federal government. Part of the process is letting go of the past. As it so often seems to happen, just when things were getting really rough, we have an intervention from Outside, another opportunity to take the long view — the long view, retrospectively, in terms of a history that informs so much of what we now know as Canada, as Yukon, and the people here and the long view of what it could be if only we have the heart and the courage to embrace the opportunities and the challenges presented by the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Imagine that, Mr. Speaker — challenges and opportunities that are identified in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 recommendations or calls for action. They echo in so many profound ways what has already been negotiated between the Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nation governments.

So when it looked like we were sort of losing sight — and clearly that's what has happened over the last 13 years; we've lost sight of the objectives of what those agreements were — along comes the TRC last year, which says, "Here's another addition to your toolbox." It's not going to be enough, Mr. Speaker, to simply check off that we read those 94.

The calls to action are profound and they will force us ultimately, as citizens and as members of this Legislature, to rethink in fundamental ways of unlearning what has been identified as a skewed sense of history, and help us build a base for a new relationship based on trust and respect.

Mr. Speaker, despite my hope that this is what we have said and endorsed in this Legislative Assembly through discussions and debate, and the words that have been expressed in this Legislative Assembly as we have marked the various anniversaries — whether it was, in 2013, the 20th anniversary of the signing of the agreements, or 2015, the 20th anniversary of the coming into effect of those agreements in the legislation — and then last year, in 2015, there was the TRC recommendations to a set of agreements and recommendations. We've all said, yes, we admire, respect and endorse them and we will abide and live by them. That's the challenge we face.

However, rather than engaging in a sustained and often difficult work of building relationships, of listening to hear where the differences are and how they might be broached, how they might be reached across the table, it has become clear that the Yukon Party preference is governance by press release or a one-off announcement rather than the serious work of figuring out how together we realize the potential of the tools we jointly created.

By now the litany of opportunities denied and their consequences are becoming tired in the repetition and, quite frankly, I am tired of repeating them, but there is no opportunity to have engaged conversation so it becomes a statement for the record that in 2016 we're here and we have to say it again for the record. We have to bear witness to the fact that these opportunities are either being ignored or denied.

Unfortunately, until there is a government in power in Yukon willing to seize those opportunities and to rectify the damage done, all Yukon citizens and all Yukon economic prosperity are jeopardized. I don't say that lightly, Mr. Speaker. If the Yukon Party seriously believes that it can continue to undermine the solemn commitments that the Yukon, as a government — not as a political party — made, and if it thinks it can undermine those, it is seriously deluded and all Yukon is seriously harmed.

To cite a few examples going back, I looked at some of the budget addresses by this Finance minister. In 2013, the controversy of the day that emerged was the whole issue of land use planning because right after the election the government decided that it rejected the land use plan — the Peel watershed recommended plan.

Again, the record showed that it was not listening and reading the agreement. It took the zero-sum approach. We won. You guys, you gave up 90 percent of the land in exchange of 10 percent settlement land, and we're not going to agree to a plan — not something that's etched in stone, but a plan that is subject to review over time — and where did we end up? Court, no certainty, decline in investment.

Land use planning, when we look at what the understanding of the parties at the time was — it was intended to provide opportunities. It was intended to say, in exchange

for First Nations ceding 90 percent of this territory — in excess of 90 percent actually — a number of commitments were made. One of them was land use planning — that we would commit to completing eight land use plans — regional land use plans — throughout this territory that would give everybody — investors in this territory, residents in this territory — what common understanding there was for the uses of those lands, whether they are recreational, residential, commercial, industrial or cultural — you name it. But it was a planning process.

In 2009, 14 years after the Vuntut Gwitchin agreement was signed — 14 years after it came into effect, actually, and 16 years after it was signed — the first and only land use plan was completed. That was an intensity-of-use plan. The majority of the issues and discussion in most land use plans had already been settled in the Vuntut Gwitchin agreement because we had agreed — and I see the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin agree. It is true; he was there. He knows about the extensive withdrawal of oil and gas lands, the creation of Ivvavik, of Bear Cave Mountain, the other national park — Vuntut National Park — which left the intensity of use to be determined along the Dempster highway corridor.

Then we get the Peel watershed plan — seven years and countless hundreds of thousands of dollars of court cases, an irredeemable bad faith. The only good consequence of that is that it has ignited citizens who say that, "These are our agreements; they are not your agreements, they are ours." There are economic consequences to that when the minister opposite will say — creating the uncertainty that it does when you say to investors that we are not really sure what is a go or what is not a go, because we can't tell you whether you are going to be challenged or not challenged because we cannot get land use planning done because we have actually put a hold on that. At the same time, the member opposite will say, "Well, we don't care about the opinions of tourists from Düsseldorf or Pasadena." That is a great message for tourism marketing. Do not think that those kinds of messages won't get out.

We have made that commitment as governments and we have one done. Until regional land use planning is completed, there will be economic uncertainty in this territory. As the Member for Klondike said earlier today, after the Premier extolled the virtues and benefits of YESAA in the previous Budget Address, after he quoted at length from the Chamber of Mines and their support for YESAA, he announced in 2014, without detail at the time, amendments to YESAA, the made-in-Yukon socio-economic environmental assessment legislation — amendments, it turned out, that he had sought using the excuse that, because the previous Conservative government in Ottawa had gutted environmental legislation across this country — CEEA, the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*, *Fisheries Act*, and the list goes on through the various omnibus legislation — that we had to sink to the lowest common denominator, that we had to take our environmental legislation created in collaboration among First Nation governments, Yukon government, federal government and industry stakeholders to reflect the realities of the Yukon.

We had to take it down several notches so that we could have politically driven direction given to an independent board.

You know, Mr. Speaker, those kinds of decisions — and we heard this in the Senate committee and the parliamentary committee on aboriginal affairs when it appeared here. It came to Yukon to hear witnesses, and we heard witnesses from several mining companies say that if this went to court — one of them actually said it would kill mining in the Yukon. What about negotiated commitments does the Yukon Party not understand? If you will do that do your First Nation partners, industry wonders what you will do to them.

This year, we have money in both the Energy, Mines and Resources and the ECO budgets to not deal with the core commitments set out in the devolution transfer agreement — that is, to develop a modern resource legislation in partnership with Yukon First Nation governments — but rather to continue a process around talking about, collaboratively developing recommendations for improving the existing Yukon mining regime.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I've said this before many times: Yukon First Nations and their governments are incredibly patient, but I think they are coming to the end of the fuse on this one as well. I think that Yukon First Nation governments have had it with being asked to sit at the table and have talks without result. It's 2016. It is 13 years after the devolution transfer agreement came into effect and not having modern successor resource legislation. I will give the minister credit where credit is due. There is forestry legislation that is not Ottawa's legislation and that does reflect the Yukon and Yukon circumstances; but as I said at the outset, we are supposed to be acting like a province. You would think that we would take pride in developing resource legislation that reflects the reality of the Yukon in the 21st century going forward and reflects the reality of the social and political commitments that we have established. I believe, and the NDP Official Opposition believes, that the devolution transfer agreement provides the tools essential to creating a new Yukon, not simply a continuation of the central-Canada-directed view of the north, that has, as it became abundantly clear over the last 10 years — and I am really hopeful that it's going to change going forward — but the past 10 years, it has viewed the north primarily as having value for the amount of resources that could be extracted from it. There is more to the north than simply mineral extraction. It is important, Mr. Speaker, but it is not the sole reason why every Yukon citizen lives in the Yukon.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the devolution transfer agreement and the First Nation final agreements speak to where we live. They speak to the importance and the ability for us as governments to engage in local decision-making, to create local benefits for our economy. I think until and unless Yukon has the government that recognizes the unique opportunities that it has on behalf of all Yukon citizens, along with Yukon First Nation governments — and that we share — our social and economic future will continue to falter. We can do better.

There's no doubt that times are tough, Mr. Speaker. I doubt that even the Premier was able to fully believe the positive spin he tried to deliver last Wednesday and Thursday. The Conference Board of Canada statistics have again confirmed that Yukon's gross domestic product has declined for a third straight year. The Yukon Party recession seems to be gaining steam.

Minto, Yukon's last open mine, is slated to begin winding down operations this summer and close early next year. Those are real jobs, Mr. Speaker. It employs many Yukoners — a declining number. We know that exploration spending is projected to be less yet again in 2016. Yukon's population, alone among the rest of Canada, has declined. I'm sure that the Premier has seen the U-Hauls heading south.

The Premier emphasizes being a net contributor to Canada, but he's not taking action to walk the talk. Proportionally, transfers from Canada have become a bigger and bigger part of the budget since 2011, when the Premier started his mandate. Think about it: after over 13 years, this government has failed to move our revenue dependency on Ottawa of over 85 percent.

The Premier is quick to say that it's due to factors beyond his control, while at the same time, deriding the government in Alberta, which saw its real revenues fall by \$10 billion when the world oil and gas markets collapsed. Imagine, Mr. Speaker, if this government suddenly faced a 30-percent reduction in transfer payments from Ottawa — imagine. Some people in this Legislative Assembly will recall the mid-1990s when the Yukon formula financing agreement did face a real cut under a Liberal government of five percent. That five percent, going forward, had a serious impact on the governments of the day.

That's why, as New Democrats, we believe there's an absolute imperative to have a strategic approach to our economy that is open to moving beyond the status quo, beyond what has been done to what could be accomplished.

Mr. Speaker, I think I'm not alone. The Auditor General has pointed out — time and again, but I'll just say it — that the current five-year mandate of this government has been characterized by a lack of strategic planning for the future of our territory. Decisions have been continually made on an ad hoc basis, reacting, rather than planning for and addressing issues.

One doesn't need to go far for examples, and I'm not sure that I'll spend too much time on those, because I know that as we debate the various measures that are outlined in this budget, they will become apparent. I know that my colleagues will want to go in-depth as we get into various departments on specific examples.

The one area that I just have to make comment on is the Yukon approach to health care. Since 2004, federal, provincial and territorial governments set out on a journey to address the issue of health care costs in this country. Despite that, the Yukon Party government seems to be running contrary to everybody else across the country. The Premier boasts about the massive increases in health care expenditures — the doubling — the doubling, Mr. Speaker — within 10 years of

physician care costs. Again, when you're not a resilient economy and when you are wholly dependent on somebody else, that's a dangerous trajectory to be on. I use that language carefully, because it's the language used by a previous Yukon Party premier when he called for a review of health care in this territory because he said we could not afford the trajectory of expenditures for health care and that we needed to find a more appropriate blend of services — appropriate to the kind of communities that we are throughout this territory; desperate small communities. By their own measure, the Yukon Party has not lived up to that challenge.

Under this government, it appears that extractive industries have long been the centrepiece of the Yukon Party's economic planning. Government decision-making has supported these industries over all other elements of the economy. As a result, in recent years our territory has not been focused on developing resiliency to periodic commodity shifts — as the Premier has so famously stated: "So goes mining, so goes Yukon."

Mr. Speaker, that narrow view of what this territory and its people have to offer has resulted in the recession we are experiencing today. This government cut funding to the Economic Development budget in 2012 when commodity prices were high and extractive industry in Yukon seemed promising. It spent years resisting calls to increase funds for tourism, a growing industry that has helped to mitigate the recent effects of low commodity prices in our economy.

What did this government learn about anticipating the inevitable boom-and-bust cycle of the extractive industry? What did they learn about investing in those activities that would sustain us through periods of low commodity prices, such as we're experiencing today? I would suggest it is very little.

Just speaking about tourism, I would remind us that several years ago the Tourism Industry Association — probably about January, three or so years ago — asked the Yukon government for \$2.5 million a year over two years to focus on domestic marketing because there is a significant growth in that area — potential.

They asked that the government build into that two-year commitment of funding criteria to evaluate the success and the continued provision of funding to continue on domestic marketing. What they got was \$1.8 million a year and the focus of the program was not solely domestic, which was a surprise to many, and there did not appear to be any evaluation criteria. What we see is the same tourism information about the number of airport landings — nothing about the economic multiplier effect of the tourism dollar, so we have to rely upon those kinds of scant details. Now this budget says the tourism industry's marketing programs will get \$900,000 a year — not even the \$1.8 million — and it's not domestic and focused. So now we're going to say less money and we're going to target our marketing globally. Again, without planning, without focus, we do this sort of limp-along approach. That is not a way to build an industry. We have heard it time and again and the ministers who have served in Tourism and Culture over the last four or five years

know of the significant opportunities that exist in the tourism area.

We've heard many times in terms of the great opportunities for diversifying our economy about support for the knowledge and innovation sector, Mr. Speaker. We've also heard that one of the great impediments to that is the lack of reliable broadband and the importance of expanding and diversifying into our fibre optic system. What have we got so far? We have four studies and a commitment to more studies. That is not terribly helpful for those small niche innovators who are looking to base their companies in the Yukon and rely upon reliable and resilient connections globally. So this budget again has another \$500,000 for studies and development. At what point will Yukoners be presented with the criteria upon which to assess which option is being studied and which option should be going forward — the recommendations?

When will there be a deliverable? What analysis is going on as we're planning in these studies? Are we analyzing the effects of discontinuous permafrost on the proposed Dempster route? What lessons have we learned from the Northwest Territories? What implications are there? What commitments have been made when we read an Alaska newspaper that in fact there is an agreement of some sort — according to them — for the Skagway route? That would be news to me and hopefully it's news to the people across the way.

Mr. Speaker, we've heard loud and clear in our community consultations and in our discussions with Yukoners across this territory that Yukoners not only want a diversified economy, they recognize the imperative of it — one that balances the non-renewable resource extraction industry potential with the many other industries that can or could contribute to the prosperity of our territory.

I'm reminded again of the challenge posed by Dr. Norman Fraser, a strong proponent of the power of entrepreneurship to transform communities. You will perhaps recall that he asked. He said that, knowing that the mineral extraction industry is the biggest Yukon success story, what if — and this is without, as he said, any intent to disparage the mining sector — its success is a problem? His question that he posed was: Given a choice, would you prefer to live in a diversified economy or a non-diversified economy? If your economy isn't very diversified, would you choose, as your single industry, which you are so heavily exposed to, to be one that is historically boom and bust?

It's an interesting question, Mr. Speaker. We need only to look again at our neighbour Alberta to see the dramatic consequences of a 60-year focus on a singular non-renewable resource extraction industry. The opportunity is here for Yukon to reframe the potential of this territory so it is not so singularly focused.

We could seriously pursue the second question posed, which was: Without reducing the size of the mineral industry — without reducing it, Mr. Speaker — what would it take to make it no more than 10 percent of Yukon's economy? What other opportunities are there?

From the many conversations with Yukoners, from the informed debate and presentations at countless public meetings over the years, Yukon New Democrats have listened and heard how boundless our opportunities for a diversified economy really are. This is the economy that we, as the NDP, would work with Yukon citizens to deliver.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it's not just the unwillingness to get in and work to create the environment for a diversified economy; it's just emphasis, year after year, in the Premier's Budget Address on record capital spending. Yet again we see this government equate the size of the budget with its effectiveness. I could be cheeky and say I'm reminded of the Maria Muldaur song, but I won't get into the lyrics of that one.

After seeing this government persist in the building of acute care hospitals in Watson Lake and Dawson City without a demonstrated need — and that's not my assessment, Mr. Speaker. That is the assessment of the Auditor General of Canada. As the Auditor General said in 2013, those were built without a complete health care needs assessment and analysis of the options available to meet identified health care needs, including the costs of those options. He said that the corporation is unable to demonstrate that the hospitals have been designed to meet the community's health care needs, or that they will provide services as cost-effectively as possible.

In a rare move in an after-the-fact situation, the government commissioned a needs assessment. Surprise — they found that they were not designed to meet community needs and that the needs of community addictions, community mental health issues were not provided for, Mr. Speaker.

A 2014 report on government spending by the C.D. Howe Institute gave the Yukon government a failing grade for its ongoing mismanagement of Yukon's finances, naming Yukon one of the worst jurisdictions in Canada for meeting its budgeting targets. We can do better, Mr. Speaker.

Several budget addresses ago, the Finance minister spoke about the importance of home care and the importance of making investments. For two years in a row, we saw investments in home care and then, lo and behold, out of the blue in 2014, he discovered the continuing care facility and said, "Whoops. We're not going into home care. We would really like to build a great, big facility in downtown Whistle Bend."

The problem with that, Mr. Speaker, is that it's a repeat of an internal process — no community consultation and, as yet, unknown costs and sources of the financing for this. I know that my colleagues will have many questions for the minister. The ones that come to mind off the top of my head when I read the various internal reports that cautioned against the location chosen by this government — one that strikes me as the most interesting is the notion that they chose a site where they were warned that there would be, because of the geotechnical instability of the ground, additional costs — unable to be predicted at the time because they hadn't done the detailed work and they hadn't seen the full design for this facility. It was quite amazing to know the kind of soil conditions that this facility is supposed to be located on —

that the design contemplates a two-floor underground parkade. That will be most interesting to see as it fills with water.

We will be interested to see what the additional costs will be to build that kind of design. We will be interested to see whether or not the facts with respect to the design of a framed structure — a three-storey framed structure for mobility-challenged people — meet the National Building Code and what the costs are when they're all in.

We will be interested to see what the actual operation and maintenance costs will be and how they will rob future territorial governments of the ability to provide a more cost-effective community care that people need as they attempt to age in place — a concern that we've heard throughout this territory from seniors in every single community and from those who plan to age in the Yukon as opposed to leaving as people did in the past.

That is just one small example. If we go back far enough — and some of us were directly involved and recall the about turns by the Yukon Party on matters as diverse as the athletes' village during the Canada Winter Games, the toing and froing of the design and the building of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and the cost overruns that it cost all Yukon citizens.

Mr. Speaker, one of the areas — and why it makes it difficult to support the approach by the Yukon Party to stewarding our fiscal resources and the policy decisions to support them — is the unwillingness — or perhaps the inability of this government to address the whole issue of the growing inequality gap in this territory.

Many of us in this room — at least on this side — attended a day-long session in — I think it was January 2010 when the Yukon Party announced its poverty reduction and social inclusion strategy with panelists as diverse as Hugh Segal, a Conservative senator who had written, along with Liberal Senator Art Eggleton, one of the best researched reports on poverty and homelessness and poverty reduction initiatives that were going on across this country — who challenged the Yukon government of the day, the current Yukon government, to take seriously the issues of poverty and inequality because, as he said, they have economic consequences and, if nothing else, governments need to understand that failure to address them will cost us all. You can pay for it through moderate means and adjustments to existing systems, or you can pay for it in acute care facilities, increased visits to emergency rooms, or, as this government — one of the comments made by the former Minister of Justice — that's fine. Our jails are built for more people, so we'll just fill the jails.

That's one way to deal with poverty — one way to deal with mental health problems — but since the announcement of that poverty reduction and social inclusion strategy, what outcomes have there been? What measurable reductions have been noted? Why, in the face of a concerted effort, as we're told by the Yukon Party government, to develop the strategy, is there increased dependence on food banks?

Mr. Speaker, it's important, when dealing with poverty and inequality, to pay attention to the root causes. We urge the Yukon Party government to pay attention to a report issued by

the Canadian Medical Association in 2013 called, *What makes us sick?*. It turns out that poverty can make kids sick their whole lives. Poverty in childhood puts a person at greater risk for diabetes than so-called lifestyle choices and behaviours.

There is a raft of these studies about how if we wanted to, we could address the root causes of poverty. I can tell you that the Yukon government has within its cadre, within its ranks, some very skilled public servants who are experts in various aspects of public policy, but when the Yukon Party makes politically motivated expenditures that dismiss the recommendations of our skilled civil service it will make for a long-term drain on our territory financially and actually socially, and it does not produce the results that Yukoners deserve.

Mr. Speaker, when we speak and when we listen to Yukoners, we hear that they want a government that works for them, is honest with them, provides leadership, responds positively to creative ideas and solutions and bold action, and they are expressing to us time and again that they don't feel this is happening under this government's watch. They feel the government has been content to sit out from the hard decisions and become a passenger when it comes to Yukon's future.

We as elected officials have a unique opportunity to bring together the diverse groups of governments, organizations, businesses and individuals to actively engage to solve problems that face our people in our territory. When we foster an environment where these groups can work together, can trust each other and treat each other with mutual respect because they know that the government is also doing that with them, we believe that it's not just the right thing to do but that it produces tangible benefits.

We think that part of that is making sure that we listen to all levels of government. We think and we know that when other levels of government, for example municipal governments, make recommendations as they did during the *Municipal Act* review, when they suggest as governments that there are ways of sharing the financial burden by allowing them to find means for revenue-generating opportunities, and when we dismiss their ideas in the review of the *Municipal Act*, it sends a message. When we largely ignore the requests made after much review and discussion internally and much prioritizing by the Association of Yukon Communities, when their infrastructure requests are largely ignored, then it reinforces that actually their voice is not being heard. When decisions are made by government in Whitehorse about what the priority is in Carmacks or Teslin, or if they're not even on the list, that delivers a message.

We would urge the Yukon Party to publish what the Association of Yukon Communities asked for with respect to the infrastructure priorities this year, and what the Yukon Party's response has been. We know the government has the right attitude and right intent. It has the ability to reach out to Yukoners and find creative solutions to our problem because we know Yukoners are resourceful people. The best solution to challenges facing Yukon will come from Yukoners themselves.

We believe that Yukon solutions work, but what we've seen is a government that, over the last few years, has chosen to ignore those solutions and go Outside to pay for Outside experts. We have seen contracts running the gamut from environmental cleanup to tourism advertising to employee assistance programs when there are local solutions that are not only qualified to do the job, but can bring a Yukon perspective.

Mr. Speaker, there are many examples of that. The two that really come to mind are the decision last year to — and I notice it's in the budget again this year, so the contract is obviously continued — grant the employee assistance program contract to Morneau Shepell. Our current Minister of Finance in Ottawa was also the head of a large multinational human resource company.

Over the last 20 or so years, the competent Yukon-based cadre of experts in employee assistance and professional counsellors — very well-qualified — have developed a skillset to be able to respond to Yukon employees. Mr. Speaker, when an employee is in distress, such as when an employee is told on Friday afternoon — because it's the practice, unfortunately, of many departments in this government, which is unfathomable, to fire people on a Friday — that they have been let go, it can be a trigger. So when that happens, Mr. Speaker, it would be really good to be able to think you can actually talk to somebody now in your community, not call somebody in Vancouver and then get referred to somebody in Whitehorse. Why choose to dehumanize employee assistance?

Mr. Speaker, the other example I wanted to raise is one that resonates in terms of lost opportunities, and goes back to what I had said when talking about the opportunities that were embedded or come to us as a result of the agreements that we negotiated with Yukon First Nation governments. One of the results of those First Nation agreements was that First Nations established independent, arm's-length development corporations to engage in economic development to help diversify Yukon's economy.

We heard again — when the First Nations appeared before the Senate committee in Ottawa, the representative of the Dakwakada Development Corporation talked about the over \$500 million it has contributed to Yukon's economy. He talked about the number of employees, First Nations and non-First Nations, income tax-paying Yukoners who are employed by First Nation development corporations. He also talked about the challenges of not having certainty about opportunities in the Yukon, uncertainty that is created by a government that creates bad relationships between First Nations and government. It creates a climate where nobody wants to invest as a result. He said we are investing Outside. We say, "What can we do to create the environment to bring that money back?" It was a double whammy when one of the few areas related to the mining sector that is actually an ongoing activity in this territory is the remediation of the contaminated sites left over from the federal watch in this territory — seven type 2 mine sites, the largest of which is Faro.

Since 2003, the Yukon government has been engaged with affected First Nations and the federal government developing and designing a closure plan for Faro, a closure plan that will see remediation activity going forward for another 150 years at minimum. It is a long-term project. My understanding and my expectation from my previous professional background is that closure plan would have been done before 13 years, but so be it. The fact is that earlier this year the contract was let to remediate the Faro mine site. When the announcement was made that the Faro mine site remediation had been granted, the press release said that it was being granted to an Alberta-based company. Being curious, I went and checked it out, and I thought, "That doesn't sound right." It turns out that the company, Parsons, is actually based in Pasadena. They may not want to come here given the minister opposite's comments about how they don't care about the opinions of the people in Pasadena.

The contract was let to a multinational corporation that is 15,000 persons strong with some three-point-some billion dollars of annual revenues. On their website they were happy to announce that they had successfully been granted this contract and it opened the doors for them, as they said, to aggressively pursue other northern mining cleanup projects. What wasn't so well-known, except for some of us including the ministers opposite, I am sure, who had been talking with local First Nation and Non-First Nation private sector companies that had also bid on that. It begs the question: At what point do we allow a massive, multinational to come in here and underbid by a few million dollars to give them what is effectively a loss-leader? We know that big box stores and other big businesses will underbid all of the time in order to get in the door. We have allowed this multinational in here and what we have done — I will read a little bit from a letter from the president of the Yukon First Nations Chamber of Commerce, because when we talk about how we create a vibrant local economy, we need to think about how it's not just simply one number in terms of the bottom line.

There are significant multiplier effects. Every dollar spent locally multiplies. When you send that dollar Outside, it has nothing more to do with this economy. What she said in her letter to her members — this is a letter that I was later told by her that was constructed not just by her, but by tax lawyers — was that we need and we should be hearing this as government — that it's a message of value, not just cost. While the Faro contract was awarded to a corporation in California for \$4 million less, it appears there was a lack of understanding when it comes to the value of a locally based bid of \$18.4 million and what a local contract could do to bolster the territory as a whole. They began with a corporate tax rate for one of the four First Nation companies that bid on the contract. If that company billed all contracts through their Yukon-based corporation and paid 15 percent of their net profit — let's presume at 20-percent margin, she said — this would amount to \$1.03 million — \$495,000 being Yukon's portion. She also gave a low estimate of 50 percent of the \$18.4 million as salaries through Yukoners and Yukon companies. The personal income tax amount would be an

additional \$3.49 million — \$1 million directly to Yukon. That's \$1.495 million supporting Yukon and not California.

We can focus on taxes but is that really the most important piece? We understand and we've been told time and time again from government members opposite that these big companies that come from Outside will employ some Yukoners, but how long do we just accept some employment as opposed to supporting our Yukon companies that raise their families here and support the territory's tax base? Of the \$18.4 million bid by a Yukon company, one can safely assume that 60 percent of those dollars would circulate in the territory. That means that \$11.4 million would be spent on personal items, big-ticket cars, snowmobiles, kids' education, after-school projects as well as small businesses, all in Yukon. How can we afford to give away that kind of money? What does it do? What message does it send — that, after 13 years, we're not prepared to invest in our own?

Mr. Speaker, what we see is a real unwillingness to take bold action. I have just used the example of the Parsons contract. You know, it's telling that the only time our Premier was taking a bold stance on something was when he organized the other northern premiers to go to Vancouver and state emphatically that the Yukon wouldn't accept a carbon tax. He didn't say, "I don't really know if we really explored all the ideas about how we address the pricing of carbon emissions." He didn't say, "Is there any way else to do something that will help drive Canada's transition to a stronger, more resilient low carbon economy?" He simply jumped to the conclusion that is what it was and it provided that kind of a grandstand.

You know, Mr. Speaker, he didn't see fit to rally these premiers against the announced cuts several years ago to the health transfers or the *Agreement on Internal Trade* that disproportionately affects the north, or when the federal government was amended YESAA against the wishes. What we hear from Yukoners is they want bold action when it comes to fighting climate change and shifting to an economy that focuses on a green energy economy and the knowledge sector. They want a government that aims high and does their best to hit that target.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it was interesting that the Minister of Finance spoke in his Budget Address to the issue of the fact that they were able to lobby the federal government and got support again for the flow-through shares. What he left out, which is really telling, are the opportunities — and we raised it in the Legislative Assembly before Christmas. You may recall the motion that was put forward by the members opposite to double the flow-through shares and we said, "You know, that's fine." That's something that the federal government has done going back for many, many years, but we said, "Why not also support the federal government to continue and increase the same tax treatment for investments in the clean energy innovation sector?" Hands off; not interested.

Well, guess what — there is an opportunity for this government or future governments because the federal government actually has ensured, through this latest federal budget, to expand tax support for the clean energy sector and

has done so just by the very means that we and the NDP had suggested in the motion debate last fall. They are talking about providing accelerated capital cost allowance support for equipment that generates energy by using renewable energy sources or fuel from waste or conserves energy by using fuel more efficiently. They want to expand the eligibility for proposed capital cost allowance in two important emerging areas — electrical vehicle charging and electrical energy storage, one of the biggest challenges that we face in this territory. We have an opportunity. I don't see that reflected in this budget.

We see a reference in here to biomass — but a stop. It doesn't go the next step. If we're serious about moving and making the transition to green energy — and as the Premier has noted many times, one of the biggest demands for energy in this territory is for fuel for vehicles. The federal government has just announced as well that it's prepared to invest in biomass gasification, and I use the example of the investment they make in Nova Scotia. They will have biomass gasification that will be diesel-ready for vehicles. We have the people with the expertise and the interest in this territory. We are early adopters. In addition to Yukon Energy Corporation, at least one private — I think two private citizens — have already confirmed orders for the new Tesla car.

Bold action also means sticking to your guns when the going gets hard or when you're faced with some adversity. As my colleague for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes said, when this government was elected, they set a goal of 50 percent waste diversion by 2015. It would have qualified as a bold action if they had stuck to it. However, 2015 came and went and they're nowhere near the goal.

What reevaluation has been done — what attempts to modernize?

Mr. Speaker, the current budget is also a demonstration of the Minister of Finance losing his grasp on his portfolio. In his first budget, he tabled a forecasted surplus of \$80 million. The forecast surplus for 2015-16 is now \$1.25 million. That's a lot of money to drop — five years, \$79 million; not bad; wore it right down. It's called spending. It's not called planning. It's not called thoughtfulness, and it does call desperation when we finally realize that, maybe after 13 years, we should be using the tools of results-based management. Results-based budgeting management would be the next step.

The potential is here. We can tap that potential but it's going to take a lot more creativity than we see demonstrated in this budget.

My colleagues and I will look forward to the opportunity when we get into various departments to engage with various ministers about specifics that they're proposing, the evidence that backs them. One of the important things that we have said over and over again is the importance of evidence-based decision-making and not making decisions as we saw with the 300-bed facility and then seeking evidence to support it. We'll be looking for evidence-based decision-making as a hallmark of good government in every aspect of what the government puts forward for its 2016-17 budget.

I will leave it to my colleagues and members opposite to continue with the discussion.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: It's a great privilege to be able to stand here in the Assembly today to speak to this particular budget, a budget of which I am very proud and a budget that I would argue, contrary to what members opposite have alluded to here today, in fact is very respectful — very responsive to the many discussions and the many conversations that this government has had not only over the past year but over the past number of years since this government was re-elected in 2011.

I want to just start off by thanking my constituency of Whitehorse West and my constituents who have really afforded me the opportunity over the many years to really work on their behalf and to be able to listen to their perspectives, their suggestions for improvement as to how we can govern and how we can respond to their priorities. I want to thank all those individuals who have provided their feedback and their suggestions over the years at the doorstep or on the phone or by e-mail, or through the many different social media outlets. What a privilege it is and has been over the past many years to be able to work on their behalf and to be able to deliver progress on a number of different fronts.

When I look back over the years, it's very interesting to see the amount of growth. I have spoken to this area, but to be able to look back to 2002 when I was first elected and to take a retrospective look at where we were and where we are today — it is night and day, I can say — and for the better. Our territory has grown significantly; the population has very much grown. I see it in my own constituency of Whitehorse West. We've seen new subdivisions — of Ingram, for example — come into full bloom. We have seen other areas within the riding that have filled in over the years with many different residents and many different forms of housing and many different populations.

As a result of that growth, in my particular area we have gone to work over a number of pieces of key infrastructure to accommodate that growth. The Hamilton Boulevard extension is one of them, and the new emergency response centre that came into being not long ago. I was pleased to be able to go to that particular facility just recently with our Minister of Justice. The emergency response centre houses Whitehorse's main ambulance station as well as Yukon's Emergency Medical Services corporate offices and the team itself. It has that added capacity to accommodate those additional vehicles as well as to offer training and conference space for each of our staff and the respective volunteers within Whitehorse and outside of Whitehorse.

It was also designed, however, to facilitate the 911 — the call-taking and the dispatch. I was very honoured to be able to take part in the official opening of that particular facility within the emergency response centre. It has enabled the RCMP to be able to take over that particular service and to relocate to the purpose-built communications suite that's housed over at the emergency response centre.

I know that, in last year's budget alone, we had about \$1 million identified within the budget to support the move, including the hiring and training of additional 911 operators to handle that planned expansion of 911 services to rural Yukon, which I know the Minister of Community Services and many others have been working diligently to fulfill.

I know that particular facility has responded to well over 3,500 calls from that new station and I know that number continues to grow by the moment and, of course, it will be expected to increase even further as we see the city continue to grow. It has been an initiative that has been a priority for the area to be able to enhance and improve our response times to the individuals who live along that particular corridor, but really, throughout the whole city and beyond the peripheral areas of the city. That particular facility, coupled with the new ambulance station that was just opened at the Whitehorse General Hospital, again, just reaffirms our commitment to enhancing emergency response times throughout the territory.

I just wanted to add initiatives such as that as well as the extension of Hamilton Boulevard. When we look at enhancing the delivery of our neighbourhoods and ensuring that they are welcoming, attractive and safe, again I just wanted to say thank you to our local neighbourhood association, the Copper Ridge Neighbourhood Association, for their ongoing work to improve access to our neighbourhood parks and other matters that are really important to the particular area. They are working with area residents and ourselves as MLAs up in that area to deliver further improvements for Lazulite park, for example, or firesmarting in the area — again being able to enhance the safety within our neighbourhoods and making them more attractive. I just wanted to say thank you so very much to all of those individuals who have volunteered their time.

This week marks National Volunteer Week, of course. I can't say enough about the thousands of individuals throughout this territory who donate their time and their energy and their efforts on our behalf each and every day. I spent the entire weekend at the Canada Games Centre and I'm very proud to say that at least our division of hockey came to an end yesterday. One only has to spend a little bit of time at the rinks — and certainly we all do that, but I had the opportunity to be able to spend a lot of time at the arenas in support of my own son's hockey team — and it's amazing what we're able to learn and see first-hand, seeing the passion and the diligence of our coaches and officials and those people who donate their time to our hockey associations and the many individuals who really support our sports organizations and really contribute to the further development of our young athletes. They all contribute to the really healthy and fantastic territory that we call home.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to make note that just earlier last week, I had the opportunity to take in the celebration of the 30th anniversary of our territory's French first language program, but also the 30th anniversary of École Émilie Tremblay. It was un grand moment pour l'École Émilie Tremblay at the Arts Centre, and it was a fantastic celebration — a really great overview of 30 years of growth of the

francophonie in our territory in full recognition of Canada's bilingual/bicultural heritage. It certainly was a great recognition of the French first language program delivered at the school itself and also of course of the evolution of the program and, I also have to say, of the evolution of the French language programs to all the various degrees that are being delivered throughout the territory.

I have to say, as an individual — the MLA where École Émilie Tremblay finds itself — it has been a tremendous opportunity to be able to attend many functions over the years and to be able to work alongside the community and the Minister of Education in undertaking the planning for a new French secondary school in Whitehorse.

Housed within this budget that we are currently debating, of course, is \$400,000 in support of this very important planned initiative for a new school, working alongside with la Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, and really working toward responding to the specific needs of this particular population — a population that we have seen significant growth in over the years. The francophonie, as I have referenced on many occasions in our territory, have seen significant growth. The francophonie has been part of our territory for over 150 years. French-speaking Yukoners have contributed to the history, the economy and the culture of our territory, and they have supported the development of our territory as we know it today. They are an integral part of its identity.

Of course, today Yukon has a French school, a French childcare centre, a French newspaper and le Centre de la francophonie, where entrepreneurs, immigrants, adult learners, youth or women can access a wide array of community services. It's really this work of our community and the efforts of our government, working alongside AFY to enhance the delivery of French-language services — to which this budget also speaks — that is really helping attract and enhance our territory as really the best place to live, work, do business and play, of course.

In really looking forward at this particular budget — and I do know that I do have a limited amount of time, unlike the Leader of the Official Opposition, which is unfortunate, because I could spend a few days — I certainly do look forward to speaking at greater length to my specific departments.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to take a look at this budget and the very fact — I want to commend the Minister of Finance and our Premier for being able to table a surplus of just over \$9 million. This is an historic time for our territory, because unlike other jurisdictions in our country, we are able to actually talk about the fact that we do have net financial resources. We actually have dollars in our bank. Not only are we introducing a budget with a surplus, but we're also able to, as a result, enhance our spending on very important services to the people who need them most.

So when we look at this, we look at the major boost to health care funding. I know the Leader of the Official Opposition referred to back in the day, when we were talking to the renewal of the Canada health transfer agreement with

Canada — I believe it was back in 2003 — I recall the federal government of the day and actually we were looking at a substantial reduction in funding for our health transfer. It was at that time that the premiers from the three northern territories did stand up and speak on behalf of the north. It was a changing point for our territorial governments, not just on the health side, but on all spectrums. It really introduced and opened up a conversation about the importance of having the base funding — so having that transfer agreement — but also having the base-plus funding formula applied. Unlike other jurisdictions in the country that have the population to support enhanced or are able to have a formula that reflects the population, that just does not work for the territories. It was at that time that our premier of the day had walked out — alongside the other premiers, walked outside and walked out on the Prime Minister of the day — to make the point about how important that health agreement was.

We have been able to benefit from consecutive health agreements over the years that reflect a population-based formula, but also the plus side, in recognition of our unique realities of living in the north and all that goes along with that. As a result, that formula and that approach to doing business has been carried over into many different fronts.

I just want to say that, when we look at our budget, even from back in 2003-04, which was one of the first budgets that I was part of, when we delivered it, our budget was about half of what we are talking about today. As a result of due diligence and practising good fiscal management — it's about growing our revenues, it's about growing the private sector, it's about growing our sectors — they have contributed so much to the livelihood of business to the territory, which creates jobs and grow families, and to all that makes us really proud to call Yukon our home.

I know that the Minister of Health and Social Services will certainly speak to the individual, specific expenditures in that particular department, but I do want to say that we find ourselves in a very fortunate circumstance that we do not have any debt in this territory.

I was reviewing the Budget Address that the Premier provided last week, and when I peruse the amount of debt that Canada's provinces and territories are carrying here today — almost \$600 billion in net debt — the Premier put that into context that it's enough to fund our entire total budget in our territory for more 400 years. That doesn't even take into account the interest on that debt that continues to accumulate. We are so very fortunate to not have that debt. I know we did have that debt back in the days of the previous NDP governments, but to be able to have a territory that is debt-free enables us to continue to make those strategic investments in infrastructure, in education, in training and health care and to support those programs that are so critical to the development and the growth of our business community. It also enables us to continue to be a very attractive place here in the territory and, as a result, we've seen a consequential growth in our population.

When we talk about key infrastructure, one of the best ways in terms of growing our economy is dedicating resources

and investing in the people who live here on the ground, making sure that we train Yukoners to take advantage of those economic opportunities. While they may not be here today, we know that, for example when mining continues to rebound — and it will — we will be ready to take advantage of those opportunities.

The Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining is one of those strategic investments made by the Government of Yukon in collaboration with Canada. I know that the work of, for example, our Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources — he continues to be very responsible and very strategic in ensuring that CNIM was a strategic investment.

The piece of legislation that was just tabled here earlier today speaks to enhanced student financial assistance available for the student population. I can say that, as an individual who has subscribed to the student grant over the years, this is great news for all Yukon students, bringing parity to the way that we deliver financial assistance and really enhancing the delivery of assistance available for our students in order for them to be able to take advantage of the great quality education that is delivered here at Yukon College or outside of the territory as well, enhancing those many options.

In terms of also growing our economy, there is a lot of important work. We spoke about this within Question Period here today — but even modernizing our mining regulations, again creating that greater certainty, that regulatory streamlining, a more integrated approach to permitting, improving mine licensing, engaging with First Nations, arranging or setting up the creation of a new strategic industries unit within EMR to do just that. Within this year's budget, of course, we're talking to providing support to Yukon Mining Alliance for \$1 million in mining attraction initiative — again, to be undertaken over the next number of years, getting ready to really take advantage of the economic opportunities that we will indeed see growth in.

Tourism, I want to say — I have a lot to say on the tourism file. It continues to be a very key strategic economic generator for this territory. I'm very proud to be the Minister of Tourism and Culture, very proud to work with a dedicated group of passionate, very well-informed set of individuals in this territory who have really helped see our revenues grow, who have helped see numbers grow and who have really helped set the stage in terms of delivering — certainly upping the ante, so to speak, in terms of how we deliver ourselves or certainly set the stage as a destination of choice for the rest of the world.

We were very pleased, based on the momentum and the success of the Yukon Now funding campaign. It was the single largest investment in tourism marketing in Yukon's history. We're very pleased to be able to build on that success over the past two years. I will give credit to industry — the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon and the Yukon Chamber of Commerce — for their vision in encouraging us to really raise the bar in terms of delivering tourism marketing to a new degree, by way of television marketing. Now we can be very proud to be able to see ourselves literally within a

suite of six television commercials that build upon the winter in tourism opportunities, promoting and staging that Yukon is a destination of choice year-round.

We are really pleased to be able to continue those efforts. Now that we have six beautiful television commercials, we need to ensure that they continue to be in play, that they continue to be advertised on those national and speciality networks. A significant chunk of those dollars will ensure that those stay in the marketplace. As we know, within any marketing campaign, sustenance and to sustain those efforts you need to ensure that those continue to roll. That is in fact, where those dollars will be going.

Likewise, continuation — I know that the Leader of the Official Opposition had perhaps questioned with bewilderment that in fact now we're taking a turn, that we're setting our eyes to the world market. I have to say that we have actually been setting our stage, or setting our eyes to the world market, for many years.

In fact, we have seen tremendous growth in our international markets. Twenty percent of the Yukon Now marketing program dollars have been dedicated and were dedicated over the past two years to the international markets — including the United States, the Asian markets where we have seen tremendous growth, and German-speaking Europe as well. Those efforts will again continue to grow — not to mention marrying up with those increased resources that this government has made toward international, overseas marketing we well. These dollars will supplement those expenditures as well.

I do not want to go on at great length, but I would also be remiss if I didn't mention additional funding for the Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association. I am really proud of the work that this group, this very progressive association, has been working on for many years. We have seen such a resurgence of cultural revitalization among First Nation communities over the years. These extra dollars — \$100,000 increase in annual funding to this particular organization — will indeed enhance their ability and sustain their efforts to be able to work with the communities, to work with individual tour operations, to help develop those further tourism experiences in our communities and to help market and bring our products and experiences to become tourism-ready, export-ready.

It is a tremendous opportunity for all of us. We know that there is a significant demand for aboriginal tourism throughout this country, and I think in the Yukon it really sets us apart. It is a very unique part of our heritage and our culture. It is certainly something that adds significant value to all that we promote and is reflected within those television commercials and each of those various products that have been borne out of the Yukon Now initiative.

There is \$1.4 million for museums and First Nation cultural centres. I look forward to debating this a little bit further. Back in the day, I remember when I first became the Minister of Tourism and Culture in 2002, our budget was far less than half of this. I think it was sitting around \$500,000 — not even that. It has literally grown by about 300 percent over

the years in terms of seeing the number of museums and cultural centres expand and very much identifying the much-needed funding to be able to help sustain their continued operations, but also to grow in terms of capital infrastructure and to help grown their products and the delivery of their experiences working hand in hand with organizations such as Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association.

We are very pleased, as I mentioned, to be able to continue our efforts — I spoke a bit about education. Again, I know that we'll probably be speaking at greater length about preserving tax credits in our territory — tax credits that speak to the importance of sport and arts in our territory. The budget, of course, includes dollars that carries our end and we certainly hope that Canada will continue on with these particular tax credits. We know that's not the case currently, but we have seen such great success with these particular tax credits in our territory and we are committed to continuing to pay those particular parents and families our portion of that particular grant.

We are also very pleased to be able to include \$520,000 toward the cost of school supplies for every child, every student in the Yukon. I have to say that, as the Premier mentioned the other day, it is perhaps a small investment but a very important investment. At the start of every year — I know this to be true — we as parents, family members and caregivers are provided a list of school supplies that we're required to retrieve for our students and for our children. I think that this is a very important expenditure and it's going to help defray those costs of school supplies. It's a necessity to have those school supplies in our schools and it's going to help offset that added cost for families in the territory. As the Premier said, I think that's \$100 for parents that they don't have to spend every September or August or whenever that school season starts. I want to say thank you to the Minister of Education for enabling that expenditure to be allotted within the department.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Yes, and as the Minister of Finance just reminded me, that is per student, so not per family. That's \$100 per student — so again, a very significant expenditure alone.

Mr. Speaker, I know that I could go on at great length about education but I would be very remiss if I didn't mention the ongoing work of Yukon College and the \$1.5 million over three years for the college to help them develop the transition into the Yukon university. A tremendous amount of work has been done in support of transitioning to the Yukon university. We have found a path that is realistic and I know that Yukon College has been working very diligently over the last year and a half on producing two first-ever made-in-Yukon university degree programs to be delivered for the first time ever in Yukon's history at Yukon College. I believe those are still on track and will be launched next year, speaking to areas of importance to our territory, including climate change and First Nation indigenous governance.

We are also very pleased to be able to again continue to provide assistance and support those integral agreements with

many of our First Nation governments throughout the territory, through MOUs or intergovernmental signed accords to ensure that education is relevant and focused on First Nation culture and is responsive to the needs of those we serve. I just want to say thank you and congratulate Yukon First Nations — whether it's Kwanlin Dün or Carcross/Tagish, Selkirk First Nation — for their ongoing work in support of delivering education.

We have spoken at great length about having those remedial assistants within our classrooms — education assistants, remedial tutors and the like. I know the Premier has spoken to this already as well, but we have seen an incredible increase in the number of individuals who provide this invaluable service to our children each and every day in our schools, and how we have been able to enhance the funding by just over \$3 million over the past four years, and we're very much committed to ensuring that, where needed, we will continue to deliver.

We were also able to just open the brand new F.H. Collins Secondary School in Riverdale. Now we see we have 639 students, I believe it is — maybe give or take a student or two. It's an incredible moment in Yukon's history to be able to see a beautiful new school that makes it very attractive for us to continue to engage with families and attract families to make Yukon their home.

I just want to again congratulate the Department of Education for bringing this very important piece of infrastructure to fruition, and we look forward to the first graduating class making great use of that particular facility. I know a couple of those personally, as we speak.

Mr. Speaker, in the health area, we have seen new hospitals in Dawson City and Watson Lake in recent years, and we are very proud to be able to continue on by being able to build the Sarah Steele facility for addictions, addressing addictions with not only concurrent sessions for women and men, but also a new youth component. This year's budget will see just over \$2 million in operational funding — a significant turn for our territory in being able to deliver new programming and being able to respond to the needs of our populations.

The mental wellness strategy that the ministry of Health and Social Services has been working on diligently and identifying new dollars in support of the strategy in addition to the services that are already provided in the territory as well — I'm very proud to say that we were the first to open Canada's MRI north of 60. We have been working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to enhance the emergency room at the hospital campus. We have been working, again, to deliver more doctors and train more nurses — thanks in part to the licensed practical nurse program at the Yukon College — increasing the number of hours of home care available for Yukoners throughout the territory.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to invest in infrastructure. IT is one area that I haven't spoken to, but again, it was only a number of years ago that we didn't have a dedicated envelope. Our government was able to identify a dedicated envelope of \$6.5 million. That now — thanks to this budget — has grown

by \$3 million and it is growing; another specific strategic sector that we heard loud and clear through all of our budget consultations that in fact this will contribute to Yukon's GDP; will contribute to jobs and will help diversify Yukon's economy. That is in fact what we are just seeing right now — investments in highways, roads, bridges and airports; again totalling almost \$56 million.

I could go on at greater length and it's unfortunate that I am just about out of time, but I did also want to say that the ongoing work with First Nations and partnering with First Nations through intergovernmental accords — whether it's land development, education, capacity development, community safety, justice, tourism or economic development, benefits each and every one of us. Again, we have many examples to be able to refer to in each of our budgets that speak to how we work with First Nations day in and day out, either at the political level or at the official level, and how we are now working to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report recommendations. These are just but a number of different examples.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of this budget and I look forward to hearing the support from the members of the opposition and looking forward to debating each and every particular item within this budget. Thank you very much.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: It is a privilege for me to stand up in this House today and speak to this bill. It is one more step in moving Yukon forward. Before I go into why I will be supporting this budget, I would like to thank my family for their continued support. My wife and my two children are very important to me. A big part of why I am here is because I wanted to build a better life for them. I was raised in a family that believed it was better to contribute than to complain, and if you don't like something, go change it and make it better. I would also like to thank all of those who volunteer in our communities — a big thank you. You help make our communities a better place to work, live and play.

When I gave my maiden address, I spoke about my grandmother, Hilda Watson, being the first woman to lead a political party in Canada. All those years ago, she made a choice to go and make it better. She showed us that the best way to change a situation is to get involved. I would like to thank my constituents in Kluane for the privilege to represent them here in the Assembly and I'm committed to work hard on behalf of everyone in my riding. I'm sincerely appreciative of their continued support.

I would also like to thank the staff in our office, especially my senior policy advisor and administrative assistant who are like oil in a machine. Things just run a lot smoother, actually, when they're around.

This budget is part of a larger package of budgets. I would like to talk about the context for this budget. Like the budgets before, it reflects the commitment that moving forward together so that we can make Yukon the best place to work, live and raise a family.

I speak with my constituents often about issues that are important to them — issues such as a healthy economy,

including resource extraction, manufacturing, tourism, private sector business, the knowledge sector and trades. As I have stated previously, we are lucky; we're not entitled. My siblings and I were raised to be hard-working, contributing members of society. My family ran a small business and each one of us kids appreciated the realities of being a small business owner, especially in a smaller community. We didn't want freebies and handouts. What we wanted were opportunities for jobs, and Yukon Party has always said the best cure for poverty and homelessness is a job.

The Yukon Party has always been the party of opportunity for people who work hard. My grandmother was willing to work hard. People saw that hard work and respected it. Rather than saying women can't be political party leaders, it was the Yukon Party all those years ago that said yes, and my grandmother was able to be the first woman to lead a political party.

My point is that I want to see opportunities for people so that people who are willing to invest their initiative and hard work can do well. The government doesn't owe anyone a job. It doesn't owe anyone a freebie. My vision for the government is where we establish the ground rules so that they are fair, balanced and just let the private sector do what they do best.

I want to talk a bit about what this budget means for my constituents. Late summer and early fall, I held some successful barbecues in the community of Haines Junction, a dinner in Beaver Creek and one in Burwash Landing and Destruction Bay. Early in the new year, I was in each one of my smaller communities in the riding to hear from my constituents. It was great to connect to hear their concerns. When I talk to my constituents, what I hear is that people are concerned about jobs and the economy, so for me it was really important that this budget focus on jobs and economy.

Some of the projects in my riding are very large and will offer employment opportunities to many of my constituents — enough that they can take care of their families for the whole year. Others are much smaller, and maybe they are not going to pay for a month's stay at some fancy place on the French Riviera, but they will pay for a couple of months' light bill or fuel for a pickup. Given many of these businesses in my riding tend to be mom-and-pop operations, just like the one my family ran, these smaller contracts mean a lot for the local economy.

In Haines Junction we have budgeted \$30,000 to replace the roof to the district office and field operations building. We have \$25,000 for a complete exterior painting of the health centre. I'm also pleased to see that in the grader station — which I worked in for years — shop lighting has been given the \$28,000 to fix that up. There is over \$80,000 worth of work on smaller projects. Hopefully a big chunk of that stays in the community and becomes the money that one of my constituents uses to pay for their kid's minor hockey registration or maybe gas money to drive over to Kluane Lake. My point is that these contracts help to keep people in my riding.

I'm supporting this budget because of what it means for the jobs and the economy in my riding. This budget authorizes

\$1.673 million for a comprehensive municipal grant for the Village of Haines Junction. That is over \$100,000 a month to run our municipality. This money goes to things like: plowing the streets, keeping the lights on in the recreation complex, having safe drinking water, operating the local dump and treating our waste water. It may not be fancy stuff, but it sure is important to our community.

Through the small communities fund, our government is budgeting \$1.5 million for solid-waste upgrades in Haines Junction, Faro and Watson Lake. The Haines Junction work includes construction of a new hazardous waste depot, installation of a permanently mounted tub grinder, a compactor, a baler and a new scale and gatehouse. Through the rural land development program, Haines Junction has \$600,000 in capital for urban residential lots and planning. The Rural Land Development unit does the developing, plans and designs, and constructs and delivers Yukon government land development projects throughout the Yukon.

To help communities provide better recreational programming for their citizens, we released a Yukon community recreational planning tool kit in January of this year. The tool kit, which is easy to use and adaptable for all rural communities, outlines the five-step process to help create a community recreational plan. To me it makes sense to access the economies of scale when it comes to these kinds of planning tools. I think the Premier spoke about being smarter with our money, and this is just one example of that.

I mentioned earlier about this budget being good for the local economy. The budget includes \$365,000 in O&M for the enhancement of social worker program services in rural communities. This means an increase of 2.3 FTEs for regional social worker trainer/mentor, one of whom is for Haines Junction, and an increase of a regional supervisor position.

I would like to thank my colleagues for coming to my communities and hearing from my constituents. As you know, we hosted Association of Yukon Communities meetings last year and many of my colleagues and staff made the trip out. We had good meetings with several community groups. I know the seniors were impressed by the strong representation that we had. I know that the Minister of Health and Social Services met with the local nurses in Haines Junction to hear their concerns. I think the regional social worker money is in part a result of that meeting. I am proud to say that Haines Junction has a new community addiction worker. Our government has put this program in place to address gaps identified by the First Nations and highlighted in the clinical services plan. This will better serve the community by providing a more diverse range of services.

The other big thing that came out of the conversation around health care and seniors housing is that our government has committed \$50,000 in the spring budget for the planning and consultation with the Village of Haines Junction, the seniors society and the First Nation on phase 2 of our seniors housing in Haines Junction.

We held a tourism and economic development event on November 27. I invited folks from the departments of Tourism and Culture and Economic Development out to Haines

Junction so that they could discuss funding opportunities that they have for the local business community. The meeting began with the viewing of the very popular Yukon Now commercials. The other goal was to get the date set for the establishment of a chamber of commerce. I am proud to see the support of so many interested businesses from around the Kluane region and to see that the chamber is up and running again. I am also glad to see that the work they do and have done in making Kluane a great place to visit.

Yukon will be hosting the Council of the Federation meetings here this summer. In addition to the meetings held here in Whitehorse, premiers will meet with the five national aboriginal organizations leaders in Haines Junction the day before the Council of the Federation begins.

An MOU has been entered into with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations on local area planning for recreational, commercial, industrial and residential land opportunities.

For Burwash Landing, we have set aside \$500,000 for upgrading and an air terminal schematic design at the Burwash airport. The Yukon government has signed an MOU with the Kluane First Nation regarding local area planning, recreational and residential land opportunities, cottage lots at Dutch Harbour on Kluane Lake and wind power. I believe we are on track for 11 recreational lots at Dutch Harbour that will be sold by lottery in summer of 2016.

Our government's commitment to education is evident in an educated MOU with Kluane First Nation on an education agreement to support successive students. A few years back in 2013, we signed an intergovernmental accord. This MOU will enable the Yukon government to meet its commitments under the shared interests and priorities section of this intergovernmental accord between Kluane First Nation and Yukon to engage in discussions regarding long-term educational planning and to establish a long-term partnership with the goal of improving educational experiences and effective outcomes for all students within the Kluane First Nation traditional territory. We have money in the budget to make those words on paper mean something in the community for our children.

We have also been cooperating with Kluane First Nation on their wind turbines. I would like to thank my colleagues, and especially the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, for providing \$1 million over the next two and a half years for the Kluane community development corporation to install the three turbines. The electricity generated will be supplied to the communities of Burwash Landing and Destruction Bay via the existing diesel micro grid — less reliance on diesel, and that's a good thing, Mr. Speaker.

In Beaver Creek, we have \$93,000 for the Nelnah Bessie John school for barrier-free access. In our 2016-17 budget, we have \$11,820,000 for Shakwak Highway restoration. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the Shakwak agreement, originally signed in 1977, planned for the roads rebuilt under the program to be paved. Funding for the Shakwak agreement has not been included in the US transportation bill. What money we have left, we are using to rehabilitate sections of the road that are impacted by permafrost thawing, rather than paving. I've

worked hard lobbying our federal government, Alaska state legislators and their federal government on this file. Grade restoration and BST patching and other work to alleviate the permafrost distress will take place in various locations, from kilometre 1700 to kilometre 1902. In other words, we're going to do our best to take care of the heaves and drops in the road, for all the people who are listening.

While I'm thinking about Beaver Creek, I would like to mention that, in December 2014, our Yukon government initiated preliminary reconciliation agreement discussions with the White River First Nation. Substantive negotiations began in March 2015 and they are progressing.

In the early spring, we had budget tours across the Yukon. In the Kluane riding, we heard from residents regarding priorities they wished to see. Some of their priorities included: brushing and signage within the communities of Beaver Creek, Destruction Bay and Haines Junction; some marine maintenance and upgrades in Destruction Bay, with the opening of our new cottage lots; some road resurfacing and upgrades in the subdivisions and in the Glacier Acres subdivision; and road upgrades, resurfacing and ditching at Mendenhall subdivision and the turning lane at the Takhini subdivision. These are just a few, but rest assured that those priorities have been passed on to the appropriate departments for action.

I want to talk a few minutes about some of the initiatives that are very important to my riding. This budget has money for practical nurse programming. In response to clear demand for locally trained professionals, the Yukon government extended the fund for an additional four years by allocating \$593,000 to it. For a riding that is a bit farther away from hospitals, nurses are often the front-line people we see when it comes to health matters, especially urgent ones. This is a good move and it's one I support.

I also appreciate our government's focus on mental health. In my riding we work hard to get kids engaged in different group activities — get them into hockey or playing ball, or something outdoors. That is why I have been so engaged in the Junior Ranger program and actually all youth activities in our community. Mr. Speaker, as adults, we have ways that we can contribute. That said, some of these young people are dealing with issues that are beyond the skillset for your average adult, so earlier this year our government announced the introduction of the FRIENDS cognitive behaviour group-based intervention program for youth, in partnership with Bell Let's Talk and Northwestel. It provides mental health prevention and treatment services in the Yukon for adolescents at social or emotional risk. While this is based in Whitehorse, I'm pleased to see that our departments are working together to improve coordination of support for students and exploring school council models for the other regions.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is all about the economy and jobs. I spoke earlier about what my vision for governing Yukon was — and the government set the ground rules and let the private sector work their magic. We have lots of examples of that, especially in the resource sector. I would like to talk a

little bit about our work on setting a long-term vision for the biomass sector. Our government adopted a biomass strategy and that will guide the development of a biomass energy sector in the territory. Using biomass is a cost-effective and environmentally sustainable solution for heating in the territory. The Yukon biomass energy strategy will also create good opportunities for investment in the Yukon in general and my riding in particular. The strategy provides opportunities for generating new energy for heating from local renewable energy sources.

When I look at my riding, I think about all the beetle-killed forest we have and that could and should be converted in biomass fuel — but I would be remiss if I didn't mention the work that I've done with regard to the forestry file. I'm sure glad to see that the forestry act is up for review and I'll be encouraging all those in the industry to be engaged and provide comments. Rather than watching it burn up during a forest fire, Mr. Speaker, where we may end up spending millions of dollars to contain the forest fire, it makes sense to this cowboy to let the private sector access the resource to access the resource and use it in a user-friendly way. Think about it for a moment — people in my riding getting jobs, Yukoners getting to heat their homes and businesses and the government reducing the risk when it comes to a large fire in my neck of the woods.

I would also like to talk a little bit about some of the programs that are territory-wide and how they impact my riding. The community development fund continues to play a huge role in providing jobs and economic development in my riding. From April 1, 2015 to March 1, 2016 of this year the Government of the Yukon approved over \$3.7 million in funding toward 82 projects throughout the territory. These include a variety of place-making projects in areas of activity related to tourism, community economic development, sport and recreation, social inclusion, health and wellness, as well as support for First Nation cultural initiatives.

Since 2003-04, the government has provided over \$30 million toward 1,190 community-related projects. That's pretty incredible.

Recently I heard from constituents in Takhini that they're looking to start a community group so that they can access CDF money for projects in their area. I think that's a great thing.

Since 2011, the communities in my riding have definitely benefited from the funding provided through CDF. During that time, Beaver Creek has received over \$131,000; Haines Junction has received over \$870,000; Burwash Landing over \$203,000. Just to highlight a few: the St. Elias ski society — they now have a new snowmobile and trail groomer; Kluane First Nation has done some great improvements to their hockey arena; there is a new playground at Canyon Creek; the new Zamboni for the Village of Haines Junction; or the St. Elias Lions Club — of which I'm a proud member — with their new barbecues and trailer.

I would also like to mention three funds that help build Yukon's economy. The regional economic development fund from April 1, 2015 to January 28, 2016 — 38 projects from

Yukon communities were approved for the regional economic development fund for a total of \$580,852. Since inception, the fund has invested over \$4.6 million in 287 Yukon projects.

The strategic industry development fund from April 1, 2015 to January 28, 2016 — 22 strategic industry development fund projects have been approved, representing over \$1.5 million in funding. Since 2003-04, the fund has invested over \$10.3 million in funding toward 181 projects.

Let me just mention a little bit about the film and sound fund. From April 1, 2015 to January 28, 2016, 36 film and sound fund projects have been approved, representing over \$1 million in funding. Since 2003-04, the fund has invested over \$8.3 million in funding toward 428 projects. As the MLA for Kluane, I often hear about the local TV show *Dr. Oakley, Yukon Vet* — as I'm sure everyone here knows Dr. Michelle Oakley. She is a vet, and she sees pretty much everything that moves in the Yukon. She helps animals big and small, wild and domestic. I have tourists who tell me that this TV show introduced them to the idea of coming to the Yukon because of the beautiful scenery that they saw.

While those tourists are in my riding, I know that they like to have access to their cell phones and, frankly, so do I. That is one more reason why I support this budget. The budget has money for 4G expansion to the rural communities. Our government wants to ensure that Yukoners in all communities have access to the same economic and social benefits. A total of \$760,000 in funding will be provided to Bell Mobility between 2014 and 2018 to assist with the expansion of the 4G services, \$46,000 in 2016-17. As a result of this initiative, 4G mobile service is now currently available in 17 Yukon communities. It's a lot different from when I first got elected.

I want to talk about how we're helping keep Yukoners safe. This budget has \$144,000 for adopting an automatic vehicle location system, which is phase 2 of the Yukon Emergency Medical Services communications systems upgrade. You didn't know about it, Mr. Speaker, did you? I'm going to tell you about it.

This phase includes the purchase and installation of automatic vehicle location devices. These devices integrate within an updated system — ensure the location of our first responders. This ensures both patients and volunteers safely in the communities. These devices do not just assist in call-taking and dispatching ambulances; they also help reduce response times by ensuring that the closest available unit is sent out. They help us make sure our fleet is back in a safe time frame and help us know when to send another team out to ensure safety.

We continue to fund the domestic water well program. The budget is \$1.2 million. If you live in a community that has piped water, you probably do not realize how important that expense is when it goes to getting potable water. Many people use water tanks on the back of their vehicles; others use wells. In 2014, amendments to the *Municipal Act* and the *Assessment and Taxation Act* were passed to extend the rural well-drilling program to property owners in participating municipalities. After regulations to support the new program were passed, the

legislative changes proved their value. Currently, 50 projects are underway, including 30 within the municipalities.

I do want to thank the Minister of Community Services for his department's work on basic 911 also. The government is working to expand basic 911 emergency call service. In February 2016, the 911 call-taking centre and police dispatch service moved from the RCMP headquarters to the emergency response centre communications suite in Whitehorse. This state-of-the-art centre is specifically designed for the Yukon-wide expansion of service. For those of us who grew up in rural communities, we have always just known the number that you dial, but if you are a tourist in a crisis, it is sure nice to be able to call the same number that everyone else does across North America. We are on schedule to complete the expansion of the basic 911 to rural Yukon by the end of the summer of 2016. This way all Yukoners and visitors will be able to dial the same easy-to-remember emergency number used across North America. As someone who is a volunteer in my community, I like to see everyone being able to contribute.

I would like to talk a little bit about the Ember Fire Academy. Our government introduced this program in August 2014. Our goal was to introduce women from the age of 16 and older to the fire service. The firefighting academy is a way of encouraging women to volunteer for the Yukon fire service and consider firefighting as a career. I understand that over the last two years, 25 participants have gone through the program and six have since joined a volunteer fire department. I hope to see more young women considering this academy. I think about how my grandmother stepped forward all those years ago to do something that was not typically a woman's job. I hope these women continue to explore new opportunities and contribute to their communities.

Let me talk a little bit about other ways this budget is helping Yukoners. We instituted the new Yukon caregiver tax credit to help all Yukoners who support family members with disabilities. In 2014, we doubled the Yukon child fitness tax credit from \$500 to \$1,000. We were proud to double the Yukon child fitness tax credit. It makes sense. I believe we have to do more than just tell kids to stay out of trouble. We have to give them healthy, positive, constructive alternatives. Those healthy, positive, constructive alternatives usually involve organized sports or activities, and that usually means money. To me, these tax credits are a whole lot better way to spend money than trying to patch kids up after they have gotten into trouble.

Each year, credits are claimed for approximately 2,800 children from 1,600 families enrolled in organizations' healthy activities.

I want to talk more about what we're doing in the Department of Environment during Committee of the Whole debate. What I would like to do here is mention a few items that may be of interest to my constituents.

Our government invested \$522,000 to add more campsites to three campgrounds and to repair or replace facilities at up to 12 others. I invite everyone interested in camping to tune in when we do Environment during Committee of the Whole. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised

with what we have in the budget. In our last platform, we committed to looking into expanding camping opportunities. We did this by looking at more campgrounds, more campsites in existing campgrounds and improved amenities.

This will not only help Yukon parks deliver a better, safer camping experience, but also provide economic and job opportunities for local businesses. We also expanded the camping opportunities by extending the seasons they are open. I do want to thank Rick Goodfellow and others for their advice on how to make our campgrounds more accessible for all Yukoners. I'm sure many of us in this Assembly recently received an e-mail letting us know how we can access things like campground permits and fishing licences online — again, more to say during Committee on that.

As someone who loves being out on the land, I'm very interested in making sure our environment is well-managed. To that end, we are investing more than \$1.5 million in 2016-17 as part of the expansion of the water monitoring network and baseline monitoring. My colleagues and I are committed to making fact-based water management decisions that sustain the quality, quantity and overall health of all Yukon waters. We have been working on this by implementing the *Yukon Water Strategy and Action Plan*, which was released in June 2014. We allocated \$3.35 million over three years.

In the first two years of this plan, the government upgraded 23 hydrometric stations, installed 15 new hydrometric stations and established or reactivated four new water quality stations. We hired a hydrologist, held two Yukon water forums, and funded the Yukon Water and Wastewater Operator training program at Yukon College. We've provided water-related presentations in Yukon schools as part of Canada Water Week, and invested in and enhanced flood forecasting.

The Yukon government is committed to promoting Yukon's unique way of life through participation in hunting and sustainable use of our wildlife resources. Mr. Speaker, last year we had 100 licences. We jacked that up to 125 this year. We have lots of information on our website so you can check that out. I'm sure we'll talk more about that in Committee of the Whole.

I'm also excited to say that new this year is the permitted use of motorized vehicles in order to retrieve and transport harvested bison in the three-kilometre bison management zone between Jarvis River and Silver City. This is a product of listening to the communities.

I'm proud as a minister to initiate the work with Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and the Aisek Renewable Resources Council and trappers on a pilot project to improve moose populations in the Aisek area. The Yukon government will provide \$50,000 in 2016-17 as part of a three-year \$174,000-funding agreement between the Yukon government and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations that began last year.

The Government of Yukon is committed to ensuring healthy wildlife populations across the territory and

continuing to work with all the key players on recovering this population. It's a priority for me and for our government.

In conclusion, I want to re-emphasize that this budget is all about jobs and the economy. This is a very good budget. It is good for Yukon. It is good for my riding of Kluane. We are very blessed to live in this magnificent territory and especially us in Kluane, which we all know is extra larger than life. I look forward to another five years of representing my community, working with the Village of Haines Junction, our three local First Nations — Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Kluane First Nation and White River First Nation — the local advisory councils in the smaller communities, the business community, Parks Canada, all our local volunteer organizations and my constituents, working hard for all of Yukon. So I look forward to rising later in debate to talk about some of the other investments in this current fiscal year. I again want to thank my fellow colleagues. I want to thank the Premier for this budget. My colleagues and I put a lot of time and effort into this budget and I really think it shows and I think Yukoners should be proud. I know that I'm proud of this budget.

Thank you and God bless, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Stick: As many of my colleagues in the House have done today, I want to start off by thanking my family — most important to ensuring that I get home and find a meal in the oven or don't have to worry about preparing meals. The type of support you get from family and friends keeps us going and without it, I know I personally would not be doing as well as I do.

It's a privilege to be a member of this Legislature and to represent Yukoners and I am proud to be here. I want to thank the citizens of Riverdale South and I've commented on this before about what a diverse group it is. We have individuals who still live in the original house they built back in the 1970s in the Yukon in Riverdale South. We have new families. I see more and more strollers and little bikes out now that the weather has turned nice. Just by looking at the traffic on the sidewalk in front of my house, I know we have more young families moving into the area. We also have seniors housing, we have apartment dwellers and we have condos, so it's quite a range.

I know I've mentioned before that I think I have the most schools in a riding — which is five — and I have yet to make it to every school council in one month. Sometimes I think it's a joke on me because I didn't go to them when I was a parent, so now I get to go to them all the time to make up for the ones I missed. I want to thank the staff, the administration and especially the elected school councils who put the time in to provide great programming and great support, not just to the children who attend their schools, but also to families. I've seen some wonderful outreach that schools have done to provide outreach to families to make sure they feel included in the community — in the community of school — and know that they are being listened to and have a chance to say something about their children's education. So a big shout out to those five schools.

This winter I had the opportunity and privilege of visiting some of our communities. I spent a lot of time talking to people at their jobs, in their homes and in their communities. Sometimes it would be at a rec centre, on the street or in the grocery store. Usually wherever you go in one of the small communities there are places where people gather or where people like to talk. I want to thank those individuals who took the time to speak to me or other caucus colleagues. There is just so much out there that people think about, have ideas about, agree with, disagree with, but most importantly, they are very willing to share — to share their ideas and make suggestions, because everybody wants the Yukon to be the best.

We have a diverse population. We have First Nation citizens born and raised here. We have a lot of citizens from Outside, from other provinces and territories, and now even other countries. We are no longer quite the same community we were when I moved here 36 years ago.

Everyone I spoke to, everyone who I listened to, spoke of their love for Yukon. They are here because this is where they want to be. It's about the place and it's about the people. I can identify with that. I too love this place and I can't think of anywhere in the world where I would rather live. I haven't seen every spot, but I know that feeling when you're driving up the highway and you come into the mountains or when you're flying up on Air North and looking out the window and you know you're back in the Yukon. There's just that sense of relief that this is our home and this is where I want to be.

I heard from Yukoners that they want to know that this going to stay — this beauty, clean air, clean water, the animals we see. I saw a video yesterday on Facebook of a moose wandering down Falcon Drive up in Copper Ridge. They want to know that this is going to exist long past their time and it will be here for future generations. They want to know that it's protected, that their children and their grandchildren, and on and on, will have the same opportunity as us to experience that part of the Yukon we love so much.

We know climate change is here. I mean, the spring has just been unbelievable. I talked to my mother yesterday and it was snowing in southern Ontario. Normally, by now, her flowers are out. I cheered; you know, it was like, ha-ha-ha. We are six weeks ahead, as far as I'm concerned. I heard my first robin this morning. I know that this is early; this is way early.

We need to do more to meet those challenges and we need to do more because we are a diverse people and we have diverse needs and we need to recognize that. We need to recognize and acknowledge that how an issue might be addressed in Whitehorse is not necessarily how it happens in the communities. Communities often have their own methods of dealing with crises and supporting individuals. It might not be the Whitehorse way, but it works for that community and we need to acknowledge that and support that.

I want to talk a bit about child poverty, because I have been thinking a lot about this. By this government's own numbers, over 230 children in families are relying on social assistance provided by this government. That's just children in

the YG Health and Social Services. That does not include children who might be on social assistance through their First Nation government or through indigenous affairs. So 230 are what we provide funding for, but we know the number is bigger.

The food bank — the numbers continue to increase and it's not just single individuals. It is families coming to supplement their food. They don't have enough. Thank goodness for the food bank. They've worked hard and continue to work hard to find ways to keep the shelves stocked and to keep the freezer full. They're looking at a neighbourhood garden right next to the food bank this summer involving youth and seniors in caring for it and planting it.

The numbers of children receiving food through the food bank is huge. We are not — we are not — addressing child poverty — we're not. Children should not have to rely on food from a food bank. Why? Why is this happening? What happened to our poverty reduction strategy that came out? Groups and organizations and individuals and government workers spent a lot of time working on poverty reduction and social inclusion. They did studies. They looked at the numbers. They knew what was going on and they came up with — it's called the strategy. But nowhere did it say that we will reduce child poverty by 10 percent in one year and 10 percent every year thereafter. There was nothing measureable to tell us whether we are achieving our goals. As numbers continue to rise, that tells me we're not achieving those goals. We are not doing enough to reduce poverty in the Yukon, especially — especially — for children.

I heard the member opposite say, "You want to reduce poverty? Get a job." There are individuals who work more than one job, and sometimes more than two jobs. Exactly how many jobs are they supposed to have? They still live in poverty. You can go and look at the food bank stats — how many families have working parents, but their money goes to rent, their money goes to utilities? These aren't all families on social assistance. These are families who are working hard. What are they supposed to do? Go to school? Maybe get some training? How are they going to do that? It's not affordable for them — it's not. It's not easy. It's not enough to say, "Get a job."

We have people on social assistance who are seniors with fixed incomes and have a top-up and who are living in poverty. We have individuals with disabilities who are permanently excluded from the workforce. Where should they get a job? They are on social assistance with the Yukon supplementary allowance top-up. It's not much, Mr. Speaker. It's not indexed; it hasn't changed. These individuals live in poverty, not because they don't — I don't know. It's because they have a disability; it's because of their situation. They shouldn't be punished.

Social assistance is not a punishment. It is a safety net to help people be a part of our community, to be able to participate. I've talked to single moms about how they manage. They manage, but they don't do it very well. It is so stressful. It's the last thing they think of when they go to bed at night — how am I going to pay for this? Which budget line

is it coming out of? It's the first thing they think of in the morning — how am I going to make this food stretch? How am I going to pack a lunch for my kids to go to school?

One hundred dollars for school supplies — it's a nice sum. We don't give that to people on social assistance. We give them \$65 for school supplies. Are they going to be included in the \$100, or is that money going to be included as income and taken back? Is \$65 good enough for individuals on social assistance? Even \$100 is not going to provide much. School supplies these days — a pair of runners for a kid — that money will get eaten up by those living in poverty very quickly.

So \$100 — it's nice if you have money and can afford the rest of the things, but if you're living in poverty, it'll help, absolutely. So why don't we put that money into schools? Why don't we put it into school supplies in schools, so everybody benefits from it in a natural way?

I was married to a teacher. I know how much money he spent on school supplies for his students all the time — pens, paper. He would go at the end of the year through the lost and found and take out the old binders with blank paper still in them and the pens and would recycle them all, clean them up and get them ready for the next school year because he knew there would be kids coming to school without supplies. It was not for himself; it was for the kids. That is what he did. So \$100 — I don't know.

I am curious too about what is going to happen with the federal government's new child benefit to families. In the past under social assistance regulations, those monies from other tax benefits had to be claimed as income. I want to know: Is this same thing going to happen with this? Are these families who get cheques to help bring them out of poverty supposed to claim them as income and receive that much less on their social assistance? That is not going to help. It will help the government's money pocket, but it won't help these families.

I am very worried about child poverty. I worry about the families who must face such guilt that they cannot provide for their own families no matter how hard they might be working, or they have to live in poverty because they are considered not able to work due to a disability, or they are a senior who didn't have a private pension and is living on CPP and OAS. It doesn't provide them enough to live on, and I hear it. I hear more and more today: "Get a job." Look how many seniors are working now. Some of them, granted, are doing it because they want to. They like being out there and working. It's a social thing; it gives them self-worth. But I know other seniors who thought they had retired and are back working because they have to. They have to in order to keep paying their rent, to keep paying their utilities and to keep paying for their food. They are working, so don't tell me, "Get a job. That will bring you out of poverty." That is just too easy and it does not address the problem.

Mental health is one of my favourites. Waiting for a strategy and waiting for a strategy, getting reports and studies from universities, and still waiting for a strategy — we heard that there will be one during this Sitting. To get right on it, they have dedicated \$1 million to go to organizations

throughout the Yukon to start addressing mental wellness, mental health. I suggested that \$1 million isn't very much. When you look at the stipulations — and one of them being that it cannot pay for core funding — that makes it pretty hard.

There are so many organizations right now in Whitehorse and in the communities that are providing services to people with mental illness, and they are doing it off the side of their desk with very little funding and outside their mandate. It's not in their mandate, but they're doing it because they see the need and somebody has to do something, so they are stepping up. It's non-profit organizations and it's housing organizations and it's groups and individuals — and individuals in the Yukon — who are trying to help these people who are falling through the safety net and who are not getting the services they need.

If we started funding those organizations for the service they provide now, that \$1 million would be gone in no time because there are people doing it, but without a strategy that brings people together and service providers and individuals with mental health issues and communities and other governments. If we don't know what's happening, how are we going to have a strategy? And if we do have a strategy, I sure hope there are measurable goals and measurable outcomes. I want to know that we reduce wait times for children, for youth, for young adults and for seniors. I want to know that there is a timeline that says, "If you are having difficulties and need to see someone, we will work to do it this quickly and then we'll measure it." Every time a person calls, we'll record the day and when we see them so that we know when we are doing our job well, so that we know when we're doing the right thing, or that we're not and we need to find another way. Not meeting a goal is not a bad thing if you learn from it. If you find out that, if we kept this office in this location open for four more hours at night, we could pick off these people because they are not up first thing in the morning and they can barely function in the afternoon. If we made it accessible to them in the evening, we would have better success. That is what a strategy is about. It's not: this is it; we're going to do it; end of story. It is: this is what our goals are, these are the outcomes we want, this is working great and let's see if we can do even better. If this isn't working, how can we improve it?

There are organizations out there doing so much for individuals and it's not their job, but they're doing it. What about the individuals in the Correctional Centre with mental health issues who are being criminalized for their mental ill health? That's not right. We shouldn't see people up there in jail because they are not receiving the supports or the care they need. That is just so wrong, and we really shouldn't even see them in the secure medical unit because it's not set up to deal with people in severe psychiatric crisis. We send a lot of people out and that's good for those individuals because there are experts Outside, but we are spending millions and millions to send them out and they come back to Whitehorse or their communities and the services aren't there for them to keep working on their mental wellness.

Families aren't included. They don't know how to deal with this individual when they come back. They're not sure. We do see more services going into the communities — great, but two or three times a month, sometimes that's just not going to do it.

Are there better ways that we can spend that money and really work with individuals here and in their communities and with their families and with their support systems?

Mental health — you know there has been so much in the news lately on suicide and suicide prevention and a lot of what we see — well, it's across the country. I mentioned this to someone, just talking about what we need, and they said that it is First Nations, and I said that no, it's not. It's those first responders whose PTSD is not being recognized. It's individuals with addictions problems; it is First Nations; it's youth — but we need a strategy.

I was trying to find out the numbers for the Yukon because I think one of the first things you should know is some information. What are our numbers? I can't find it anywhere. I've looked through the coroner's reports and yet I know that many families are impacted by suicide in the Yukon. What are we doing to prevent that?

Some communities have been able step up and start working on their own strategies. Some First Nations have the resources and the capacity to be able to do that and to work with their citizens in coming up with a strategy because they can't wait any longer. There are too many. One is too many.

If we're not providing services through a mental health strategy to individuals, whoever they are, whatever the reason, we are doing a real disservice to Yukoners and to their families and to their communities.

Suicide just makes me angry. It's such a waste. It impacts everybody.

I have had family members who have committed suicide and you're left with guilt. Why didn't I see it? How come they didn't talk to me? What did I do? What didn't I do?

If we don't start addressing this soon, it's just going to carry on and continue on. We can stop it — maybe not everyone, but we can certainly provide better services to help people. Right now we rely on an emergency phone line run by volunteers from 9:00 to 1:00 or 2:00 — and thank you for those people and the time they put in, but it's a pretty small window if you're feeling suicidal. There has to be a way to stop it and to help these people and to come around them and support them and help them be well.

We're not going to prevent everyone, I know that. There are some people who just can't see themselves going on, and that's going to be their choice, but we can certainly be doing a lot more than we are now. Without a mental health strategy, we're not doing it. We are not doing it. We send them from the community to the hospital. A doctor sees them, does an assessment, maybe keeps them a day or two and sends them back, or sends them just out the door, not even back. That's not helping; it's not helping at all. We know the root causes: poverty, isolation, addictions, joblessness, for some it's just inherited — it just is.

I wanted to talk a bit about the TRC, because I think, from here on in, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action — I think everything we do now should be viewed through that. When we're creating policy or looking at programs, we need to look and see where it comes in. This one is around health, and we call upon the federal government, in consultation with aboriginal people, to establish measurable goals, to identify and close the gaps in health outcomes between aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities, publish annual progress reports and assess long-term trends. It should focus — the indicators should be infant mortality, with maternal health, suicide, mental health, addictions, life expectancy, birth rates, infant and child health issues, chronic diseases, illness and injury incidence and the availability of appropriate health services. That's where we come in.

We're in a unique situation here where First Nations have the same doctors you and I have. They go to the same hospital. They go to the same community health. The billing — different people pay for it. It's not always up to us, but what we do in health impacts the services those people receive. So even though this identifies the federal government, some of these things I think we should be keeping stats on.

One of the big ones would be diabetes. We know that diabetes is going up and up. I just heard on the news the other day — I think it's in the last 10 years, it has quadrupled — the number of people with diabetes. If it was — I don't want to say "just" diabetes. There are so many implications: kidney disease, kidney failure, the need for dialysis, poor circulation, blindness — on and on and on. We should know those numbers for the Yukon, because we should be prepared to provide those services and bill it back to the federal government, because that's what we do. If we don't have those stats, let's find a way to get them. There has to be a way. We can negotiate land claims, I'm sure we can negotiate some health stats. We're not asking for identifying information; we're just asking for health stats. That's an important one.

We see the numbers at the Emergency department continuing to rise. We hear that there are more doctors being hired, but the people who are going to Emergency still — the largest proportion — are those who have non-urgent needs: a prescription or a referral. They don't have access to a health care professional. I'm not even talking about a family doctor; I'm talking about health care professionals. We have the nurse practitioner legislation. We have nurse practitioners working in the women's sexual health program in two clinics. We have one position at the referred care clinic. That's it. Why should I have to take up my doctor's time to go to my clinic to get a prescription renewed that I've been on for 30 years? I don't. I don't need to see my doctor. Where are the nurse practitioners? What have we done to move this forward? I know that money was offered. If they're not willing to hire them, then let's create another clinic with nurse practitioners and a doctor on salary who will work collaboratively as a team to provide services that people need. There are a lot of people who still don't have family doctors. They call the

number of the website and they're told there are no doctors, so they come and see us. We don't have them.

Midwives — I think we've been advocating for this since 2011. When are we going to get on this? I know there is a working group and a symposium coming up, but the work has been done and the studies are there. We are the second-to-last jurisdiction to not have midwifery legislation that allows women and families to have choices. We have brand new community hospitals that this government likes to talk about, where a woman still can't have a baby. "Oh, you need an OB/GYN." No you don't.

In the Northwest Territories they have a community with a nursing station that has midwives working out of it. They work in conjunction and collaboration with doctors. All the safe ones, they are able to deliver. If there is an emergency, they can call on a doctor. They can medevac to a hospital. We still have women who have to come here two weeks before their due date and wander the streets. You see them, you know, just walking, walking, walking. You don't recognize them, but you see how pregnant they are and you know they are from a community. They are away from their family. If they have children, usually they have to leave them at home. Their partner has to stay home to take care — it's not a great situation. When are we going to have babies in these hospitals? When are we going to have midwives so women have a choice? The evidence is there. Women who receive care from a midwife have better outcomes. The babies have better outcomes and the moms have better outcomes and better follow-up. Why wouldn't we want that? Let's do it. It's sustainable and affordable. Let's do this. We've been talking about it for four and a half years.

Medical travel is an issue that I get a lot of. I'm sure the minister has read some of the letters I've sent to him from constituents who come in. It's a person on a fixed income, medevaced out to Vancouver, given \$35 a day. They have to stay in a hotel for two of those days. If you can find one for \$35 in Vancouver, I wouldn't be staying there. They are required, and that's it. It's like, "That's what you get, I'm sorry you went into debt, there is no other option".

We have had people go to Social Assistance and say, "This happened, and I don't have the money now, and how am I supposed to live?" It is like, "No, sorry, that is medical travel." We are not helping them. There is not even an appeal process. The only appeal process is that I write another letter and hope that somebody pays attention.

Dental care: this is one I talked about a lot, but mostly around children. The more I read and the more I understand, individuals on fixed incomes or social assistance — let's face it, families with three kids who are working two good jobs, but with no medical or dental insurance are in trouble because dental costs are astronomical. People don't go because they cannot afford it until there is an emergency. Yet dental care is so important. It impacts our life's health. Good dental health or bad dental health affects heart health, respiratory infections, diabetic complications and dementia. It is there, the information is there. Too many people are going without good dental care.

Then there is the 150-bed seniors complex. I am still hearing from seniors who are very concerned about this. They are concerned about the money it is going to cost. We heard the minister today say how hard it is to hire nurses and health care professionals. Well, we are going to need a lot. Where are we going to get them? Part of the research and information on care of seniors talks about continuity. When I get up in the morning, I see the same staff person. It does not change. Already they see staff changes two or sometimes three times a day. What if it is somebody different every day because we do not have enough and we are relying on auxiliaries on call. Where are we going to get these professionals? Where are we going to find physicians? Where are we going to find geriatric specialists? Where are we going to find nurses and nurse practitioners? What are the O&M costs for this place going to be? There is not a hint of that. There is going to be a lot, and it is not sustainable. There are groups of citizens getting together with friends and neighbours to talk about this and to talk about different ways of aging. They are talking about what is happening in other places across the country and what is happening in other countries. I understand that this will be going ahead. It is not going to stop, but boy, I just don't see it as being sustainable. It certainly is not going to make people happy, especially those from the communities. Some of them are fine with it, but others who are born and raised and living in their communities do not want to come to Whitehorse.

I guess the last part — and I know I only have two minutes — has to do with child welfare. In the last Sitting I heard the number of First Nation children in care.

I want to go back to the truth and reconciliation calls to action. We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial and aboriginal governments to commit to reducing the number of aboriginal children in care by monitoring and assessing neglect investigations, providing adequate resources to enable aboriginal communities and child welfare organizations to keep aboriginal families together where it's safe to do so, and to keep children in culturally appropriate environments, regardless of where they reside.

I'm going to skip a few and get the major ones — ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child welfare investigations are properly educated and trained. We call on all levels of government to implement Jordan's Principle, require all child welfare agencies and courts to take the residential school legacy into account in their decision-making, develop culturally appropriate parenting programs, to work in collaboration with provinces, territories and First Nation governments and keep stats, to prepare annual reports on numbers and where they've gone and who took care of them — measureable goals. You know, it's what I've been talking about in every area.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the privilege of standing here and being able to speak to this issue. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to extend my thanks to my family, to my friends and to the constituents of Porter Creek South for supporting me, believing in me and encouraging me in my endeavours as a

Yukon Party MLA. My family, my friends and the constituents of Porter Creek South continue to reinforce the importance of a stable, diverse economy, first-rate health care and high quality education.

The Yukon Party has done an incredible job at addressing each of these areas. The stronger the economy, the stronger our health care and education systems will. A couple of examples are the investments we've made for people with disabilities, but also the investments we've made — and as the Leader of the Official Opposition highlighted during her Budget Address reply — around the doctor recruitment and retention to ensure Yukoners have access to health care.

Now specifically to people with disabilities, the Yukon Party government stepped up to the plate to help kids like my son Jack with the issues they face having autism, but also many other families and children who are affected by disabilities.

As I've said before, the Yukon Party government doesn't give itself enough credit for the work they've done on the social side of the ledger. Yukoners know that without a functioning, stable economy to support it, a social safety net isn't going to help anyone.

I have also said before in this Assembly and I will continue to remind Yukoners that it's important to remember where we came from. Now, most of us sitting here will remember that prior to the Yukon Party taking office in 2002, Yukon was in the throes of a terrible economic recession. Our unemployment rate was far too high and our economy was suffering. Both opposition parties did their best to euthanize resource extraction in the territory and our private sector economy was in dire need of attention. These were the challenges before us when Yukoners elected the Yukon Party in 2002 and re-elected us in 2006.

I know that both opposition parties would prefer not to be reminded of the past but, Mr. Speaker, I feel it is incumbent upon me as a Yukon Party MLA to remind our constituents exactly what their choices are and the harm that policy choices from opposition parties can have on our economy and our territory as a whole.

Our clear vision for moving forward together and our solid leadership from the Premier maintain our path to support our commitments to all Yukoners. This Yukon Party government will continue down the path improving upon achieving a better quality of life, building a prosperous, diversified Yukon economy, managing and protecting the Yukon's environment and wildlife, and practising good government.

Yukoners selected the Yukon Party to lead the territory because the Yukon Party team has the vision, the energy and the experience to meet these challenges head-on with confidence. On October 11, 2011, Yukoners made a good choice to continue to prosper and grow under the stewardship of a re-elected Yukon Party government. Yukoners, as I've said many times in this Legislature, are smart people.

The Yukon Party government has again used a budget to make considerate and strategic investments. In fact, under a Yukon Party government, our territory and our economy

continue to grow. Both parties opposite have demonstrated to Yukoners that their policy choices are ineffective in building our economy and result in population decreases and huge debt. That's not something that Yukoners want.

The Yukon Party has demonstrated that we can deliver growth with prosperity. I don't share these comments in haste. I share them because I want to make a point — that the Yukon Party made the decision to replace the failed policies of both parties opposite with policy that works for Yukoners. It is as simple as that.

The Premier's Budget Address highlighted a number of key department initiatives. In this budget, we are making it a priority to invest in creating a health system that promotes, protects and enhances the well-being of Yukon people. As the Premier mentioned, the total health budget is increasing by \$11 million, or nearly nine percent this year. We are working to create a system that is innovative and responsive to the needs of our Yukon communities.

Throughout the Yukon, awareness is growing of the mental health and addictions challenges some people face. As a government, we are committed to ensuring effective programs and services are in place when Yukoners need them. The new Sarah Steele facility is planned to open this fall and will significantly increase access to addictions and mental health services for adults, youth and families.

The new Alcohol and Drug Services program will offer a continuum of services, providing options to match clients' needs. The intensive treatment program will no longer be a 28-day program. Rather, the new program will offer continuous intake, which will help address the wait times and will offer the client a range of treatment options specific to their needs.

After-care services will be improved. Social workers will provide transitional supports to clients coming into and leaving the intensive treatment program. There are eight beds in the new facility that will be designated transitional to increase supports to clients readying themselves to return to their community. As well, three new community addictions workers have been hired in the rural communities of Watson Lake, Haines Junction and Dawson City. Clients returning home from intensive treatment will be offered ongoing support for post-treatment care through these workers.

We heard from Yukoners that youth were not receiving timely access to addiction and mental health care. In response, the new Sarah Steele facility will provide a four-bed youth residential addiction and mental health treatment program alongside youth withdrawal services. These services will use a family treatment model.

Mr. Speaker, we're pleased to announce that our department will soon be releasing a 10-year Yukon mental wellness strategy. The purpose of this strategy is to address mental wellness needs in Yukon and to provide an overall direction for mental wellness system improvements.

The 10-year strategy will take an innovative and integrative approach to mental wellness that integrates best practices from across Canada and international jurisdictions. We have identified short- and long-term actions and we have

allocated \$1 million to initiate the strategy to ensure its success.

We know that over 50 percent of Yukon individuals seeking help for addiction also have a mental health issue. We have all recognized the need to bring mental health and addictions out of the shadows and the new Sarah Steele facility, alongside the mental wellness strategy for Yukon, will work to address these issues effectively and transparently.

Departmental staff are making significant efforts to speak with stakeholders throughout the territory, including Yukon rural communities, First Nations, non-government organizations, health care professionals, RCMP and others who are working to build better mental health among our citizens.

Many of us don't even question whether we have somewhere to go at the end of the day. For our more vulnerable population, knowing that you have a home to go to at the end of the day makes life more bearable. We will continue to work hard to ensure that the most vulnerable Yukoners have a safe and secure place to stay.

We are opening the new St. Elias group home this spring. The new group home will provide safe and supportive housing to individuals with moderate to severe cognitive disabilities. It will increase its current capacity from five to 10 rooms and will include four suites designated to accommodate more independent living.

The new Salvation Army Whitehorse Centre of Hope will open next winter. This facility will not only provide emergency shelter for 25 people but also 20 transitional housing units. Individuals living in these transitional units will receive support services to assist them to be more self-sufficient.

The partnership between the Salvation Army and our government has provided a great opportunity to work collaboratively in supporting our homeless and our most vulnerable populations. I am pleased that Yukon government has joined the partnership with Kwanlin Dün and the City of Whitehorse to address the priority needs of our vulnerable people.

Our government continues to expand home and community long-term care options to ensure that Yukoners receive timely access to the most appropriate care in the most appropriate place. Improving housing and long-term care options for an aging population in Yukon has been and will continue to be a priority for this Yukon Party government.

The first phase of the new 150-bed Whistle Bend continuing care facility will begin construction this spring. Providing quality, responsive services that are centred on the needs of the residents was at the forefront of the design of the Whistle Bend continuing care facility.

In the interim, we have completed the Sixth Avenue continuing care home facility now known as Birch Lodge. This newly renovated property provides 10 beds for long-term care and will also free up beds at Whitehorse General Hospital for acute care right away. This facility opened in February and is operating now at full capacity.

In Dawson we have worked collaboratively with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to replace McDonald Lodge. The new building has 15 beds available to individuals who require services that are not available in their own home. I was pleased to see so many people, including the former MLA for Dawson, Steve Nordick, at the opening of McDonald Lodge. I know how hard Steve worked and advocated for that new facility during his time representing the people of Dawson. In fact, during the announcements, not only the Premier, but the Mayor of Dawson and the Chief of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in recognized Steve's efforts and success as the doors of the new facility were open. We recognize that supporting individuals in their homes for as long as possible is so very important. This next year we will continue to enhance home care services to ensure that we can meet the needs of Yukoners who require and desire that level of care. This will include the addition of three new positions to home care services.

As you can clearly see, our government is committed to providing quality and accessible care for Yukoners requiring long-term care assistance. I recognize how fortunate seniors are in Yukon. Over the last 10 years, the Yukon Party government has increased the budget for home care across the territory because we believe it is important to keep seniors in their homes and their communities for as long as possible. Seniors and elders used to move out of the territory after retirement. For many reasons, we wanted to find a way to help make Yukon the best place for them. I firmly believe that grandparents can play an important role in helping children and teens as they grow up. Some of my constituents found that grandparents could be that bridge in those sometimes difficult teenage years. One of those changes we have seen is the increasing number of seniors who in fact choose to remain in our territory.

I have spent some time talking in this Assembly talking about the continuum of care in Yukon and in Canada. It seems to me that part of the challenge is definitions and terminology for living supports and the fact that they are not consistent across Canada. I will spend some time talking about that terminology. I will begin with the most basic kind of support and then will move through the list of the most complex kinds of supports.

Home living is for people who live independently in their own home, apartment or condo. They are responsible for arranging for any home care or other support services that they may require. Supported living combines accommodation services with meals, light housekeeping and sometimes social activities. Supported living is able to meet a wide range of needs, but cannot support those with serious or complex health care needs. Home care provides professional and personal care as required and arranged by the individual. Assisted living provides housing, hospitality services like food, laundry, housekeeping and personal care services for adults who can live independently but require a supportive environment and light care due to physical and functional health challenges. These are usually very large complexes, sometimes called retirement communities, and have aging in place.

Residential continuing care provides the 24-hour professional clinical care and supervision for individuals with complex care needs who are unable to manage at home with the support of family, friends, home care and so on. These clients have extremely heavy care requirements — for example, advanced dementia or total care — and require specialized care services that are delivered in a home-like setting. These are not individuals who can be maintained at home or in assisted living or supported living complexes.

Since 2012, the Yukon Party government has increased the home care budget by some 350 percent. I would add that the members opposite voted against those increases to home care, just as they voted against the new hospital in Dawson, just as they voted against the new hospital in Watson Lake, and just as they have already indicated they don't support providing continuing care to seniors with a higher level of need in a new 150-bed facility in Whistle Bend.

My constituents reiterated to me that the Whistle Bend facility is needed by the citizens of this territory, by all citizens in this territory. I still can't believe that one of the members opposite asked if we knew what the root causes of aging were. A member opposite, in a response last year, quoted from a 2008 Yukon health care review, "the right care at the right place at the right time" but, as I've said before, Mr. Speaker, that statement is very much behind the philosophy of our continuing care system in 2016.

Yukon has the best low-cost home care program in Canada, bar none. Through this program and its amazing staff here in Whitehorse and in rural communities, when needed, we're able to maintain our seniors and elders in their homes and their home communities for longer periods of time than we were able to do in the past. Our staff work with families, when there are families, and other health care providers to ensure collaborative care in a truest sense of the word, but the reality is that there sometimes comes a time in an individual's life, despite all the services that we can provide, when they cannot stay in their home.

Yukon also has a higher than average number of individuals with absolutely no social or family support, and many of our clients rely on their neighbours for aid, rather than a child or spouse. Fourteen percent of home care clients have no caregiver at all to assist them — again a higher number than the national average of three percent without caregivers. We have the highest ratio of individuals over the age of 85 living alone. As I've said, this government has increased the home care funding over the last decade by some 350 percent and we'll continue to support home care when we can, but we also recognize that 40 percent of our home care clients are at risk of requiring a much higher level of care for some of the very reasons that I have already mentioned.

Of our over 500 clients throughout the territory, more than 200 are considered high risk, a much higher number than our national average. The reality is there comes a point when people can't remain in their homes and they can't remain in their home community, if that happens to be outside of Whitehorse. I'm aware that attracting medical professionals to small communities is an ongoing challenge. MLAs who

represent ridings outside of Whitehorse have shared with me some of the obstacles their communities face in getting people with specialized skills to come to rural and remote Yukon.

The reality is that, in a territory of 37,000, not every community is going to have all the options available to them in the continuum of care. Our reality is that we must have centralized services to care for our seniors who have reached this stage in their lives.

Many seniors are in fact able to remain in their homes, supported by a family until the end of their life. Others are not as fortunate and will require the care and support that we can provide in our facilities. We're proud of the care that continuing care staff give to all of our citizens and we're proud that, as a government, we can do this.

We've also worked to ensure that Yukoners health care dollars improve quality care and health outcomes for patients and families. Yukoners have been able to access our new MRI machine at the Whitehorse General Hospital for some time now. The Emergency department expansion is underway and will increase efficiencies and improve the standard of care.

Another very positive new development is that, for the first time, Yukon will be supporting the costs for hepatitis C treatment. This expensive treatment covers the cost for a 24-week course of medication and will prevent future health care needs associated with hepatitis C.

We've been pursuing opportunities to make our health care system more sustainable. More than ever before, we are committed to innovative options to ensure our health care system is there for generations of Yukoners to come. Technological advances have resulted in productivity gains and more effectiveness of health care.

Yukon has invested in the development of an electronic health records system. This project will eventually lead to more efficient and secure sharing of information between health care providers. One component of the e-health system has been operationalized in the community health centres and continuing care facilities, which has allowed for the direct flow of lab tests electronically between these programs and the Whitehorse General Hospital. We're also working on two other key components: the client registry and drug information systems.

The territorial health investment fund project is well underway and has made progress in improving the effectiveness in the use of technology to improve mental health service delivery. For example, this year THIF is piloting the use of telepsychiatry services in rural Yukon communities. This program will increase access to needed mental health support services in patients' home communities. THIF is transforming our health care system by building strong performance measurement and quality improvement mechanisms into our health care programming. The evidence helps improve our health systems by establishing more efficient and effective practices and, at the same time, reduces gaps in services. This continues to help us make informed decisions as to how resources should be allocated to best serve Yukoners.

This government has worked to make best use of the skills and capacity of all our health care providers, hospitals, community clinics and organizations to ensure patients receive timely access to quality, coordinated care. Building our health and social system around the needs of individual patients, Mr. Speaker, is essential.

The *Clinical Services Plan for Yukon* provided many insightful recommendations on how to achieve patient-centred and collaborative care, address the delivery of services in rural communities and use technology to expand resource capacity and access to all Yukoners.

Motion to adjourn debate

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I move that debate be now adjourned.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Health and Social Services that debate be now adjourned.

Motion to adjourn debate on Bill No. 23 agreed to

Mr. Elias: I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:24 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 252

1st Session

33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, April 12, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER — Hon. David Laxton, MLA, Porter Creek Centre

DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Darrell Pasloski	Mountainview	Premier Minister responsible for Finance; Executive Council Office
Hon. Elaine Taylor	Whitehorse West	Deputy Premier Minister responsible for Tourism and Culture; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Justice; Yukon Development Corporation/ Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Doug Graham	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Education
Hon. Scott Kent	Riverdale North	Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources; Highways and Public Works
Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Community Services; Public Service Commission
Hon. Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Minister responsible for Environment
Hon. Mike Nixon	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin	Minister responsible for Economic Development; Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Party

Darius Elias	Government House Leader Vuntut Gwitchin
Hon. David Laxton	Porter Creek Centre
Patti McLeod	Watson Lake

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

New Democratic Party

Elizabeth Hanson	Leader of the Official Opposition Whitehorse Centre
Jan Stick	Official Opposition House Leader Riverdale South
Kevin Barr	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes
Lois Moorcroft	Copperbelt South
Jim Tredger	Mayo-Tatchun
Kate White	Takhini-Kopper King

Liberal Party

Sandy Silver	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, April 12, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will now proceed with the Order Paper. Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of the Rotary Music Festival

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure today to rise on behalf of all members of the Legislature to speak about an annual event that has become a major highlight of our performing arts scene and to pay tribute to the organizers and volunteers who make it happen every year.

I speak of course about the Rotary Music Festival, which starts tomorrow at the Yukon Arts Centre here in Whitehorse. The festival began in 1969 as an initiative of the Whitehorse Choral Society and, not surprisingly, with a focus on local music. Two years later, the newly established Rotary Club of Whitehorse became involved, working in partnership with the choral society for the first few years and then, in 1975, taking over full responsibility for organizing and administering the festival — a role they have continued to fill for the past 40 years.

That first festival in 1969 took place over a two-day period and involved about 60 performers and one adjudicator. The 2016 festival will last nine days and will involve nearly 1,500 participants and seven adjudicators. By any measure we wish to use, Mr. Speaker, it's indeed a tremendous success. It's also a testament to the powerful influence the festival has had on the growth of the performing arts scene here in the territory. From its early focus on vocal music, the festival program has expanded over the years to include instrumental music, including flute and other wind instruments, violin, guitar and of course the ever-popular piano.

I note that the category of piano duets, trios and quartets are once again included in the program this year. The two piano quartets' description from the festival's syllabus reads, "Eight hands, two pianos." I don't know about other members of the House, Mr. Speaker, but that description immediately creates a most delightful image in my mind and we have to marvel at the logistics involved in seating four musicians and two grand pianos on the same stage, never mind coordinating the actual musical scores.

Much of the music performed at the festival is in a classical vein of course, but the scope has expanded over the years to include jazz and pop styles as well.

As I noted last year, Mr. Speaker, the festival now also includes several modern dance categories, and I know there is a member on the front bench on this side who has a son in one of those modern dance categories. It ranges from traditional

ballet to modern and contemporary dance. As Minister of Education, Mr. Speaker, I'm particularly pleased to notice the student choreography category, which strikes me as a forward-looking and youth-empowering category.

One of the wonderful benefits of the Rotary Music Festival is how it nurtures young musicians and fosters music appreciation among all ages. I know, Mr. Speaker; I had two children of my own who participated in the Rotary Music Festival over the years, and I really take this opportunity to salute and thank the many music teachers who provide instruction, encouragement and inspiration to their students. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank teachers and administrators in Yukon schools, who make allowance during the school day for their students to participate in the festival.

I recently learned that, every year, festival organizers invite Yukon youth to participate in the program cover art contest. This year's winner is Ona Toews-Cardona, a grade 10 student at F.H. Collins Secondary School. Her work, *My Musical Roots*, was chosen to grace this year's program cover. Congratulations to Ona and to all the young artists whose work over the years has graced the cover of this musical program.

An annual event of this magnitude cannot happen without a strong organizational structure and the work of many hands and many minds. Year after year, dozens of volunteers offer their time to perform the many tasks involved in such a complex venture as this wonderful festival.

Today I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the work of the Rotary Music Festival committee, which is comprised of Rotarians, music and dance educators and community representatives — all of whom are volunteers. The committee is chaired by Rod Hill. I would like to acknowledge Mr. Hill's considerable ongoing commitment to the festival and thank him for his leadership over the past many years. Mr. Hill was honoured with the City of Whitehorse volunteer of the year award in 2005 for his involvement and, 11 years later, he is still volunteering for the festival.

I would also like to thank and acknowledge long-time committee member Joanne Lewis who has worked on very many aspects of the festival over the years, including five years as festival chair. The festival's continuing success is due in no small part to Ms. Lewis's contributions.

Festival treasurer Frank Curlew has served on the committee for several years as well, bringing his financial acumen and his persuasive abilities. Judging from the impressive list of corporate organizations and individual sponsors who support the festival, Mr. Curlew has clearly proven to be a go-to person and a person who is very difficult to say no to.

I encourage all members also to take a look at the program or visit the festival website to take a look at the people who sponsor this important event. I would like to take the opportunity to ask all members to acknowledge Mr. Hill and Ms. Lewis, both of whom have joined us this afternoon and are seated in the gallery. Thank you very much for your work.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Graham: In closing today, I would once again like to thank the Rotary Club of Whitehorse for continuing to make the Rotary Music Festival the centrepiece of its annual service project activities. The club states with well-deserved pride that their principle satisfaction comes from the compliments received each year from the visiting adjudicators, who invariably comment most favourably on the exemplary organization and outstanding calibre of the young musical talent they find in this territory.

Speaker: Are there any visitors to be introduced?
Are there any returns or documents for tabling?
Are there any reports of committees?
Are there any petitions to be presented?
Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 98: *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I move that Bill No. 98, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 98, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 98 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?

Bill No. 200: *Technical Amendments Act, 2016* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I move that Bill No. 200, entitled *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 200, entitled *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 200 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?

Bill No. 21: *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I move that Bill No. 21, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 21, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 21 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?
Is there a statement by a minister?
This then brings to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Investment in infrastructure development

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, Yukon's municipalities and local governments are the closest level of government to Yukon citizens. They are responsible for water, sewer, sport and recreation and solid-waste management. They intimately understand the needs of their communities, and that is why when they were tasked with providing the Yukon government with their priorities, the AYC had no problem coming up with a list. They actually understand the basis of the Yukon government's new-found, results-based management. However, as we heard last night at Whitehorse City Council, there are concerns that the real infrastructure needs of Yukon communities are not being heard by this government.

In the interest of transparency, will the Premier table the prioritized infrastructure request made by the Association of Yukon Communities and the response made by the Yukon government?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, beginning with my predecessors, the former ministers of Community Services, and beginning with me as minister early last year, we began a process of engagement with Yukon municipalities, Yukon communities and other groups, including First Nations, throughout the territory to gauge their priorities for the next round of what has yet to become federal infrastructure spending. To that end, we have had meetings both at the official and political levels between officials of those municipal governments and mayors and councils and me over the last number of years. What we have done is taken that input, considered it and gathered it into a single document, which is available to interested parties on the Community Services' website.

Through those discussions that I have individually with mayors and councils and through engagement as recently as this morning with a number of mayors and CAOs, I can note that, by and large, the infrastructure plans that we are developing are aligned with their priorities; that they have appreciated the early, consistent and ongoing engagement with my department and me; and that the projects that we have completed or that are underway are needed, welcomed and appreciated by those municipal governments. I look forward to continuing to work with the municipalities to deliver on their infrastructure needs by tapping into federal infrastructure funding and, of course, providing the necessary funding on our part as well.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, the interest of transparency is really important because Yukon communities do express concerns — we have heard this time and again — about the process with which infrastructure decisions are actually made.

Yukon communities have been tasked with asset management planning. They identify projects, not based on political reasons, but based on evidence and need. When they

submit the request to government for much-needed waste management infrastructure, for example, and their requests are passed over while this government appears poised to allocate millions to build a sports complex in Whistle Bend, they're rightly upset. It's a simple question of transparency. The money should be allocated based on the needs of the communities.

To avoid the public perception that this Yukon Party government makes politically motivated, rather than evidence-based, spending decisions, will the government release the criteria used to establish its funding for Yukon community infrastructure?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear with Yukon municipalities and with the public about the priorities and criteria that we use when assessing these projects. Obviously when we ask all communities what their priorities are, we receive a lengthy, expensive list of priorities. The total amount that has been requested is well over a billion dollars. Somebody at some point has to apply some criteria.

We have done that; we have communicated that with municipalities and communities alike. Of course, our first priority is dealing with outstanding regulatory issues. For instance, if a community is not meeting their drinking water standards — as has been the case in a number of communities, we've stepped in and provided the necessary water treatment facilities to ensure that they're meeting that regulatory standard.

The next criterion is what we call core infrastructure. If the municipality is seeking to provide what their core municipality infrastructure is, naturally there are a number of discussions about what those are, but they tend to be in the categories of water, waste water, solid waste and a number of road projects.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the third criterion we have applied is whether or not a project will improve the lifecycle costs of a particular piece of infrastructure that will not only help the municipality with the cost of that infrastructure, but will offer the opportunity to enhance some green energy alternatives. For instance, I know in Burwash we applied some solar panels to the treatment plant there and were able to reduce some of the operational costs for that First Nation and for the Yukon government.

So Mr. Speaker, that's —

Speaker: Order, please. Final supplementary.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for laying out some of the criteria used, as this government should be able to explain how the priorities of the communities fit with the government's overall infrastructure plans. After all, this is a government that says it's committed to results-based management.

I can tell you, though, Mr. Speaker, that when we visited Yukon communities, municipal and government leaders consistently brought up concerns about how their requests for much-needed infrastructure projects are being ignored without reason or rationale provided.

Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, it's a communications issue. This government seems to have a few of those. This government

needs to explain to Yukon communities why the priorities they identified do not show up in the budget and work with them to assure them that there is a list of priorities and when their needs will be met.

Will the government commit to working with the AYC to link their priorities with Yukon government's spending plans?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, we're already doing exactly that, and conversations with mayors and CAOs throughout this territory confirm that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's important to recognize that, as I've noted earlier, we can't do everything for everyone all at once. We know that we need to plan for the future, we need to allocate funding over a number of years, and that's what we've done. What you see before us right now, Mr. Speaker, is a budget that contains a number of very important municipal projects that have funding provided by the Yukon government, as well as the Government of Canada through their new Building Canada fund. That list is available to all of us, as legislators, and to the public — whether it's a new waste-water treatment plant in Burwash Landing, a new sewage lagoon and drying beds for Faro, or whether it's the lift stations that will be developed in Haines Junction, or any of the important projects that were announced a few weeks ago by me and our MP, Larry Bagnell, through the small communities fund.

A number of those projects are right here in Whitehorse, Mr. Speaker — improvements and protections for our groundwater here in Whitehorse; the McLean Lake road connector is a project that was funded through that particular fund as well. These are all priorities that were brought up by the municipalities through this process. These are projects that are supported by municipalities and supported by Yukoners because they know that we need to make these infrastructure investments for the well-being of all Yukoners.

Question re: Faro mine site

Mr. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, when devolution occurred, the federal government committed to cleaning up the existing historic mining liabilities in Yukon. Basically, they provide the money and we conduct the cleanup. Now, 13 years after devolution, there is little apparent progress on the remediation of these mine sites. Faro is the worst of these. With millions already spent, another \$150 million in spending is expected for Faro starting in 2017. After 13 years, Mr. Speaker, all we have is a partially completed closure plan.

Will the minister inform this House of the progress to clean up the Faro mine site and exactly how much has spent to date toward its remediation?

Hon. Mr. Kent: When it comes to the Faro mine site, I think all members who have been on-site — I know a number of members from this side of the House have toured the site and would recognize the complexities of that site and the contamination. Care and maintenance, of course, is critical to protecting human health and safety and the environment in the near term. The previous care and maintenance operator installed a new \$16-million water treatment plant that replaced the aging and unsafe converted mill base treatment process.

The overall remediation design has been advanced from the feasibility stage to an approximate 20-percent level of design. There have been changing environmental conditions. As I've noted, they have impacted remediation priorities and forced a change to the remediation schedules. Current site efforts are focused on developing a permanent solution for water quality challenges in the north fork of Rose Creek. This would translate into construction of a new dam and diversion system worth over \$100 million in the next three to five years.

Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite noted, we have been in charge of managing the care and maintenance for remediation on behalf of the Government of Canada for the past number of years. I don't have the total amount with me on what has been spent there, but I can provide that to the member at a later date. Again, this is a very complex situation that occurs at Faro and officials in the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and Canada are doing their best to —

Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Tredger: The constantly moving goalposts and evolving priorities for all of Yukon's type 2 sites are worrisome. If any other government were to spend hundreds of millions of dollars with little to show, it would be a scandal, Mr. Speaker, but because this government doesn't have to dip directly into Yukoners' pockets to clean up these sites, it seems that they are content to let the money flow without any concrete timelines or firm goals.

To be clear, this is federal money. I am certain that the federal government is just as disappointed with the results as Yukoners are.

How much patience does the minister think the Government of Canada has for the hundreds of millions of federal dollars being spent with few results?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Of course we're concerned. Canadian taxpayers' dollars are our taxpayers' dollars as well. We contribute, obviously, to the Government of Canada. In this case, the Government of Canada does fund this historic liability as it was permitted under their watch.

As I mentioned, there have been some changing environmental conditions on the site that have impacted the remediation priorities and forced the change to the schedules. The Government of Yukon is working very closely with the Kaska First Nations and the Government of Canada to develop a revised governance and management approach that maximizes the conditions for project success.

Again, Mr. Speaker, for those who have had the opportunity to tour the site, it is a very large and complex site. As I mentioned, the north fork of Rose Creek is an emerging challenge that the officials who are involved in the remediation are facing. We're certainly working hard on the care and maintenance aspects as well. As I mentioned, the remediation design has advanced to an approximate 20-percent level of design, given the different priorities. Mr. Speaker, I'm confident that the government officials — not only from the Yukon government, but also the Government of Canada — are working hard to ensure that the conditions at the Faro mine site, and indeed all of our type 2 sites, get resolved and that we move toward a level of

remediation, but again, as I mentioned, these are very complex situations and complex sites to manage.

Mr. Tredger: This should be a good news story, but the constant setbacks and lack of transparency make it an embarrassment for this government. Promised water-quality test releases are no longer available, and the website that was intended to keep Yukoners updated about progress has been down for several months now. The lack of transparency for what is one of Yukon's biggest yearly expenses is unacceptable.

A Yukon NDP government would make it a priority to get the Faro mine site cleanup back on track and ensure that the public is informed and local businesses are involved in the cleanup.

What evidence does the minister have to show Yukon First Nations whose traditional territory is affected and the communities downstream that cleaning up the Faro mine site is a priority?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Of course this is a priority. We have identified a significant amount of money in the current budget for the remediation of the Faro mine site. It's a priority not only for us, but it's a priority for the Government of Canada.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, there have been some changing environmental conditions, obviously beyond the control of anyone in this Legislative Assembly, including the government. The north fork of Rose Creek — there is some significant water-quality challenges that have emerged there over the past number of years. That has become a focus. We're looking at the construction of a new dam and diversion system for the north fork of Rose Creek that is going to cost over \$100 million in the next three to five years. We're working with the Government of Canada and Kaska First Nations to revise the governance and management approach that will hopefully maximize the conditions for project success.

Again, Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned in previous answers, this is a very complex site that we're dealing with at Faro. As a major economic driver for the territory back in the 1960s, 1970s and into the 1990s, it certainly served a purpose then. Unfortunately the permitting at the time and the environmental scrutiny at the time was not what it is today and we're left with a site that Canada permitted and is responsible for providing the dollars to clean up, but, as I have mentioned, Canadian taxpayers include Yukon taxpayers. We're concerned with this and we're doing our utmost to ensure there is success with the cleanup of the Faro mine site.

Question re: Economic growth

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, in early March, the Yukon government had taxpayers foot the bill for a flyer that was mailed across the territory. It was a *Report to Yukoners* that boldly stated this government is — and I quote: "growing our economy".

The Conference Board of Canada recently confirmed our economy shrank last year and has in fact shrunk three years in a row. In a few months' time, the territory's last operating hardrock mine will be shutting its doors. The government's

own forecast says — and I quote: “Real GDP is expected to contract for the third consecutive year” for 2015 — so much for the claim that the government has successfully been growing our economy.

When is this government going to admit that its economic record is actually one of failure?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Of course the Government of Yukon continues to invest to strengthen infrastructure and to contribute to the diversification of the economy. It's very important to us. We see this government continue to spend millions of dollars investing in everything from infrastructure such as roads to infrastructure in fibre. We continue to invest in education. We take the economy very seriously. We continue to invest in tourism. We've seen from the Minister of Tourism — she has spoken at length about all of the great investments we've made there.

We do understand that the global markets are in a downturn and we continue to work to make the Yukon a great place.

Mr. Silver: When the Yukon Party 2.0 came into office in 2011, there were three operating hardrock mines in the Yukon, and in a few months' time, there will be none. The government has had successive billion-dollar budgets at their disposal. Transfer payments from Ottawa have increased every year as well. Despite this, we have just completed our third year in a row of economic decline — the worst performance, Mr. Speaker, in all of Canada.

Now, the Yukon Party loved to take credit when things were going good, but they are singing a different tune now that things are bad. Here's one of the bold statements from the archives — and I quote: “The boom-and-bust swings of the past will be largely mitigated by sound economic planning and investment attraction efforts.”

Why has this government delivered three years in a row of “bust”?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I'll respond to the member's questions about the mining industry. Of course, it's something that has been one of the cornerstones of our economy for well over 100 years. The placer mining industry itself is continuing to grow over the past number of years, employing a number of Yukoners in the Klondike region and throughout other regions in the Yukon as well, including Mayo, Carmacks and the Kluane region. We're seeing tremendous success and growth in that industry — and largely family-run operations that employ many Yukoners and spend in those Yukon communities.

On the hardrock side, we see projects like Kaminak's Coffee property moving out of the exploration and advanced exploration into a permitting phase — very excited to see that happen. The privately owned Kudz Ze Kayah property by BMC will see the largest exploration expenditures in the territory this year — I believe close to \$14 million US.

I spoke to the chair of the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board this morning, and he is optimistic about the markets and the fact that during the period between Roundup and PDAC, companies were able to raise money for exploration

opportunities — his very own project at Eagle — Victoria Gold — there's exploration activity there as we speak.

Again, we're seeing tremendous activity in the mining industry.

Mr. Silver: I agree that we have a lot to thank for with the placer mining industry, and the fact that they can sell their product in American dollars.

Mr. Speaker, this government has developed three years of negative growth in the economy — the single-worst economy in all of Canada — yet it has the nerve to produce brochures with taxpayers' money that claim that it's growing the economy. The federal budget even singled out Whitehorse for needing extra help for people with EI. The Yukon Party has blamed low mineral prices, they've blamed YESAA, and they've blamed the new federal government, but is unwilling to admit its role in how we got to the bottom of Canada's economic barrel. Coasting on high mineral prices, refusing to address the regulatory uncertainty, and a habit of meeting First Nation governments in courts are all things that this government has control over that are not making a difference.

Mr. Speaker, this is bad for the economy. When is the government going to accept that it's part of the problem and not part of the solution when it comes to our economy?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: We've heard the ministers of Economic Development and Energy, Mines and Resources talk about many of the things we're doing during an economic downturn to ensure that this territory is in the best position to move forward very quickly when the economy turns around. We don't live in a bubble.

The member opposite knows that this is a situation that is occurring not only Yukon, but in fact in all jurisdictions that have a resource industry as the primary driver of their economy. We only have to look to the east to the Northwest Territories or to Nunavut as well.

We are continuing to focus on doing what we can. To add to the comments the ministers made, there's a \$3-million increase in our IT investment this year — from \$6.5 million to \$9.5 million. That money will put many Yukoners to work with high-paying jobs. The reality when it comes to the parties opposite is that, when it comes to mining, as I've said many times, the NDP supports mining so long as it's done somewhere else, and of course the Liberal Party supports everything, but sadly stands for nothing.

Question re: Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport maintenance

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, last fall the Minister of Highways and Public Works said that deficiencies in the Whitehorse airport apron panels were being addressed and that the government planned to hold the contractor liable. The new concrete apron panels were cracking shortly after they were built. However, the contractor asserted that he had identified problems with the soil underneath the apron panels, stopped the work and then informed the government that there could be deficiencies in the work if the soil issues weren't addressed. He then stated the Yukon government told him to go ahead with the project anyway.

The fact is that whatever these deficiencies were caused by, they need to be fixed. Mr. Speaker, can the government provide an update on the condition of the Whitehorse airport apron panels?

Hon. Mr. Kent: First of all, the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport has an excellent safety and security record. There are very few flight delays or cancellations each year due to weather conditions or aircraft mechanical issues, and there have been no known cancellations due to poorly maintained runways. We have a rigorous runway inspection system in place at the Whitehorse airport. They're inspected on a regular basis. Detailed engineering inspections are conducted every two years in accordance with our surface management system.

That said — just to update members of the House on the apron panel project — we are still working with the contractor's bonding agency to resolve the issue and the deficiencies that are occurring with the apron panels.

It's anticipated that the negotiations on a resolution will continue for a number of months; however there are no immediate dangers with the apron panels to equipment or the safety of the planes is my understanding from officials at Highways and Public Works, the Aviation branch.

Again, as this continues to emerge and go forward, I will continue to provide updates for Members of the Legislative Assembly and the Yukon public.

Ms. Moorcroft: I think that the airport safety record is better than this government's record of managing capital projects.

Mr. Speaker, the contractor suggested the cracking in the airport apron panel may require the entire project to be redone. If true, this is a colossal failure of the government to manage the infrastructure project. Late last year, a Yukon government spokesperson was unable to say in a radio interview whether the entirety of the airport apron panel would have to be removed. We do know that repairs will be costly and that they will also inconvenience airport users of all types during the busy summer months.

Can the minister say whether the project will need to be completely redone to repair the deficiencies in the airport apron panels?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Again, as minister, we rely on the expertise and the professionalism of our officials when it comes to this. There are several deficiencies related to the concrete and construction quality. As I mentioned, there are some disagreements between us and the contractor with respect to who has responsibility for those and we're working with the contractor's bonding agency to resolve those issues. As I mentioned, it is anticipated those negotiations on a resolution will continue for the coming months. Once there is a change to that, I will be able to inform the House and/or Yukoners with respect to the changes but, again, we're working with the contractor's bonding agency to resolve this issue.

Ms. Moorcroft: This project was mostly funded through the federal government's airports capital assistance program with a portion being provided by the Yukon

government. When this issue first flared up, the question the Minister of Highways and Public Works refused to answer was who would bear the cost of the repairs. At the time, the contractor had stated that the government had waived his company's liability when they ignored his concerns and told him to resume work on the panels. It is unclear whether the federal government would provide additional funding if Yukon government had mismanaged the project. The minister said that they are negotiating for a resolution.

Can the minister tell the public whether the Yukon government and, by extension, Yukon citizens are responsible for footing the bill for repairs of the Whitehorse airport apron panels?

Hon. Mr. Kent: As I mentioned in previous responses here today there are disagreements with who is responsible for the deficiencies in the apron panels. We're working with the contractor's bonding agency to resolve this issue.

The member's question also reminded me of some questions raised during the Fall Sitting where the member opposite referenced a report by the Government of Canada at the time. At that time, I did ask her to table the report, so this is just a reminder to the member opposite that this request is still outstanding. I know that she did identify a report. If indeed it doesn't exist, I will give her an opportunity to stand on her feet and correct the record — as I would if I made an erroneous claim on the floor of this House.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we're working with the contractor's bonding agency to resolve the issue. Once there is a resolution reached, I will be able to communicate it to this House and/or the Yukon public.

Question re: National Aboriginal Day as a Yukon statutory holiday

Mr. Barr: Mr. Speaker, late last year the Yukon Legislative Assembly unanimously passed a motion to make June 21 National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday for all Yukoners. Making Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday recognizes the contributions of Yukon's indigenous people and supports efforts at reconciliation and understanding between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people. During the debate, the minister responsible for undertaking this project amended the motion to allow for consultations before amending the necessary legislation.

Has the minister started the consultation process with Yukon First Nations, Yukon's business community and Yukon's unions to make National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, as I and my colleagues indicated in motion debate on this subject last year, of course we very much support National Aboriginal Day as a celebration of First Nation culture, language and accomplishments, and through a number of ways provide funding and support to groups who participate in this type of event. When it comes to the specific question of whether or not to create a statutory holiday for National Aboriginal Day, we were pretty clear last year that, in order to do that, we would need to make legislative changes, and before we do that

kind of legislative change, we would want to consult broadly as indicated in the content of the motion that was passed last year.

The next steps for that will be to reach out to groups as listed by the member opposite. We have not begun that process yet, but hope to in a matter of weeks. It is my hope that we will be in consultation by the end of this calendar month, and we look forward to hearing back from those groups listed by the member opposite about this important issue.

Mr. Barr: It seems that this government wrote off making Aboriginal Day a holiday for this June 21 from the get-go from the sounds of the response from the minister. I understand that this kind of consultation cannot be done all at once, and I understand that amending legislation is not a simple process. However, it is important that this government show that it is following through on the Legislature's vote to make National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday by getting straight to work conducting the consultation and laying the groundwork for the legislative amendments. I would have hoped that would have already begun.

Can the minister give Yukoners a firm timeline for how he plans to implement National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my last response, the necessary change will require legislative change. That is something that is the prerogative of the Legislature to make, obviously. I don't think that will be possible in this current Sitting and, as such, it will have to be done in a future legislative Sitting. I need to note that the motion we passed last year indicated our willingness to consult on the issue. It did not bind us to undertaking that specific legislative change. That is something that we will have to consider going forward.

What we need to also remember is that, while we very much support National Aboriginal Day and the celebration and promotion of First Nation culture, language and accomplishments, it does need to be remembered that the creation of a new statutory holiday comes at some cost. It is not necessarily a cost that is borne by government or by us as legislators, but it is borne specifically by Yukon businesses. Whether a Yukon business has two employees or 200, there is a significant cost that comes with the creation of a new statutory holiday. That is why we thought it would be only fair to ask the business community what they thought about the possibility of creating a new statutory holiday.

As I've mentioned in my last response, we plan to begin consultation on that very soon. I indicated that we hope to begin consultation by the end of this month. I know that's not as fast as what the members opposite are shouting off-mic, but that's the course we've taken and we look forward to hearing from the business community and Yukoners about this important issue.

Mr. Barr: Adopting National Aboriginal Day as a territorial holiday would be an important step toward honouring the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We hear that the government is

going to do this. I again state that I wish the government would have already taken the steps. We were happy to go with the amendments and I trusted that it would be.

Why has the government not started to this date in good faith with proceeding with its consultations?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, we are moving forward with consultation. I hope to have that consultation launched by the end of this month. With regard to the timing, we felt it was appropriate to bring it forward as soon as possible and that of course is by the end of this month.

Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, we support National Aboriginal Day. We support it in a number of ways, whether it's through funding or through other types of support for groups celebrating National Aboriginal Day. Of course the question of whether or not to create a new statutory holiday is an important one — one that would require legislative change — a change that is not going to be able to be done in this current Sitting. As such, we hope to consult with the business community, with union groups, with First Nations and the public alike in the coming weeks to gain an understanding of what the impact of the creation of a new statutory holiday would be.

As I've mentioned, Mr. Speaker, this type of decision is not one that should be taken lightly. Of course there are costs that are borne by the Yukon business community as a result of the creation of a new statutory holiday. We need to understand what those costs will be and whether or not it's appropriate to put those costs on the Yukon business community at this time.

I look forward to moving forward with consultation and we'll do so in the coming weeks to hear from Yukoners about this issue.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of government private members' business

Mr. Elias: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(7), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of government private members to be called on Wednesday, April 13, 2016. They are Motion No. 1133, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, and Motion No. 1134, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 23: *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17* — Second Reading — *adjourned debate*

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 23, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Pasloski; adjourned debate, the Hon. Mr. Nixon.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: As I spoke yesterday, I would also like to take this opportunity again to thank my friends, my family, and the constituents of Porter Creek South for

supporting me, for believing in me and for encouraging me in my endeavours as a Yukon Party MLA. Those people certainly remind me and reinforce the importance of a stable, diverse economy, first-rate health care and high-quality education. I believe that the Yukon Party government has done an incredible job at addressing each of these areas. We know the stronger the economy, the stronger our health care and the stronger our education systems will be.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take the opportunity to thank our Yukon Party caucus support staff, our EAs and our policy advisors for their long hours and their hard work to support us with our daily scheduled tasks and ensuring that we are organized and ready for constructive debate in this Legislature. I would also like to thank the department staff in Health and Social Services, who work day in and day out to ensure that Yukoners' health care, continuing care and social service network is functional and meeting the needs of Yukoners. I would be remiss to leave out my appreciation of each and every one of my Yukon Party colleagues. It has certainly been a pleasure over the years working with all of them and I do believe, Mr. Speaker, that we have an amazing team.

I would like to extend my thanks to the Leader of the Official Opposition for highlighting, during her reply to the budget speech, the investments that we've made over the last decade pertaining to the recruitment and retention of doctors to ensure Yukoners have access to health care.

I feel, as I mentioned yesterday, that it is incumbent upon me, as a Yukon Party MLA, to remind our constituents exactly what their choices are and the harm that policy choices from the opposition parties can have on our economy and on our territory as a whole. Our clear vision for moving forward together and our solid leadership from the Premier maintains our path to support our commitments to each and every one in the territory. This Yukon Party government will continue down the path to improving upon achieving a better quality of life, building a prosperous, diversified Yukon economy, managing and protecting Yukon's environment and wildlife, and practising good government.

The Yukon Party government has, again in this budget, made considerate and strategic investments. In fact, under a Yukon Party government, our territory and our economy continue to grow. The Yukon Party has demonstrated that we can deliver growth with prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, moving on into the Department of Health and Social Services, we are finalizing the clinical services implementation plan, which will serve as a guide on how the department will act and move forward on the accepted recommendations. Through the territorial health investment fund mental wellness project, we will also be piloting a new telemental health system to assist counsellors with a more efficient process to connect with clients in rural Yukon communities through a face-to-face option. Increasing the use of telehealth and other types of technologies to enhance service delivery and access in communities is certainly a priority for this government and a priority for the department.

These are a few of the highlights for Health and Social Services, which demonstrate how we continue to provide excellent core services to all Yukon residents and also shows how we are working to improve their lives and to support families. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, we have made considerable improvements to our health care system that have made it more effective and more responsive to the needs of Yukon citizens.

In addition to our investments, though, it is important to recognize that Yukon citizens themselves have an important role to play in their own health and in the health of their families. To help recognize this, we continue to help implement the active living strategy. The vision of that strategy is a Yukon that is active and where health, well-being and physical activity are viewed as an investment in the quality of life for every individual for a vibrant, healthy and sustainable Yukon community.

To quote our Premier, he said: "I can say with confidence that our health care system is stronger, more flexible and better suited to the needs of Yukon citizens than it was when we took office in 2011." I talk with my constituents regularly about issues that are important to them — issues such as a healthy economy, including resource extraction, natural gas and tourism, private sector businesses, the knowledge sector and trades. The constituents of Porter Creek South speak to me about health care and how they recognize that Yukon's health care is arguably one of the best in Canada. In fact, as I pay more attention to health care across our country, I consider myself very fortunate to live in a place where the level of care for my friends, my family and my constituents is truly second to none. As I have stated before, we are lucky; we are not entitled.

The budget tabled before us speaks to a healthy economy. The budget speaks to investments in the resource sector. It speaks to investments in our tourism economy. It speaks to investments in the knowledge sector and trades, and it speaks to solid leadership. Your Yukon Party government has very proudly made Yukoners its priority.

Yukoners often reflect upon how fortunate we really are to live, work, play and raise a family in the best part of Canada, and perhaps the best part of the world. We truly have it all. We have resources beneath the ground that can support us for generations to come. We have a solid tourism product that the world wants to see. We have infrastructure that supports trades, IT and other knowledge-based sectors. We have a private sector that is motivated and eager for more growth, and we have a Yukon Party government that can commit and deliver to Yukoners. In Yukon's history, I would argue, as many others would, that we've never seen this from Liberal or NDP governments.

I recently recorded a tribute to Autism Awareness Day and the Light It Up Blue campaign. As a father of a child with autism, I'm very aware of the many benefits that we, as Canadians and truly Yukoners, enjoy. I'm certainly grateful for the assistance that this Yukon Party government has provided to my family and many other families over the last number of years.

When I was first elected, a number of families did connect with me. Some were single parents trying to raise a child with special needs; some were couples; some had more than one child with special needs. I'm pleased that this Yukon Party government, due to its fiscal prudence, has been able to step up to the plate and provide supports to those families.

I've often thought to myself: How would a family cope if they didn't live in a country like Canada and didn't live in a territory like Yukon? How would they manage if they had to raise all that money for themselves to care for their children with disabilities? For me, a budget that focuses on putting Yukoners to work is a budget that enables the government to help families who have children with special needs.

Mr. Speaker, recently we rolled out a news release, talking about how Yukon communities will soon have access to a \$1-million innovation pot, subject to legislative approval, to help them meet the mental health needs of their citizens. I quoted in this press release: "This fund will support the principles and concepts of the Yukon Mental Wellness Strategy, which will be released in the next few weeks, and will help communities tailor capacity-building initiatives to meet their specific needs".

Mr. Speaker, the fund will be time-limited and cannot be used for core funding. Communities and individuals will have to submit proposals that support community capacity building. The government is currently working with communities, stakeholders and service providers to determine how best to use this fund. It is anticipated that these details will be finalized to coincide with the release of the mental health strategy and, as I have indicated, will be tabled in this Legislature in the coming weeks.

I will read a quote in relation to this press release from the Mental Health Association of Yukon and Ray Wells went on to say: "Yukon communities will benefit from having access to more resources and this fund is one way of providing them the support they need". I have said it before and I will say it again — providing mental health services and supports is not only a government responsibility and it is not only the responsibility of a municipality or First Nations. It is everyone's responsibility to address mental health and mental wellness in our territory.

I would also like to take the opportunity to highlight some of the work that has been done by our incredible Yukon social workers. We all know that social workers are professionals whose primary focus is helping children, Yukon families, our youth, our seniors, groups and communities to increase their individual and collective wellness and well-being. Yukon social workers are employed in a variety of fields, including mental health, education, health, social services and justice, both within government services and professional community partners. They are counsellors — family, group or youth justice conferences and family support workers, family service workers, child-in-care workers, foster care workers, adoption workers, probation officers and educators. They are our families, they are our friends and they are our neighbours. They work for First Nation organizations and communities, government, hospitals, care facilities, schools, custody

centres, non-governmental organizations and other non-profit societies, and certainly in private practice.

In Yukon, regional social workers provide integrative services in communities, working collaboratively with First Nations in areas of community development support, child welfare, recruitment and support of foster homes, probation and senior supports. Social workers in Whitehorse provide a range of services in more specialized branches and units by working collaboratively with First Nation partners in areas of child welfare, adoption, counselling via Child and Adolescent Therapeutic Services, probation, senior supports, and services to family with children with disabilities. Social workers also work in hospitals as members of treatment teams that provide a link between the team and family and community resources, and in schools where they help students adjust to the school environment. They work as probation officers and in custody centres. They also work for First Nations and other community agencies and provide counselling to children, youth, adults and families and as community developers.

In private practice, they offer their services on a fee-for-service basis to individuals, families and organizations. Social workers also work at Yukon College, teaching and supporting students. They are also involved in policy analysis, policy development and planning and federal, provincial or social planning departments or councils.

The Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada provides a regulated professional organization for Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut. This voluntary organization represents social workers practising in Canada's three territories and in the far north. As the Minister of Health and Social Services, and on behalf of this Yukon Party government, thank you to all social workers working in our incredible territory.

In conclusion, I would be remiss to leave out an important announcement that we just made today. This government is committed to providing equitable access to health care services for all Yukoners and is consistently analyzing programs that will benefit our citizens. The Premier announced to the Yukon Medical Association last November that this government will introduce a colorectal screening program this year. Colorectal cancer is the third-most common cancer diagnosed in Canada, but treatment is highly successful if the disease is diagnosed and treated early. There is strong evidence that screening tests substantially reduce incidents and mortality due to colorectal cancer. The introduction of this program brings Yukon into step with other jurisdictions, all of which either have a program in place or in development. I am very proud that this government, my caucus colleagues and the Premier supported us moving forward on a system that provides a different and perhaps better screening procedure for Yukoners.

In conclusion, this budget is for Yukoners. It is about the confidence that Yukoners have in this Yukon Party government and it is truly about making Yukon the best place to work, live, play and raise a family.

Mr. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased and honoured to speak on behalf of the people of Mayo-Tatchun. I would like to thank them for their continued support and for their efforts to keep me informed and involved in their communities and in their lives. It has been an interesting four, going on five years. Together we have made new friends, attended celebrations, meetings, and planning sessions and grieved our losses. I want to thank my constituents for including me in their lives, for showing me true hospitality, for sharing with me the value of community, for talking, and for their ideas and concerns. I have learned much and been inspired.

I would like to also thank all members of the Legislature for their dedication and contributions to Yukon, Yukon citizens and, through them, to the wider Canadian community. I have learned from all of you. Thank you.

The people of Mayo-Tatchun — the people of Carmacks, Pelly Crossing, Mayo, Stewart Crossing and Keno — have a deep sense of commitment to their families, to their neighbours and to their communities. They live on the land and in their communities. They care deeply and are committed to each other. They know they are part of the land, part of the water, and they are committed to being stewards of the land. It has been an honour to get to know them, to share their stories, their hopes, concerns and dreams. These resourceful Yukon citizens, like citizens in other Yukon communities, can teach us a thing or two about resilience and working together, about sustainability and stewardship, about water and forests, about mining and tourism, about roads and rivers and communication — but, most of all, they can show us the way to work together respectfully to build family and community and to build a rich, robust and diverse economy that is committed to the now and to the future — our children.

I have said it before — the strength of the Yukon lies in our people. They must have a voice — our friends and neighbours, the people most affected by the decisions made, the people most able to get results effectively and efficiently.

Yukon citizens and leaders came together to sign the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and the subsequent self-government agreements. The cooperation, the respect and trust among our leaders also enabled the devolution transfer agreement. These agreements were seen as a way forward, a process built on respect, trust — neighbour to neighbour — and a deep, deep understanding of the value of our land and water. The spirit of these treaties and agreements was intended to build trust and cooperation, to share resources and knowledge together in the spirit of land claims and self-government agreements, to bring municipal governments, First Nation governments, advisory councils, and our boards and committees to the table together for all Yukon.

However, the promise of the UFA has been sidetracked. This Yukon Party government has spent more time in costly legal wrangling than any other government in Yukon's history. The last 12 years of Yukon Party government has seen an ever-increasing acrimony and legal wrangling, an ever-increasing expenditure of time, resources and money —

time, resources and money better used to build a diverse, robust economy and to build community wellness.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report gives us another opportunity to reset the table. They have issued calls to action and recommendations that provide direction and hope, but they must be taken respectfully and they must be taken seriously. Our government must show our commitment by our actions, by our legislation and by adequate funding. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is more than words. There is no quick fix. We must involve all Yukon in meeting the recommendations and actions.

Many knowledgeable and involved citizens feel that they are not being heard. The Premier talks of going to communities but, as one resident told me, the Premier came to our community but he didn't listen.

Another who attended a meeting described the Yukon Party's community tour this way: they came in a hurry, they talked a lot and they left in a hurry.

Maybe the Premier and his Cabinet colleagues were playing a game of broken telephone where they whispered in each other's ear as the story went around the room. Now, like when we were children, the resulting words have little resemblance to what was originally said. The Association of Yukon Communities cited the fact that the voices of Yukon, the priorities of our municipalities, were not reflected in the budget. Yukon citizens want to be part of the solution. They want to lead, to voice their concerns, their solutions and their priorities, yet many are disappointed — disappointed that once again, we have a \$1.3-billion budget that does not reflect their priorities and their hopes and that does not use to the full extent our human and natural resources — to use them respectfully with an eye to the future.

Residents and municipal councils are raising the alarm and want community infrastructure made a priority. Municipal and Yukon government buildings are aging. Many nursing stations and recreational facilities are woefully inadequate to meet current needs, let alone future needs. From swimming pools to fire halls, ambulance stations to recreation centres — facilities that are vital to our communities' well-being are being neglected. Strategic planning and action is needed. One of my constituents said that we need more democracy and less politics.

Solid-waste management is an increasing concern. Local areas and municipalities want to be involved in creating workable, efficient and environmentally sound solutions. Now is not the time for a government flyby — but the time to come together to consult and to listen and to act. Now is the time to engage all Yukon. We need all the expertise and the involvement of all Yukon citizens.

According to the Auditor General, in their report on education in 2009 — true now as it was then — “Strategic planning is a management tool that focuses on the future. It helps a department set priorities and goals and develop a plan to meet those goals. It also helps a department to assess how resources are to be allocated and gives it the scope to adjust its direction in response to a changing environment.” A common theme of the Auditor General's report remains this Yukon

Party government's lack of comprehensive collection of data and long-term strategic planning. Strategic planning is now more important than ever; strategic planning that involves our civil service and the Yukon public.

The Yukon Party Premier talks about balancing the budget and not running a deficit. This Premier speaks as to how we are the envy of other jurisdictions. That is rather rich to talk of our sister jurisdictions when we receive in the neighbourhood of \$1 billion — that's billion with a "B" — from the federal government. Yes, the Yukon government receives more than \$1 billion — with a "B" — in revenue directly from the federal government. That is approximately \$37,000 per person. To talk of balancing a budget is, at best, disingenuous. We should be talking of careful planning, sound management and preparation for the future, when every day we see the opposite: poorly done needs assessments; projects started, cancelled and started again; costly reviews and studies that sit unread on shelves; quick fixes and grandiose schemes; and auditors' reports that continually speak to the lack of planning, lack of evaluation, lack of data collection and lack of direction.

The Premier conveniently doesn't mention the dollars owed by our corporations. According to the most recent Public Accounts, we have a debt of \$127 million through the Yukon Development Corporation. We have a debt of \$45.8 million through the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Yukon Housing Corporation has a debt of \$7.8 million, bringing Yukon's total debt to almost \$200 million. This is in the form of bonds almost entirely deferred to our grandchildren 40 years' hence — deferred to our grandchildren.

It is disappointing to note that, rather than strategic planning and setting aside funds to finance future projects, like the 300-bed institution in Whistle Bend, this Yukon Party's ongoing solution is to first ask the federal government for yet more money. If that fails, the next step is to ask our corporations to go further in debt.

It is easy to brag about balancing a budget when we get over \$1 billion from Daddy. Seriously, I think Daddy would be much happier if we managed the money we received more judiciously. Also, a word of caution, after years of Conservative mismanagement, Daddy is broke. The annual national deficit is projected to be over \$29 billion — that again is billion with a "B". Worse still, the projected federal net debt is estimated to rise to over \$700 billion. Again, that is billion with a "B". Yet we get the same old, tired answer from the Yukon Party — ad hoc requests for more funding from the federal government. In the words of the minister responsible for Economic Development, we are eagerly awaiting a response from the federal government. That is not a plan for diversification; nor is it a plan for independence. It is a plan that will only increase our vulnerability and our dependence on federal transfers.

We are entering a critical time for the Yukon. We have to adapt to ever-increasing climate change — change that is already affecting our land, our water, our air, our seasons, our wildlife populations and indeed threatening our sustainability. Each year, costs associated with climate change are becoming

more evident monetarily as roads, buildings, crops and forests are challenged — but also environmentally. We are a small jurisdiction, but we need to step up to the plate. It's not very Yukon to say we don't make a big difference. It is like Yukon people to step up and say we want to be part of the solution.

The Secretary General of the United Nations said, "The time has come to acknowledge that national interests are best served by acting in the global interest." Now is the time for us to come together for environmental stewardship, for our waters and for our land, to protect what we have and to maintain it now and for future generations.

Yukoners have been very clear and First Nations have been very clear that fracking has no place in our territory. In fact, since the select committee on fracking has delivered their report, fracking has been proven to contaminate water supplies, has been instrumental in causing earthquakes and seismic events and fracking wells continue to leak methane. Dr. Cherry from the Council of Canadian Academies restated that wellbore integrity remains an unresolved challenge. Yet, we see the Premier and the Yukon Party government continuing to advocate and use public funds to promote and subsidize an outdated industry. Just when the rest of the world is recognizing the need to transfer from a carbon-based economy, the Yukon Party is speculating on a temporary resurgence in the oil and gas industry.

The world does not need more oil. The world is awash in oil and gas. Science tells us that we cannot burn what we have already discovered. Just next door, productive wells are being shut in, decommissioned. There are tens of thousands of unemployed skilled oil and gas workers. Investing almost \$3 million in fossil fuels when the rest of the world is divesting is wrong-headed. The economy of the 21st century and the jobs of the 21st century will be based on green, renewable industry. The science is clear, the economics are clear, and the people of Yukon have been clear.

It is becoming ever more evident that time is scarce. We must redouble our efforts to move from a carbon-based economy to renewable and sustainable sources of energy. This is not a policy decision; it is a scientific truth.

Yukoners want to be part of the solution. There is a challenge. It won't be easy, but the science again is clear. The longer we wait, the harder it will be. Yukon citizens and our leaders, like the rest of the world, must put our time, our ingenuity and our knowledge to move from our dependence on fossil fuels. I am proud of Yukon citizens — Yukoners who want to be part of the solution. They want to develop small-scale hydro. They want to take advantage of diverse opportunities to build a green economy, to develop and produce local energy, energy that takes advantage of locally available technologies — geothermal, wind, small-scale hydro, wood gasification — the list goes on. These are industry developments that provide local jobs that contribute to our need for a carbon-free future. It can be done; it must be done.

An interesting fact I heard the other day is that Whitehorse receives more usable sunlight than Berlin, Germany; yet Berlin, Germany, is a leader in the solar energy

field. Jurisdictions around the world are benefiting from jobs and safe, reliable, renewable energy.

Green energy investments and jobs are the fastest growing segment of the world's economy. There were 7.7 million direct and indirect jobs created in the renewable energy sector in 2014. It is time to diversify, to build a lasting and sustainable base of energy for the Yukon. Yukon small businesses and industry are struggling while this government engages in costly, time-consuming and losing battles with other levels of government. This government engages in unnecessary and costly legal battles and disputes with other levels of government, all the while hiring more communications officers and Outside ad agencies to cover their inadequacies. Land use planning — a key part of the UFA and a means to provide certainty for residents and for industry — remains mired in costly legal dispute. In Justice Ron Veale's decision, he stated that — and I quote: "... the process adopted by the Government of Yukon..." — in approving the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* — "... was not based upon a contextual interpretation of..." — the final agreements. The plain reading interpretation endorsed by the government does not "... enhance the goal of reconciliation..." and is inconsistent "...with the honour and integrity of the Crown." Yet we have seen no apology, no attempt to undo the harm caused by this Yukon Party government's actions.

We have a dedicated, informed and knowledgeable civil service. It is time to trust our civil service, to use their expertise, to remove the gag orders and allow them to do what we hired them to do — work for all Yukoners, advocate for all Yukon, now and in the future — and to use their science and their expertise and their passion to advocate, advise and help build a healthy, sustainable and diverse economy. Again, we need more democracy and less politics.

It is time to diversify. The mineral industry has a role to play, but it is not the only player. It is to all our advantage to build a robust, diverse economy together. When I reflect over the last four years, I realize that many of the issues remain the same — roads and buildings damaged by increasing melting of permafrost; roads by heavier industrial traffic need repair. Our system needs some strategic planning, but what we get is a patchwork of makeshift repairs each spring.

Housing and land availability remain an issue in many communities. We hear of government workers having to work from another community due to a lack of housing in the community where they have been employed. Housing in communities greatly impacts the ability to recruit and keep YTG employees in those communities. I've heard stories of teachers beginning the year with no home, bunking out in others' spare rooms, moving from one room to another, instead of being able to focus on their teaching and students.

Health and nursing care in communities has been limited by temporary staff and by policy decisions. Rural residents want to age in place, yet in the Yukon Party government's apparent haste to build a 300-bed institution in Whistle Bend, there has been little recognition of the value and role that seniors and elders bring to families and to communities.

Health facilities are not being kept up. Carmacks Health Centre is woefully inadequate. Pelly Crossing airport is still unable to land medical flights. Keno is in dire need of a safe community well, and the recommendations of the health impact assessment done in 2009 by Dr. Hanley are still not being met.

What was once almost universal dental care provided to all Yukon children has languished to the point where many children do not take part, especially in a critical preventive aspect. I would like to acknowledge Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation for their recognition of this lapse and their building of a preventive dental care program for their children.

Many First Nations are struggling to create land-based treatment facilities for after-care and for programming.

When it comes to recreational facilities, Carmacks has been without a skating rink for two years. Dawson City rec centre is, after all these years, still not functioning as intended. Community swimming pools are patched together. Many communities are missing much of a short summer season for repairs to their rinks. I've heard tales of EMS buildings not serving the needs, fire trucks and ambulances that don't fit, the lack of central storage for search and rescue and the lack of meeting and training facilities or a place to meet and train for our emergency responders. I've heard of the need for government buildings to be upgraded for licensing and service to community people. As I mentioned earlier, despite years of warning and calls to drill a new well in Keno, the well was finally shut down with no alternative except to truck water from Mayo.

The people of the Selkirk First Nation are still waiting for this government to follow through on memoranda and agreements around a Fort Selkirk buffer zone around the Dhaw Ghro management area years later. The Dhaw Ghro management area holds a special place in the hearts and minds of the elders of the Na Cho Nyäk Dun and Selkirk. Much time and effort was put into that, yet nothing, years later. The elders who worked on that are passing. When I talk to them, they ask: When will that be resolved? I've asked in the House: When will that memorandum be signed? When will that agreement go forward? But nothing. Where are this government's priorities?

The infrastructure — where is the local planning input; where are the partnerships? It's time for more democracy and less politics. It's time to build with and to support small businesses or entrepreneurs. We owe it to the citizens of Canada who are investing over a billion dollars — with a "B" — in Yukon and Yukon people. We owe it to the citizens of Yukon, our friends and our neighbours, and to our First Nation partner governments, to the business community, to build a better, more robust, more prosperous and diverse Yukon.

I will have further questions for the ministers who are responsible for various requests for appropriation to ensure that the funds are spend appropriately and that they will help and support the people of Yukon, and specifically the citizens of Mayo-Tatchun.

Thank you for your attention.

Mr. Elias: Once again, it's a privilege and a pleasure to rise in the Assembly and respond to Bill No. 23 in second reading to this 2016-17 budget. It's a good budget.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I begin, as always, to send my heartfelt thanks to the people of Old Crow and my family for their incredible hard work and support over the years. No matter what the issues or concerns are, my constituents are always there at the forefront, giving direction, participating and solving problems and implementing our decisions.

[Member spoke in Gwich'in. Text unavailable.]

Change is upon us once again in north Yukon and we all will be called upon to reaffirm our values and commitments to a brighter future and to hold them up against the hard realities we face on a daily basis in our community and to see how we are measuring up to our forebears and the promises made to future generations.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have consistently affirmed the grandeur of our community and north Yukon over the years when I speak on my constituents' behalf.

I tell people that our strength does not come from our creeks being filled with gold or the buried treasures under our lands, but because of the true richness of our community, our people and the strength of our families to always strive to be and do better for those yet unborn. We are rich in heritage and cultural diversity and the vastness of our lands, the purity of our waters, our ever-wondrous fish and wildlife, and our young people — the currency of our great wealth. I say to my constituents today that we have every reason to be thankful, to be optimistic and hopeful and to be determined and focused on the future. We have been and will always be together today for our children tomorrow, because our plan is working.

Madam Deputy Speaker, my constituents should be proud of what we have achieved in the last few years as a community in partnership with all levels of government, non-government organizations and industry. We have secured 4G and high-speed Internet upgrades. We ensured that no hydraulic-fracture stimulation will occur in north Yukon. We started a *Helicobacter pylori* bacterium study in Old Crow that has helped so many and continues today. We have successfully received a \$2.9-million investment into a new community and recreation facility from the Yukon territorial government and \$2 million from the Vuntut Gwitchin government, and we now patiently await the federal government's promise of an additional \$2.7 million as committed to our community of Old Crow by two different members of Parliament.

We just received a wonderful commitment to begin the planning for a new health centre in Old Crow. I am very pleased, as are my constituents, to see a line item valued at \$250,000 to begin the planning for this wonderful project in Old Crow. Thank you to the honourable Premier and my Cabinet colleagues. Our community is excited about this investment and ready to begin the hard work of planning a new replacement for the health centre in Old Crow.

We have a reinvigorated land and water monitoring program in north Yukon, something that is very important to

my constituents. It's good to see a budget announcement of conducting baseline studies on water quality and groundwater in the Eagle Plains region, something that was a specific ask from my community. More specifically, in the Eagle Plains region, the Water Resources branch is conducting both long-term and baseline water monitoring for groundwater and surface water quality and quantity in the area spanning part of the Yukon River Basin and the Peel River Basin. Long-term monitoring stations include, for groundwater, one site at the Northern Cross camp. Snow surveys are being done at three sites: at the Eagle River, in the Eagle Plains Basin and Riff's Ridge. For the hydrometric sites, there are four sites on the Eagle River, at the Dempster Highway, McParlon Creek, Dalglish Creek and Peel River above the canyon, and two additional sites are planned for installation this year. There are two sites for water quality planned on the Ogilvie River and Eagle River for this year as well.

Old Crow has been very successful and proven that land-based experiential education programming works in achieving elementary learning outcomes. As a community, we have worked to upgrade and build new roads and complete drainage infrastructure.

When the Nutrition North Canada program became defunct in achieving its objectives in Old Crow, our community just didn't stand around and complain. We sought out partners to invest in our community and fix the problem by opening a new Arctic cooperative store that is operating quite well.

We have protected our community from the mighty Porcupine River by completing the community's riverbank stabilization effort.

The investments in social services and mental health and our elders programming has doubled, and there is more to come.

I know that every day our community appreciates and is proud of the new water treatment plant and the workers who ensure every single household has clean, safe drinking water every day. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this is something that many communities across Canada simply cannot say.

This government has more than doubled the investment in our community's sports and recreation and healthy living funding — something that is so appreciated. I have witnessed the benefits of this funding to the health and well-being of our youth especially in Old Crow over the years.

I am pleased to see the smiles on our families' faces, who enjoy having their secondary students at home in Old Crow for Easter holidays and during Thanksgiving.

The building of a winter road a couple of years ago has paid tremendous dividends for our community and continues to bear fruit with jobs, infrastructure, housing, and programs and service deliveries.

We are cleaning up the contaminated sites in Old Crow thanks to this government's investments and partnerships with the community and the Vuntut Gwitchin government.

Through the departments of Tourism and Culture and Economic Development we enjoy the continued restoration of

our historic sites and Vuntut Gwitchin traditional trails throughout the Vuntut Gwitchin traditional territory.

We thank the Executive Council Office for its invaluable contributions to the Porcupine caribou education effort — a support that has been going on for decades.

Last but not least, our community looks forward to the creation of the new Summit Lake-Bell River protected area very soon, as envisioned in the *North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan*.

These are but a few accomplishments, so I hope we all take some time to reflect on the good things and be proud because we have come a long way to ensure jobs are provided and people can make an honest living and provide for their families.

Once again, I thank my government colleagues and the federal and Vuntut Gwitchin governments for their investments in Old Crow over the years. Our citizens work hard every day, and the fruits of their labour are what make our territory so great.

I want to take some time here to thank our health care providers across the territory for their commitment to excellence in patient care across our territory. Thank you to all our educators who, day in and day out, work to nurture and educate our youth. To the people who swing the hammers and build our precious infrastructure: thank you. To the RCMP, the volunteer firefighters and emergency services personnel, men and women who are on patrol and help keep us safe: thank you.

To the front-line service providers or the people behind the counter ringing up the sales and to our hunters and trappers and fishermen and farmers: thank you for being our eyes and ears out there. To our miners and drillers and oil and gas service men and women: thank you for your work.

To all the private businesses that make our economy go around: thank you. To our transportation industry and long-haul truck drivers, who ensure goods get to our great territory every day: thank you.

To our waitresses and waiters, mechanics and pilots and to everyone who works behind the scenes in all levels of government and non-government organizations, and our boards and committees in the public service: mahsi' cho.

Mr. Speaker, if I can use an iceberg analogy of success that I actually saw on Facebook the other day — and I thought, you know, this is pretty true actually. An iceberg analogy of success — all that most people see, the majority of times, is the tip of the iceberg, or the success, and they don't see what really happened to get there, like the sacrifice, the rejections, the adversity, the disappointments, the criticisms, the doubters, the courage, the discipline, the persistence, the little setbacks, the struggles, the late nights, the risks, the hard work, and the impact on our families. That's all below the surface and it's the bulk of what was experienced; but many just see the tip of the iceberg — the successful part. I thought that was appropriate to mention.

It's our working citizens who keep and ensure that this territory — our home — is the best place to live, work, play, raise a family and do business.

I will change gears here a bit here. Under the direction and leadership of our Hon. Premier, I had the pleasant opportunity to participate in the Yukon government's community budget tours. Thank you so much to all of our staff who worked so hard to make this happen. Your work is recognized and appreciated. I would like to also take this opportunity to thank each and every citizen who came out and communicated with us — personally, via e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, social media, written letter, or in the grocery store or hockey rink — their issues, concerns, or comments on how to make our Yukon that much better. I personally enjoy the face-to-face discussions because it represents an unhindered access to the decision-makers that so many other Canadian citizens never get a chance to experience. Mr. Speaker, it's important to note that every community I visited realized that their public government simply cannot do everything on its own, but they were very thankful that they were afforded the opportunity to be listened to about what was important to them.

Mr. Speaker, in Beaver Creek, the current community club building was built in 1967 and the community members would like to work with the White River First Nation to build a cultural community centre that would meet the community needs and possibly accommodate services such as a daycare, and community members would also like to see housing for another teacher.

In Haines Junction, members would like to expand on a partnership between Tourism and Culture and the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations to further market the Haines Junction area.

In Mendenhall, our discussion related to work being done on the Mendenhall roads, ditches and culverts that need fixing, and community members were interested in working with contractors and they want to be a part of the planning for the road works.

In Carmacks, Mr. Speaker, a new skating rink and curling rink building came up in talks, and the town communicated that they have \$1 million saved to go toward a new skating rink and curling rink complex and they are presently seeking additional funding partners to make this project happen. In Mount Lorne, the citizens were concerned about their comprehensive land planning review and the importance of civic addressing for emergency services.

In Tagish, the citizens there expressed the fact that their community is growing and their needs are changing. Case in point, they said that their community has a diverse population that includes permanent residents, people who commute to Whitehorse to work, a growing number of seniors and recreational residents. They mentioned that the population of Tagish has grown and they feel that the services and infrastructure haven't kept up. They also mentioned that their community has made five proposals to the Building Canada fund and asked for a new community centre, new water well and skating rink. Specific issues came up around the community centre, like a second access route to the community centre for various reasons, and they wanted to stress that the community centre property is an emergency

gathering site for residents of the area. Residents were also concerned about the speed limits on the highway near the community centre and would like the speed limits through Tagish reviewed, with an opportunity to participate in that review. They spoke about a FireSmart program around the community centre, a new septic system and water tank because they feel like the existing septic system is too small because they hold regular community events and numbers can be around 100 people in attendance.

In Mayo, the community felt that they were lacking resources to hire much-needed social workers and drug and alcohol workers. They also spoke of a fire protection plan for the subdivision, and they are still seeking three components to finish the new subdivision: to complete water and sewer upgrades, another road access to address safety issues, and a fire protection plan that includes a fire truck, fire hydrants and a new fire hall.

In Pelly, they strongly felt the need to have some sort of elder-care home program because they do not want to send their elders to Whitehorse if it's not absolutely necessary. With regard to education, many residents in Pelly felt that language loss and traditional skills and knowledge needed additional financial support to maintain their culture and language. They expressed that many elders are passing on and, as a result, they are losing their language and need more help to support the youth to learn life skills in the bush. Residents of Pelly also spoke about their airport and associated medevacs. They said that their airport needs to be upgraded. It needs to be extended, resurfaced and it needs lights on the runway so planes can land safely because currently they have to drive people to Mayo or to Whitehorse.

Mr. Speaker, this is obviously not an exhaustive list, but just some of the things that I heard.

People in the communities appreciated being listened to. Some of the 2016-17 budget highlights in my riding in the Vuntut Gwitchin include \$600,000 toward the Old Crow community centre, and Old Crow Health Centre replacement planning of \$250,000, as mentioned before. It's an understatement to say that I have some very happy constituents and we look forward to the hard work ahead and partnership in making this project a reality.

The Old Crow airport is going to be receiving \$291,000; Old Crow sports and recreation, \$118,201; north Yukon regional economic development is going to receive \$150,000; the north Yukon water monitoring, \$130,000; Old Crow health programming, \$69,000; Rampart House historic site restoration, \$60,000; the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation caribou education effort, \$50,000; the Dempster fibre optic project, \$500,000; Dempster Highway improvements, \$3.2 million; the Herschel Island visitor improvements, \$500,000 — all, of course, pending this House's approval.

So on behalf of my constituents, I thank this government for these investments because they are greatly appreciated.

I want to speak to something that's near and dear to my heart, and that's sport and recreation. Participating in sport and recreation, Mr. Speaker, saved my life — that's case-

closed. That's why I say it's near and dear to my heart. I want to read something into the record that I wrote about hockey.

We were in a sudden-death shootout in the annual Native Hockey Tournament, and we said, who wants to shoot? And as we witnessed many little arms shoot up in the air, we realized Old Crow's hockey program was a success. Just give a kid a chance — that was our motto right from day one when we decided to do our part in building solid young citizens and to ensure that our youth reached their true athletic potential. We also agreed that the cultural values of respect, patriotism, discipline and equity had to be integrated into the program as well and were crucial components.

Over the years, we have had new talents and different heroes, and it became well-known that any youth were welcome to help fill our roster, regardless of skill. It has been such a pleasure for us to watch them learn about the strength of teamwork, what it means to persevere, to look adversity in the eye and smile right back, to never give up, and that there's nothing like having the responsibility of winning for your team in a sudden-death shootout to build some character.

Hockey has taught the players about dealing with pressure, and that alone teaches responsibility and, most important to us, hockey has taught them not to be afraid of failure, which results in a more positive self-image. In our opinion, there is no better place to teach children about the world than on a sheet of ice. Many of our leaders of tomorrow will be molded through participating in hockey. Investing in hockey is investing in their quality of life now and for the future. Growing children need inspiration and physical activity, and hockey is a great way to develop those youths' mental, physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.

In 2008, we gave a young, shy, 10-year-old boy a chance to win the Yukon Native Hockey Tournament for us. He had never played hockey before and he scored. A few months later, his parents came up to us and said "You don't know what that goal did for my son. It changed his life, and thank you for giving him a chance to play." If medals and trophies are a measure of success, all one has to do is visit the Old Crow youth centre and have a look at the trophies that have accumulated over the years. But we know that it is more than just those medals that measure our success. It is how the game changes lives for our youth and arms them with the skills to manage both success and defeat. It's about preparing them to reach their full potential.

To the parents, our sponsors and our community of Old Crow: whether in victory or defeat, we all have cause to be proud of our players who have brought so much glory and we salute you.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the annual Native Hockey Tournament this year, where the North Yukon Eagles from Old Crow and the Gwitchin Braves from Old Crow once again did our community proud. The Eagles battled — did they ever battle — to a silver medal and we took home top defence, top score and most valuable player awards, and the Braves came in fourth and won the top score awards. Job well done, boys and girls, and I'm very proud of you all.

I guess my point is that when I see our Premier and our Cabinet led by our minister of sport invest the largest amount of money ever into sport and recreation in our territory, I support this investment wholeheartedly because I know firsthand the value of such investments, not just to the individual, but to our society as a whole. I thank my fellow colleagues for these investments.

In closing, over the years, I have used these responses to the budget speech to lift hearts in dark times, to help give some hope in times of despair, to inspire new feats and to help give courage to the weary, to honour the dead and to welcome the newly born and to make a difference in the day-to-day lives of the people I represent. It is my hope and desire that my time in this Assembly will become a lasting resource for those MLAs of the Vuntut Gwitchin yet to come in the knowledge that my time as their representative has made it just a little bit easier to accomplish their goals, dreams and aspirations on behalf of citizens in north Yukon.

I will in the very near future be responding to the significant requests from my constituents to keep the Vuntut Gwitchin riding and their representation in this Assembly in good hands.

I commend this budget to the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Merci beaucoup and mahsi' cho.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, I would like to start my response to the 2016-17 Budget Address by thanking the constituents of Copperbelt South. I am proud to represent the residents of this growing electoral district of urban, country residential and agricultural neighbourhoods connected to Whitehorse along the Alaska Highway corridor. Copperbelt South has a variety of industrial, commercial and home-based businesses. Services there range from: gas stations; building supplies — with a new, larger store recently opened at Kilrich Industries; the Winterlong microbrewery, which has been successful enough to plan an expansion this summer; a new restaurant just opened at the Carcross Cut-off; and many other large and small operations. Mount Sima ski hill operations have been wildly successful. This season, they sold over 1,000 passes, and they have repaid their loan. Just this weekend, with great weather and awesome bands, the Simapalooza was a rocking event on the hill.

I also want to extend my congratulations to the Golden Horn Elementary School students on their participation in the Yukon Sourdough Rendezvous spelling bee again this year. Veronica won second prize for the second year in a row. Golden Horn Elementary School also had strong participation again this year at the 2016 Yukon/Stikine regional science fair. Students in grades 4, 5 and 7 won awards for their projects, which included the Student Choice Award and two BC Agriculture in the Classroom awards, once again demonstrating the remarkable achievements of students at Golden Horn. The Golden Horn outdoor experiential school model makes our parents and community members extremely proud of its success.

The Wolf Creek campground is located in Copperbelt South. Last fall, this Legislature unanimously adopted a

motion I put forward about developing accessible campsites, trails, cookhouses, outhouses and other facilities. I am pleased that the plans the minister committed to then appear in this budget, and I hope that the upgrades at Wolf Creek, Marsh Lake and Teslin campgrounds mean that people with disabilities will have more opportunity to enjoy camping in Yukon parks. This is a priority for my constituents, for Yukoners and for visitors.

The Yukon Party government, over the last four and a half years has received unprecedented cash flows from the federal government. They took northern housing trust funds but failed to implement a Yukon-wide plan to alleviate homelessness.

In his Budget Address, the Premier asserted that there would be no debt for future generations. However, he failed to mention that there is more than \$150 million of debt on the books for Yukon Hospital Corporation, Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Housing Corporation.

What else do we see in this budget? We see a commitment to support local business — late in the game, but it is good that the government has recognized the need to improve. Over the years I have heard many complaints from business owners that government procurement could do more to support the local economy, and that they are failing to do so.

The Northwest Territories, with its *Agreement on Internal Trade*, supports local businesses. They do more to support local business. Provinces understand the need for exemptions for small northern economies, so it's no wonder that the Yukon businesses are critical of this government when the Yukon government did not consult with the chambers and businesses about the *Agreement on Internal Trade* prior to negotiations. This is one of many ways that government has alienated businesses throughout their term in office.

At the second annual industry conference Whitehorse Business Connect held in March at the Yukon Convention Centre — a small business conference to network and support each other and receive economic updates from government organizations — there were project updates from the City of Whitehorse, Energy, Mines and Resources, Property Management and Community Services. The new procurement centre talked about selling to government and the green procurement initiative, which built on the *Climate Change Action Plan* that came into effect in May 2010. The new procurement centre offers training for government staff, advises departmental officials and houses the government's capital project updates.

The procurement advisory panel, which accepted submissions up to December 2015, will make recommendations to address concerns raised by Yukon businesses. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that some of those businesses are cynical about what they will see and whether there will in fact be strong action. This budget speech is late to promise the flow of benefits from government to local businesses. We hope to see the procurement practices at Yukon government meet the Budget Address promises for a

flow of benefits from government to local businesses, which will generate more local employment.

Over the past four and a half years, there has been some notable contract mismanagement — and indeed throughout the term the Yukon Party has been in government prior to its current iteration. The Auditor General has been critical of many of those. We saw a hospital in Watson Lake that was framed and then the shell left to deteriorate, exposed to the weather and, as the Auditor General pointed out, there was no prior needs assessment, and then finally it was completed. We saw the arrest processing unit attached to Whitehorse Correctional Centre. Again, government built the floor, complete with wiring, and then determined the building footprint would have to be smaller to reduce the costs and they had to rip out the floor. There were untold numbers of change orders at Whitehorse Correctional Centre during the construction of that facility and, since it opened in 2012, we've seen a budget for renovations at \$80,000 per year.

The fundamental failure of this government is that it makes decisions about significant and costly capital infrastructure projects without talking to Yukoners. The Whistle Bend continuing care facility was a 300-bed, now a 150-bed. The Yukon Party started consultations after there was public outrage and the government has now halved the scope of the project. Seniors want to age in place. They want to see home care expanded. They want to be able to live at home. Seniors in rural communities don't necessarily want to move to Whitehorse. Many of them are strongly opposed to moving to Whitehorse. Not everyone will need care in a facility, so we need to have alternative housing models and care models for seniors.

The Yukon government failed to include the Association of Yukon Communities' project priorities in the Building Canada funding submission to the federal government. That's an example of this government's approach of alienating people, whether it's the business community, municipalities or First Nations.

Other capital project mismanagement is the Whitehorse airport. There were a number of problematic projects there — the apron panels, which are damaged and may have to be rebuilt. I have met with disability rights advocates. There are problems with the accessible parking lot and the ramp to the airport terminal building. I've heard complaints about the water and sewer extension project.

Mr. Speaker, last spring the Yukon Party government released their Whitehorse corridor functional plan and options to upgrade the Alaska Highway from Gentian Lane south of the Carcross Cut-off to the northern municipal boundary, a distance of some 40 kilometres. The multi-year plan was to spend up to \$200 million twinning the Alaska Highway. The government then released their plans for public comment.

Late last year, the government released the Whitehorse corridor functional plan public engagement report. This "what we heard" document assessed what Yukoners thought about this government's approach to Alaska Highway corridor planning in the Whitehorse area. The results were mixed,

understandably, for a \$200-million project that would significantly affect lives and businesses.

Yukon residents, constituents of Copperbelt South and people in the business and transportation sector have questioned whether the case for twinning the Alaska Highway has been met and whether the proposed \$200-million price tag has been justified. The public is divided on the proposed changes. Forty percent of respondents agree and 40 percent of respondents disagree that the proposal on addressing traffic congestion and travel times met the needs. Overall, more respondents disagree than agree that the draft plan reflects a balanced approach between community, environmental and economic considerations.

The public consultation also identified further areas of concern, such as the Mayo Road turnoff and the need for dedicated merging lanes, different speed limits throughout the corridor being problematic, and passing lanes needed in certain areas of the corridor. Work is supposed to commence this summer, but there is not a consensus that all the proposed changes are necessary.

We have heard from Yukon businesses along the corridor that have stated that the plans do not reflect the reality on the ground. They have formed the Alaska Highway Corridor Business Association, which is organized to "... protect, maintain and enhance the integrity of Whitehorse corridor businesses in proximity to the Alaska Highway."

The City of Whitehorse expressed concerns that the proposed Alaska Highway corridor changes do not encourage the use of walking, cycling, public transit and other forms of active transportation, and might reduce tourist visits to downtown. There was a good turnout at a town hall meeting I attended, where the City of Whitehorse mayor and council invited people to speak about municipality issues, and the Alaska Highway corridor was unquestionably top-of-mind for people there. This government has failed to provide a sufficient rationale for twinning the highway along the Alaska Highway corridor in the Whitehorse area. There's serious concern that they haven't done their due diligence.

I would like to thank the Highways and Public Works officials for the departmental briefing this morning. They indicated the work being done this summer is to add a northbound passing lane between Pioneer RV Park and the Miles Canyon intersection. I have asked for more current data on traffic in this corridor, as the functional plan report on traffic collisions was dated from 1996 to 2009. I think that, when we're contemplating as much as a \$200-million expenditure over a number of years, there should be more current traffic collision information taken into account before those plans move ahead. This project affects the daily lives of constituents commuting to work, businesses along the corridor and all those concerned about traffic safety on the highway, when it comes to them and their families, and I will be following it closely.

Turning to the Justice budget, the public wants to see more personal interaction between police and citizens, so we support additional RCMP members in Whitehorse. There will be four added this year, one on each of the watches in

Whitehorse. I wonder whether the new members will be on the street. Will they expand foot and bike patrols?

The public also wants to see a police force that's more representative of the population. There is a need to recruit more women and First Nation members. That's an ongoing need, first brought into the public arena in the 2010 report, *Sharing Common Ground*, following a review of the Yukon police force.

There are a number of initiatives there, including the new specialized response unit that has just been established to respond to major crimes of violence, particularly sexualized assault and violence against women. I've had a discussion with the outgoing commanding officer, Peter Clark, who has been with the Whitehorse detachment since 2010, about ensuring that the expertise of the specialized response unit will continue to be made available to all RCMP members in all communities, because we know about the high rate of violence against women in this territory.

I recently met with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation about their new community safety protocol. I hope the recent Kwanlin Dün First Nation, City of Whitehorse, Anti-Poverty Coalition and non-government sector's conversations and the initiative to respond to poverty reduction, racism, inequality and homelessness have been heard and that the RCMP and the government will make progress on improving safety and promoting safety.

My responsibility as a critic is to propose approaches that I believe better reflect public values and the needs of the community. My hope is that the Yukon government Department of Justice, in its operation of correctional facilities, can work collaboratively with Yukon First Nation justice programs and develop culturally appropriate rehabilitative programming.

The Auditor General reported that the Yukon government is missing two key opportunities in corrections — first, to improve offenders' chances for rehabilitation and, second, successful reintegration into the community.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations 30 and 31 come into play here. The TRC calls upon governments to commit to eliminating the overrepresentation of aboriginal people in custody over the next decade and to issue detailed annual reports that monitor and evaluate progress in doing so. It also calls on federal, provincial and territorial governments to provide sufficient and stable funding to implement and evaluate community sanctions that will provide realistic alternatives to imprisonment for aboriginal offenders and respond to the underlying causes of offending.

The Yukon government could work with First Nation justice programs toward developing land-based healing programs for inmates — for example: addictions treatment; building traditional skills, language and dance; healing from the cultural genocide of residential school; and eradicating residential school practices that continue in institutional models of today need to be priorities. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission report findings and calls to action are building a profound change in how members of the settler

community and governments interact with the indigenous peoples of Yukon who have inhabited their traditional territories from time immemorial.

I also want to make note of the FASD study that has been underway since this government came into office — or shortly after. The interim final report of June 2015 on *Yukon FASD Diagnosis and Case Management in Adult Corrections Population* was done for the Public Health Agency of Canada, one of the funders. There was very little solid information in that report. The bulk of it was a collection of appendices.

The final FASD final report was supposedly being released last weekend at the second national FASD biennial conference in BC. I look forward to the minister tabling that in the House if he is willing in fact to share it with the Legislature and the public. We look forward to seeing the final results.

I want to speak about missing and murdered indigenous women. We are seeing improved police and social responses to women reporting violence and sexual assault. Improvements to sexual assault law are also needed. In Yukon, as elsewhere in Canada and around the world, women don't trust the criminal justice system enough to report sexual assault to the police and to testify in courts that allow humiliating exposure of the personal and discriminatory practices at trial. These undermine public confidence in the administration of justice and in the justice system.

Over the years, Yukon has had strong active women's groups who have been calling out failures in the justice system in response to violence against women. We've seen letters to the editor. We have seen rallies, marches, petitions and law reform. Yukon women's groups' participation in the review of Yukon's police force, women's groups and First Nation negotiation of agreements with the RCMP of the *Together for Justice Protocol* in Watson Lake and the *Together for Safety Protocol* in Whitehorse demonstrate leadership. These formal agreements between the RCMP, women's groups and First Nations are something that we can highlight nationally and internationally. The Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle and the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council work on *Stolen Sisters* and identifying missing and murdered women in the Yukon has expanded our understanding of this crisis and has produced a lot of public attention.

This Legislature was one of the first to unanimously adopt a motion for a national public inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women. I acknowledge that Yukon government continues to play a strong role in supporting community groups and working with other governments to address missing and murdered indigenous women. I'm proud that violence against women is one issue on which we have been able to achieve all-party agreement in this House. We tend to focus on the divisions between opposite sides of the House, but there are many areas where we do accomplish things by showing we have common ground and support actions that will benefit all of the community.

I want to turn to the Yukon College, which has community campuses spread throughout the territory, making it a unique place to deliver excellent post-secondary

education. Modern technologies and Internet connections can expand what is offered throughout the territory. The Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining presents an opportunity to take mobile training to communities and to recruit students for a number of trades that provide good paying jobs and skills that are transferrable to the renewable energy sector. Yukon College could become a leading and respected institution in the environmental management of mining activity.

I think about the Caring for the Land program that was offered and that trained Teslin Tlingit Council citizens in environmental monitoring and environmental management, which resulted in many of the graduates finding work.

While it's great to see expansion of northern studies and indigenous studies at Yukon College, developing a university is much more costly. This government has \$1.5 million over three years to help Yukon College develop into a university, and that amount simply isn't enough to deliver on the promise. The cost of library services alone for a university isn't covered. What the library has now is not enough to support a university.

There are seven university programs offered through Yukon College: Master in Educational Leadership at Simon Fraser University; Master of Public Administration through the University of Alaska Southeast; Bachelor of Science at the University of Alberta; Master of Education from the University of Northern British Columbia; Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Social Work through the University of Regina; and Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies through the University of the Arctic.

For many years, Yukon College, Yukon government and the federal government have worked hard to recognize the links across the circumpolar north. Will this project abandon the liaison with the University of the Arctic? What about all seven degree programs that are offered at Yukon College through six different universities? Will a long-term plan be developed and will it meet the community's needs and its population statistics? Is there funding for faculty, teaching and research contemplated?

Universities Canada requires prospective members to have 500 full-time equivalents for at least two years before joining. Here's what the Yukon College student numbers look like, and they don't meet that criteria. In 2012-13, there were 63 students in degree programs, and then another 190 in university transfer. Those 190 students wouldn't necessarily want to take a program at the college for the full four years, and it would take many years to be able to offer seven different degree programs — and that's not even contemplating university transfer to programs other than the seven that are offered here.

In 2013-14, for full-time degree and post-graduate programs, there were 60 students and 55 part-time; in 2014-15, the degree and post-graduate programs enrollment was 49 part-time and 56 full-time.

So where is the needs assessment that proves the need for a university? University accreditation is premised on degree programs being the core teaching mission of the institution. Is that what Yukon government is proposing? There is a strong

need for Yukon College to offer the career and technical programs, the trades programs, the academic and skill development programs, and non-credit programs. About a quarter of the students at Yukon College are in the access program, which is designed to help students who have not graduated from high school achieve that level so that they could then consider moving on into post-secondary education.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls for providing funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms. It calls upon ministers to build the student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect. Those are goals that we are trying to achieve not simply for students, but for teachers and for citizens. I am concerned with the cost of libraries alone at a university, the subscriptions to online journals. The community needs and the population statistics do not show a demonstrated need and the possibility of achieving a number of university programs. We need to continue to focus on continuing to improving the numbers of students, especially First Nation students, who graduate from high school and continue on to post-secondary education. That is why I have linked it to those recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

We have seen this government's failure of vision when it comes to the Peel and land use planning. We have seen this government seeming to cultivate bad relationships. I want to repeat how important it is for Yukon government to listen and lead on implementing Yukon's final agreements. We have seen an unfortunate number of legal battles where the Yukon government has forced First Nations and others, even local businesses, to go to court to find solutions.

The development of a regional land use plan is an unfulfilled promise of chapter 11 of the final agreements. Yukon First Nations gave up the bulk of their land base in exchange for a new and respectful relationship and a commitment to deal with land disposition issues in cooperation between Yukon and First Nation governments. It is in the public interest of all Yukon residents to develop these big-picture land use plans before further work is conducted on local area plans. Yukon NDP would work with all parties to put land use planning back on track for all eight regions in the Yukon. That is a missed opportunity. Regional land use plans would provide economic certainty for future development.

The *Final Recommended Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* was a contentious issue in the 2011 election campaign, and with the clock ticking on an election call, it seems likely to be so again in 2016. The Yukon government has argued that the Peel court case is not in the national interest and that the Supreme Court of Canada should not hear an appeal. First Nations and environmental NGOs argue that the government's new unilateral land use plan for the Peel River watershed is a betrayal of final agreement obligations and that the fate of the Peel watershed and of land claim agreements in Yukon is of national, and indeed, international significance.

Most of us are now aware of the imperative to change our fossil fuel consumption patterns. We must make the shift to renewable energy and create a green economy. There is no doubt that we can make this shift and that we must develop a sustainable energy future. Liquefied natural gas and big hydro are not renewable energy. Wind, solar, geothermal and small hydro are renewable energy sources.

Estimates of the annual subsidy to the fossil fuel energy industry in Canada range from \$37 billion to \$46 billion. That's billion with a "B".

Worldwide, the annual subsidy to fossil fuel resource extraction industries is estimated at \$550 billion. We could choose to subsidize renewable and sustainable energy instead of a carbon-based fossil fuel energy economy. Renewable energy economy creates good jobs.

We do see in this budget money for cleaning up contaminated sites that are found at highway camps, at air fields, at the site of World War II Alaska Highway construction, at old resource extraction industrial sites. That's a good expenditure, but let's stop creating contaminated sites.

The Yukon would not accept a carbon tax. That was a bold action of the Premier to opt out of doing our part to fight climate change.

I want to remind members of the keen public interest at the fracking committee hearings held throughout Yukon. The public doesn't support hydraulic fracturing because of the harm it causes, and we heard a lot of scientific evidence about that.

My colleague, the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, spoke a short while ago about the wellbore integrity being a challenge — that all wells leak over time. Since participating in the all-party Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing, I have continued to monitor ongoing research. Pennsylvania landowners have now been awarded millions of dollars for contaminated drinking water that was caused by hydraulic fracturing drilling adjacent to their properties.

It deeply concerns me that this Yukon Party government has not met the recommendations of the all-party Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing, which they promised to do. They made that commitment on paper but, by their actions, they are ignoring it. We have not seen the records capturing baseline environmental data for water, for air. We have not seen sufficient climate change research. This government has not conducted an in-depth study of the failed economics of hydraulic fracturing.

The government needs to provide leadership. Governments should bring forward creative solutions that benefit all Yukoners. We need to build constructive relationships with the Yukon public and tap the potential of Yukon people. I fail to see this government meeting that need in this budget.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: It is a pleasure to rise today and speak to this budget, the 2016-17 budget. I want to go through a number of things today, but I thought I would just begin by

acknowledging my appreciation for my constituents for being here today. It's a great honour and privilege to represent members of my community as their MLA, and I appreciate their ongoing support. Of course, in doing that, I can't forget to thank a number of other people as well.

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge and thank my family for the immense support that they have provided to me over the years. Of course, first on that list is my wife Brittany, who has been an exceptional source of support for me over the years, and our daughter, London, who is two now, as of about two weeks ago — which is a bit of a startling fact for me, Mr. Speaker, as that makes me very much aware of how quickly time goes by.

I also should note — I haven't done it previously in the Legislature, but I should have earlier — both of my sisters, who live here in Whitehorse, have each had children as well in the past little while, and I wanted to offer my congratulations to them. My youngest sister, Lindsey, and her partner Kyle, had a beautiful baby girl last year. Her name is Aliya Isabella Anderson and she was born on March 15 last year, so she just celebrated her first birthday a few weeks ago as well. My sister Bonnie Dixon had a girl as well — Harlyn Eva Dixon — who was born October 22 last year, so she is of course a growing young girl as well. In my family of course, three very young girls all within about 18 months — I know that the three of them are going to enjoy themselves growing up. Of course my parents, Don and Linda Dixon — I would be remiss if I didn't thank them as well for their support over the years.

I am very proud, Mr. Speaker, of this budget for a number of reasons. Obviously we go through this every year and debate our budgets and discuss them, but I did feel that this budget was unique and special for a number of reasons, not the least of which is it's likely to be our last budget before the next election, and so the last opportunity for us to talk about — the last budget. That was a coincidence that I had to wipe my nose at that point, Mr. Speaker.

It was an important budget, I think, because of the effort that my colleagues and I put in this year, given the unique situation that we were faced with — a challenging economy, some declining investment from the federal government, which has led to some difficult choices for us to make over the last number of months in preparation for this budget.

Nonetheless, we were able to complete the budget and have it tabled last week. Despite those challenging conditions that I noted earlier, we were able to come up with a budget that achieved a modest surplus — essentially a balanced budget — with significant new spending on key infrastructure projects. There are no new tax increases and, of course, very important to all of us, no net debt. These are all important features of the budget, but I think they are all the more important when we look around the country and see what the situation is in a number of other regions in the country.

The fact that we have no net debt is something that is very important and something that we will talk a lot about over the coming weeks, I am sure. I know that others have pointed out that there is in fact debt on the books for some of

the corporations, and that is true, but the important thing is that our financial assets outweigh our obligations, and that means we have no net debt. That is a unique situation to be in the country and, given its current trajectory, the only other province or territory that can say that is Alberta, but, given the current trajectory that they are on, it is likely that by this time next year we will be the only jurisdiction in the country that can make the claim to have no net debt. That is an impressive accomplishment, and I think that it is something that we should all be very proud of. Certainly, we are on this side of the House.

With this budget, despite just having a modest surplus, no tax increases and no net debt, we have found ways to make numerous increases in a number of important programs and projects. I am going to talk a little bit about some of those that are both relevant to my riding and relevant to my departments as minister. I will get into those in a few moments.

Before I do, I wanted to as well — in noting my thanks to my constituents earlier — give a special thanks to the members of the Copper Ridge Neighbourhood Association. They are a relatively small group of people in the Copper Ridge neighbourhood who make a very large difference for our community in Copper Ridge. I know my colleague, the Member for Whitehorse West, also thanked this particular group. It is a group that the Member for Whitehorse West and I share, as we split Copper Ridge, but I wanted to add my voice to hers in thanking them for the work that they have done, not only in the past year but in the past several years, making a number of wonderful improvements to community.

A few weeks ago, the Copper Ridge Neighbourhood Association had the opportunity to send out an e-mail update to residents in the Copper Ridge area and noted a few excellent accomplishments that I will read from. First of all, they noted that the new Winze Park has had a very successful winter season, and I will quote from their update here: “With the unusually warm winter the family friendly rinks in Copper Ridge seen many families take advantage of the ice to teach the wee ones to enjoy the joys of skating outside, including the most recent addition at Winze Park! Many neighbours stepped up and ensured that the rink was shoveled for weekend play and for the once a week flooding.” It was also noticed that a number of neighbours stepped up and were either plowing the rink or tying skates of kids at the rink who needed a bit of assistance.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer thanks to those members in the community who come together around the rinks to help either shovel it off or help — as Copper Ridge Neighbourhood Association notes — the wee ones to tie skates and enjoy some good fun on the ice.

Also deserving of thanks is the City of Whitehorse for the dedicated O&M work at the neighbourhood parks throughout the city. The parks and rec staff at the city have been fabulous to work with and they’ve been very helpful for the Copper Ridge Neighbourhood Association in not only preparing the park for development, but also for the ongoing support and ongoing things that they do.

This summer, Winze Park will see phase 2 of the park’s redevelopment take place with the inclusion of basketball nets at either end of the rink, a pump track for skateboarding and scooters and other activities like that, as well as some adult exercise equipment that will be added in the public spaces there in that park.

Castle Rock Enterprises was the successful bidder and contractor that did the design and build work, and they will complete the work with the inclusion of a light post for evening winter skating to be in place for next winter.

This project was one that was supported by the community development fund. I know that it wasn’t lost on my neighbours and friends around the neighbourhood that this government came through with this significant investment in this park, particularly the Department of Economic Development through the CDF. It was very much appreciated by my community and the fruits of that labour have been realized at the beginning of this winter by the excellent use that Winze Park has received.

Mr. Speaker, of course there’s Lazulite Park, which has seen a lot of use and development over the years as well. According to the Copper Ridge Neighbourhood Association, there will be no new work this summer, but there was a significant amount of work done last year to finish up with that park. That park offers a number of features for both young and old to use and access, whether it’s children living on Lazulite Drive or residents of the Copper Ridge continuing care centre. I’m advised that park is well-used by folks in my neighbourhood as well.

Again, I just wanted to thank the members of the Copper Ridge Neighbourhood Association for their work on both those parks, as well as FireSmart, WildWise, Crime Stoppers and a range of other programs that they work with others to provide.

Mr. Speaker, if I can, I would like to turn now to some of the features in this budget that are relevant to my department. First of all, with regard to the branch of Sport and Recreation in the Department of Community Services, there are some significant initiatives and investment in this budget that I think bear discussion.

First and foremost was the considerable announcement of increased funding for a number of sport groups in the territory. Late last year, I received a letter from Sport Yukon requesting, not necessarily an increase in funding, but a restructuring of some of the funding that they received. They noted that while they receive funding from a number of different sources, it would be beneficial to them if we could provide them with some additional certainty and consistency with the way they are funded. Without being too prescriptive, they made that request.

In considering that request, I had the chance to talk to a number of sports groups about how they receive funding and what sort of funding they receive, and ultimately we came to the decision and were able to achieve in this budget a considerable increase and change in the structure of funding.

What the new system will look like is that four particular sports organizations will receive funding directly from the

Department of Community Services Sport and Recreation branch. Those groups are Sport Yukon, Special Olympics Yukon, the Yukon Aboriginal Sport Circle, and the Recreation and Parks Association of Yukon.

The reason we chose those four organizations was because of the fact that they are all each — and they each have their own unique features, but each of them is an umbrella organization that deals with a number of other sports and in some cases delivers programs directly on behalf of the department. For instance, RPAY, of course, is a significant delivery body for a number of programs that Yukon government provides.

The intent was to take the amount that they normally have to apply for from the YRAC fund and give that to them directly through a contribution agreement. While this would appear to only benefit these four groups, I think it's very important to note that, by making this new funding available to those four groups, it frees up considerable money in the YRAC fund that will now be available for all other sport-governing bodies who apply to YRAC to access.

That's a very important step forward, I think, for the way that sports are funded in our territory. If you ask any one of these four groups, I know that they're all very excited about the opportunity that they will have, not only because of the funding but because of the time they will have now saved for them. My understanding is that previously they would have to spend anywhere from 10 to 15 hours preparing a YRAC submission in order to access that funding annually. Naturally, even though they have been successful in accessing funding over the years, there was always the question of whether or not they would be successful in getting it, and because it was an annual application, it made it challenging for them to recruit staff and made it challenging for them to be relied upon for consistent program implementation.

These four groups will, of course, benefit in terms of the consistency and clarity of funding. They will know exactly what they will get each year and they will be freed up to a certain extent to do other important things, like focus on their own sports or focus on their own programs.

For the other 20- or 30-odd Yukon sport governing bodies, there is an additional \$300,000 in the pot to apply for. Now it has been indicated to me by a number of sports groups that, while they appreciate the annual funding they get from YRAC, they rarely get all that they ask for and no group is ever successful in getting everything they need, so I think that this will be a positive step forward for all the sport governing bodies that seek YRAC funding, as there will be a whole bunch of new money available in that pot. So that is one important feature of the budget that I wanted to highlight.

While on the subject of sport, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to take an opportunity to discuss the Arctic Winter Games that recently occurred in Nuuk, Greenland with some of the sports — hockey — occurring in Iqaluit, Nunavut. I had the opportunity to attend those games, along with Team Yukon and it was an exceptional experience, I think, for everyone. We flew over to Greenland on Air North charters, beginning departures on midnight on the Friday before the games began,

and flew right over the Arctic, landing in Kangerlussuaq, Greenland the next day. There were three flights out of Whitehorse, going to Kangerlussuaq and the intention when we arrived there was we would continue on to Nuuk by way of what they called an air bridge, which was a series of Dash 8 planes that would fly us, and all other teams from Canada, from Kangerlussuaq to Nuuk. The reason of course we had to land in Kangerlussuaq was that it is the only airfield in Greenland that had the sufficient size to allow a 737 to land.

Unfortunately, weather, as it does sometimes in the north, had different plans for us and we ended up having to spend about a day and a half in Kangerlussuaq. When I say “we” I mean the entirety of Team Yukon, the majority of Team Alaska, the majority of Team Northern Alberta and some folks from the Northwest Territories as well. So some 1,000 or 2,000 people were stuck in an airport in a community the size of about 400 and we had to find a way to stay entertained and keep our athletes from Team Yukon engaged as well. During that day and a half of being stuck in a very small town in northern Greenland, I had the opportunity to witness how wonderful our mission staff and coaches really are. Each respective official or coach was able to find things for their athletes to do, keep them engaged and keep them busy and the whole time absolutely everyone was in great spirits. Nobody was upset; nobody was concerned about the fact that we were delayed. Everyone just took it in stride and rolled with the punches and it was excellent, Mr. Speaker.

I also should note the incredible hospitality that was exhibited by the volunteers and residents of Kangerlussuaq. For a very small community to take in thousands of people and house them and, in some cases, feed them, was very much appreciated by everyone certainly on Team Yukon.

I didn't have the stomach to try the muktuk that they offered us in the airport. After a day and a half in an airplane and an airport, I was a little queasy to begin with and a giant box of muktuk, frozen and left to thaw out for us to eat, didn't quite hit the spot for me. I had to resort to some pizza from the airport, unfortunately. But I know that some of our young athletes were brave and tried some of the fresh muktuk. I don't think anyone actually enjoyed it, but they certainly enjoyed the experience.

When we eventually got to Nuuk, it was a phenomenal experience there as well. Team Yukon did wonderfully in a whole range of sports. Of course, as members will be aware, Team Yukon earned 100 ulus in 14 events, including futsal, alpine skiing and snowshoeing. Meanwhile, the cultural contingent, composed of six young performing artists, wowed the crowds with original music and dance at the 2016 gala show.

Throughout the games, fair-play pins were distributed to participants who best demonstrated sportsmanship, fair play and a positive attitude. Yukon recipients included 11 athletes and one coach. Those were Alice Frost, Maggie Brook, Prism Saswirsy, Karyin Qui, Colin Hickman, Emily Gaw, Emily King, Peyton Twardochleb, Grace-Anne Janssen, Allen Mark, Kuduat Shorty, Sofia Bond and Tyler Milton. So I wanted, in addition to congratulating all of Team Yukon, to highlight

those individuals who received fair-play pins during their time in Nuuk. Of course, the fair-play pins were certainly well-deserved. Each has their own story and each has their own background for why they got the pin — I don't have the details of that — but I know that each one of them is very deserving.

On my way back, I had the pleasure of stopping in Iqaluit to watch a little bit of hockey. Again, unfortunately, due to the weather, I wasn't able to stay for as long as I planned in Iqaluit and was only able to watch a little bit of one game. But the hockey teams that were in Iqaluit, I know, enjoyed the competition and enjoyed the opportunity to join the rest of Team Yukon over in Nuuk for the closing ceremonies.

Anyone who followed the *Rant N' Raven* — which is the publication put out by Sport Yukon — during the games, would have heard some of the interesting stories. But there was one — and I won't repeat the entire story, Mr. Speaker, but I would encourage interested listeners to seek out the story about the lost pins. Our chef de mission en route to the games had an unfortunate circumstance in Seattle where he lost all his bags and that included all of Team Yukon's pins. Through a very interesting series of events, those pins were actually returned by some bystanders in Seattle who happened to find the pins at a bus stop after they had been stolen. So it's a remarkable story and worth visiting the website to read. I hope that we find a way to thank those individuals in Seattle who were able to return those pins in time to give out during the games — one day, Mr. Speaker.

While there are so many mission staff and coaches to thank — and I won't be able to do that all today — I did want to highlight the work of Team Yukon's chef de mission, Trevor Twardochleb. Trevor was amazing. I don't think he actually slept once when he was in Nuuk. He may have for a couple of hours one night, but every single night there was something going on that required him to go rummaging through bags at the airport or seeking out changes in venues, et cetera. His work was phenomenal and it was very much appreciated by everyone who was there. Of course, the athletes each deserve commendation and congratulations for their wonderful representation of Yukon at the games. I will leave it at that for the Arctic Winter Games but, needless to say, it was an incredible experience.

The next sport aspect I wanted to mention, just because it's very relevant and recent, is the Special Olympics. Our athletes from Yukon participated in the nationals in Newfoundland this year and did quite well. They participated in the Special Olympics Canada Winter Games in Corner Brook, Newfoundland, and competed in cross-country skiing and figure skating. I should note, Mr. Speaker, that those games in Newfoundland were qualifiers for Team Canada to participate at the 2017 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Austria. While they didn't know it earlier on Saturday night, it was announced at the Special Olympics banquet on Saturday night that two of our athletes from Yukon had been selected for Team Canada. So Tijana McCarthy and Mike Sumner were selected to represent Team Canada at the Austria games next year in 2017. That announcement was

made by the executive director, Serge Michaud, on Saturday night, and I think everybody who was in attendance — many members were there — really appreciated the surprise on the faces of Mike and Tijana, who learned that night they were going to Austria next year to represent not only Yukon, but all Canada, at the world games. Congratulations to them on their performance in Newfoundland, and for all the athletes who participated, and a special shout-out to those two athletes who will head off to Austria next year with Team Canada.

I was going to wrap up my comments on sport, but there was one other piece I wanted to mention — and I was reminded of it listening to the Member for Copperbelt South talking — and that was Mount Sima. Mount Sima had a wonderful year this past winter. It concluded this Sunday with Simapalooza and a number of events, including the Slush Cup, which the Premier and I had the opportunity to witness and take in.

Since 2013, Yukon government has provided support to the Friends of Mount Sima Society, whose tremendous efforts took over operations of the hill in 2013-14. This facility plays an important role as a home to three of our territorial sport governing bodies that provide both recreational and competitive opportunities for many youth in Yukon. Sima has been supported by businesses, the community and other sport organizations for the benefit of all Yukon. It can also provide a future hosting destination for both summer and winter sports and will continue to provide recreational health, social and economic benefits for all Yukon.

Yukon community members supported the hill in the winter of 2013-14 by purchasing over 900 season passes. In 2014-15, 850 season passes were sold, and this past season the sale of passes exceeded 1,000. We have seen considerable support from the community for Sima. These sales were combined with a very successful effort to promote and secure Mount Sima as an early season training facility for provincial and national teams. The pre-season training program not only brought new revenue to the hill, but also very good opportunities for local athletes to train. This program was so successful that many teams have already signed up to come back next year, and a few new teams have been added to the mix as well.

We of course are very proud to have been part of the solution to ensure that the hill remained open for the past two seasons and, last year, provided funding in support of that initiative to open Sima for some pre-season training. That was a collaborative effort between the departments of Community Services, Tourism and Culture and Economic Development, and that support helps to ensure hill operations in the pre-season training program continue. This helps our athletes by providing a great facility for training and hosting events in alpine skiing, snowboarding and free-style skiing, and also creates a unique tourism opportunity for Whitehorse. Bringing in over 100 athletes in November is an excellent source of revenue I know for a number of the hotels, restaurants and others in the service industry who appreciated the influx of people in the off-season.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks on sports and move on to a few other important issues in the Department of Community Services.

One important initiative that we have underway is the expansion of basic 911 for the territory. To simplify public access to emergency help, Protective Services is leading the Yukon government's efforts to expand basic 911 emergency call service. Once in place, Yukoners and visitors will be able to dial the same easy-to-remember emergency number used across North America. Protective Services has worked closely with the RCMP to expand the capacity of the 911 call-taking centre and police dispatch operation in Whitehorse to prepare for the expansion of basic 911 to rural Yukon.

The RCMP has managed the 911 call-taking centre since basic 911 first came to the Whitehorse area in 1995. This arrangement will continue as basic 911 extends into rural Yukon by the end of the summer 2016. As part of this initiative, the 911 call-taking centre and police dispatch service moved from the RCMP headquarters in Whitehorse to the emergency response centre communications suite specifically designed for the Yukon-wide expansion of service.

Yukon government committed more than \$1 million in 2015-16 to support both the move and the hiring and training of additional 911 call centre staff. The RCMP call-taking centre has been operating out of the emergency response centre since February of this year and updated rural emergency service response maps have been delivered to response agencies and RCMP dispatch to support 911. I also need to note that an important partner in the development of this project has been Northwestel, as it is they who will have to make the application to the CRTC for the necessary changes. As well, this change has resulted in a new agreement with the RCMP around 911 and, between Yukon government, the RCMP and Northwestel, we remain on track to see 911 expanded here in the territory.

Another important initiative that will be very important, not only to the Protective Services branch of Community Services, but will be very important to the community of Haines Junction as well is that, later this year — in August — Yukon will host, yet again, Operation Nanook. Yukon government of course is committed to constant improvement in Yukon's emergency management. In addition to supporting Yukon's emergency first response organizations, Protective Services coordinates resources for scenario-based emergency management exercises. In 2013, the Government of Yukon hosted the Canadian Armed Forces Operation Nanook 13, a northern sovereignty and disaster relief exercise. It was the first time such an operation was held in the territory. Operation Nanook rotates through Canada's north about every three years and Yukon will again test its emergency preparedness when the operation returns in August of this year to Haines Junction. Exercises like this, and other smaller scale training initiatives help us practise our response to and improve our preparations for natural- and human-caused disaster events. They are key to Yukon's emergency preparedness model.

I want to particularly thank the mayor of Haines Junction, as he has personally sat on the committee that is preparing for Operation Nanook and has provided significant input into the process with regard to the availability and accessing of services and products from Haines Junction. It's very important that we try to maximize the economic benefit that can come from these sorts of initiatives and the contributions of the mayor and others from the community of Haines Junction will certainly ensure that those benefits are maximized.

Mr. Speaker, in discussing the expansion of 911, I forgot to note some important new infrastructure as well. While the RCMP dispatch moved to the emergency response centre on Two Mile Hill, I should also note that EMS of course is based there as well, and as a result of some changes going on at the Whitehorse General Hospital campus, the ambulance station there has seen changes as well. As a result of the changes to the Whitehorse General Hospital emergency area, a new ambulance station was built and, as of a few months or weeks ago, EMS has moved its operations to the new building.

The new building is an excellent facility that I had the chance to tour a few weeks ago and I was very impressed by the upgrade from the previous building. I know that a number of the EMS professionals who work there certainly appreciated the upgrade from the old building, which was rather old. I've heard there was some celebration in the demolition of the old building, but I won't get into in detail. Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, having the new ambulance station at the Whitehorse General Hospital campus as well as the relatively new building up on Two Mile Hill means that both of our Whitehorse-based ambulance stations are very new, very modern and will certainly improve the services that are available to Yukoners as well as make for a better place to work for those professionals who work there on our behalf.

I recognize that my time is quickly elapsing, Mr. Speaker, so I will move on briefly. I did want to note and have some discussion a little bit on infrastructure, but I don't think I'll be able to, given the time. I did want to note that a few weeks ago I had the opportunity to announce with our MP, Larry Bagnell, that a number of projects had been approved under the small communities fund. Of course, the small communities fund is a small piece of the new Building Canada fund. It's for communities under 100,000 — of course, which would apply to all Yukon communities.

The five projects that were approved under the small communities fund were the first projects that had been approved under the new Building Canada fund, which was a significant milestone. Those projects included: ducted sewage system in Carmacks; solid-waste upgrades for Haines Junction, Faro, and Watson Lake; a project in Teslin to improve drainage and improve some roads; and of course, two projects right here in Whitehorse, which are very relevant to those of us who live here in Whitehorse. The first was the Whitehorse groundwater protection program. That project will consist of improvements to protect the Selkirk aquifer under the Riverdale subdivision, which supplies 100 percent of Whitehorse's drinking water. The upgrades include:

decommissioning of abandoned wells, improving drainage around active water wells and monitoring well sites and improve monitoring systems.

In conjunction with that project, I should note that Public Works is in the process of removing a number of old underground tanks in Riverdale as well, I believe, at Macaulay Lodge and at one of the schools in Riverdale, so we're seeing some improvements to the protection of Yukon's groundwater and drinking water through these initiatives.

As well, relevant to my riding, of course, was the McLean Lake connector road, which was a project that will create a new road link between the McLean Lake area, completing work envisioned in the planning of the Hamilton Boulevard extension that began in 2009. The project will improve traffic flow on the Alaska Highway by rerouting heavy truck traffic away from the old highway access and through the controlled Alaska Highway/Hamilton Boulevard intersection. The project will include base preparation, ditching and BST work or asphalt surface. That project will be important for people in my neighbourhood as well as those who are coming in from south of Whitehorse in the morning, as those big trucks that used to have to turn left at the road at McLean Lake will now have the opportunity to go through the controlled intersection.

Mr. Speaker, I realize I'm out of time, so I will conclude my remarks by noting that I'm again very proud of the budget put forward by this government, by my colleagues, beginning, of course, with the Premier — the Minister of Finance — and my colleagues in Cabinet.

I look forward to seeing some debate on the budget in the coming weeks and look forward to passing this budget, as I believe it does a good job of setting us up well for the future.

With that, I commend this budget to the House and thank my colleagues yet again. Cheers.

Mr. Silver: I would like to begin as I always do with a heartfelt thank you to the constituency of the Klondike for the privilege of representing them here in the Assembly. I want to thank Dawson City for all of the support that I have received over the past five years. It has been an honour representing the Klondike in Whitehorse. For the record, I will be seeking the support of Dawson residents for another term as the Klondike MLA in the next territorial election whenever that might occur. I'm waiting for some other announcements here, but haven't heard them. I announced this the day before the session began and I'm excited about the campaign that will happen sometime later this year. No nods from the people across the hall.

Since we met last fall, I had a great deal of time in the Klondike talking with people about issues and also just enjoying all that Dawson has to offer. There is never a dull moment in this vibrant northern community and I would be hard-pressed to find a community that has so much to do in the winter months. Judging by the number of out-of-towners who were welcomed to the Klondike during the Thaw di Gras festival we held a few short weeks ago, clearly this is no secret.

We had Sourdough Sams and Rendezvous Queens come up for our lip sync. Many people actually stayed along for the Sunday chili cook-off, which, this year was, won by Dennis Dunn and Kyla MacArthur. Congratulations to those two. They have been in it every year for at least — I won't say how many, but this is the first time that they have actually won it.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Silver: I just so happened to volunteer that weekend and I was a judge.

Getting down to the budget, it is interesting to note that we are already into the 2016-17 fiscal year as we begin debating on the budget. This is the second year in a row that the government made a conscious decision or choice to begin the Spring Sitting after the fiscal year had already begun. The normal course of events is to begin the Sitting, as you know, in late March or earlier to allow time to pass an interim supply bill before the fiscal year actually begins. That didn't happen again this year for several reasons — one of the main reasons being the government's inability to make a decision on whether or not to call a spring election and another one would be the astounding turnover in the ranks of deputy ministers in this government. It's hard to pull together a budget when we need to consult the phone book to find out who has been fired and who is still employed. The amount of money needed for severance packages also kept changing right up to the last minute.

The late call has resulted in the government once again bypassing the Legislature for spending authority by relying on special warrants. It demonstrates a lack of respect, in my opinion, for this Chamber and for democracy. I was critical of this approach last year and here I am again this year.

I want to read from you what Robert Ascah, a fellow in the Institute for Public Economics at the University of Alberta had to say, and I quote: "Special warrants should typically be used only in exceptional circumstances — for instance, when a new government has just been elected and needs more time to bring in a budget, and unanticipated emergencies like floods or fires might also require extra spending when the assembly isn't sitting."

But he said he doesn't understand why a government would routinely convene the Legislature so late that they would have to issue special warrants for that. I am going to quote again: "The problem with the use of special warrants is that cabinet avoids the scrutiny of the legislative assembly. I just don't think that's a good way of running governments." He said democracy demands that any money from the public purse must be debated. Ascah was skeptical of the Yukon government and their explanation that the late federal budget meant it needed more time to finalize its own finances. He said provincial and territorial finance ministers typically meet with their federal counterparts well before the end of the fiscal year, and get a pretty good sense of how to plan for their budgets.

Anyone who watched the Premier's speech to the Conservative think-tank in 2015 at the Manning networking conference got an early look at a line that the Yukon Party often has been repeating in the last little while. The Premier

told Canada's leading Conservatives, whom he does not want to be associated with as of late, that his goal was to make Yukon a net contributor to Canada. If Yukon were to judge this government on what progress has been made toward achieving that goal — and they should when they go the polls this October — the government would certainly get a failing grade. We still receive the vast majority of our funding from Ottawa, and we are certainly no closer to being a net contributor to Canada than we were 14 years ago. That has not changed in all of the time that the Yukon Party has been in office.

Now according to the government's own budget documents, the Yukon continues to generate only 12 percent of its own revenue. The rest still comes from the Government of Canada and other sources. There is lots of talk about growing the private sector, but it is not matched by the numbers. When the government came to power, approximately 80 percent of expenses were paid by federal transfer; now, 88 percent of our expenses are paid with other peoples' money. Because of our economic situation we are less able to stand on our own than we were when the Yukon Party was elected. We raised \$114 million in taxes and general revenues in 2011-12. We are expected to raise only \$112 million, according to the budget tabled last week. We are paying less and less of our own freight since the government came into power five year as ago.

After five years, the government is doing exactly what the Yukon Party government has always done and that is to spend federal money. The year the Premier was elected, they spent \$745 million of someone else's money — I believe somebody called it "Daddy" today. This year they are spending \$925 million of someone else's money. Now, I get it — we live in a unique place with unique challenges and federal money is key to sustaining the north. But everyone will agree that we should be able to spend it more wisely.

I am quoting here again: "If you don't stand up for a debt-free Yukon, you don't stand up for Yukoners." That was the Premier last week, and it is quite a line. I think the Premier's speech-writer should take a look at the Public Accounts, which detail the \$190-some million in debt that is on the books for the Crown corporations that are part of this government. We have ministers responsible for the Crown corporations; the Crown corporations are part of this government. The lion's share of the debt has been built up over the last 14 years of Yukon Party rule.

We do not have net debt and we haven't had net debt since the mid-1990s, I believe. It's pretty rich to hear the Yukon Party government criticizing any government who does create debt. This government should look in the mirror. It was only a couple of years ago that this government was forced to make a one-time payment of \$27 million to the Hospital Corporation to cover some of the costs of the massive debt that corporation ran up under the Yukon Party government 1.0. If this isn't their debt, why are they paying it down?

The speech also said — and I quote: "... other provinces and territories pay interest on that debt." Well, Mr. Speaker,

so do we. The Yukon Development Corporation, for example, paid \$5 million a year to cover the costs of the \$100-million bond it issued a few years ago. Now the Premier clearly just glossed over that fact in his speech.

Let's move to another dubious claim that the budget speech makes. The top of page six of the budget speech says: "Growing our Economy". In early March, the Yukon government had taxpayers foot the bill for a flyer that was mailed across the territory. It was a report to Yukoners that boldly stated this government is growing our economy. Now, Mr. Speaker, the Conference Board of Canada recently confirmed that our economy shrank last year and in fact shrank for three years in a row. In a few months' time, the territory's last operating hardrock mine will be shutting its doors. The government's own forecast says — and I quote: "Real GDP is expected to contract for the third consecutive year in 2015." So much for the claim that the government has successfully grown the economy.

When Yukon Party 2.0 came into office in 2011, there were three hardrock mines and, in a few months' time, there will be none. The government has had successive billion-dollar budgets at their disposal, transfer payments from Ottawa have increased every year as well. Despite this, we have just completed our third year in a row of economic decline — the worst performance in all of Canada.

This government has delivered three years in a row of negative economic growth — the single worst economic record of any place in Canada — yet the Yukon Party has the nerve to produce a brochure, with taxpayers' money, that claims that it's growing the economy. The recent federal budget even singled out Whitehorse for extra help for people on EI.

Now the Yukon Party has blamed low mineral prices; it blamed YESAA and the new federal government, but it is unwilling to admit its own role in how we got to the bottom of Canada's economic barrel. Coasting on high mineral prices, refusing to address regulatory uncertainty, and a habit of meeting First Nation governments in court are all things under this government's control that could have made a difference with a different approach. It's a fact that we have the worst-performing economy in Canada and we are producing less and less goods and services each year. Our GDP went down in 2013. Our GDP went down in 2014 and it's going to go down in 2015. We are the only place in Canada to see our economy shrink three years in a row.

Now we know what happens because of these types of situations: people leave — and people are leaving. We know a growing population grows our economy, but unfortunately the Yukon was the only place in Canada whose population went down in the first quarter of 2016, according to Statistics Canada. Now it will be interesting to watch our population grow or fall, moving forward.

There was another item that I wanted to note from the Premier's Manning speech last year. He praised our — and I quote: "proven regulatory and permitting process" when it comes to mining. We had the Premier telling a national audience of Conservatives that everything was great with our

permitting system. Here at home, it is a different message entirely. In this year's budget speech, the Premier said that we need to — and I quote: "... modernize our mining regulations to create greater certainty, regulatory streamlining and a more integrated approach to permitting..." So nationally in front of Conservatives, everything is blue sky; a year later in the budget speech, it's a totally different message.

Our regulatory system is broken, and we have just managed to avoid a court battle because the new federal government is committing to fix the mess of the former Conservative government in Ottawa and this government. The Yukon Party government likes to present itself as a defender of mining. When it was elected, Yukon was one of the most attractive regions in the world. Since then, we have tumbled down the Fraser Institute rankings, and who does that hurt? Well, it hurts Yukon companies. Under this government, we have lost the Keno mine, the Wolverine mine and the Minto mine. We are coming out of a commodities supercycle, seen once in a generation, and we don't have a single operating hardrock mine with a long-term future here. Now, as an election looms, the government is scrambling to develop a mineral strategy and starting to ask the Government of Canada to fund new infrastructure projects that have been drawn out, frankly, on a napkin. Speaking of the mineral development strategy, we know that it was scheduled to go to Cabinet recently and was pulled from the agenda at the last minute.

We know that one of the defining accomplishments of this government has been to ratchet up uncertainty for investors, particularly in the resource sector. That uncertainty is reflected in the latest rankings in the Fraser Institute mining report. It was also reflected in the mineral exploration in the territory, which is down by 18 percent again this year. It has dropped almost every year that Yukon Party 2.0 has been in the office. Ongoing court battles with First Nations and regulatory uncertainty have tarnished our relationships and have tarnished our reputation as being a good place to do business.

A perfect example of this is the Yukon Party's botched attempt to amend Bill S-6, or YESAA. Regulatory uncertainty is a huge problem right now in our resource sector. It comes up when I meet with mining companies and oil and gas companies that want to do business here. It is one of the reasons our economy has shrunk for three years in a row. It is one of the reasons we continue to drop in the Fraser Institute mining rankings. It is one of the reasons exploration has dropped almost every year since the government took office. It wasn't that long ago the Premier was singing the praise of YESAA. This is him in 2013 — and I quote: "Frameworks like YESAA enable us to harness the momentum of the past decade and turn it into sustainable economic growth."

Mr. Speaker, three years ago, this government was praising YESAA to anyone who would listen. Now, as it tries to duck responsibilities for the role it has played in creating the only economy in Canada that has shrunk for three years in a row, there is no love for YESAA from this government.

With regard to a government blaming low mineral prices, here is a quote from Yukon Party 1.0: "... Yukon's climb to

the top of the rankings has absolutely nothing to do with world mineral prices; it has everything to do with us — this government — making the changes necessary to restore investor confidence in Yukon."

I've said it before and I'll say it again: when things are going well, the Yukon Party will take the credit; when things are going bad, it's YESAA or it's the world mineral prices. Last week, the new federal minister was here to start cleaning up the mess left by this government after its YESAA review.

Before the last election, this government and all Yukoners were aware of problems in our mining regulatory system. The Yukon Party platform stated it would — and I quote: "Continue to work with the Government of Canada to resolve the issues pertaining to the problems with the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Act and the Yukon Waters Act."

Despite that, the government is now only getting around to working on resolving those issues. Unlike the Premier, who now blames low mineral prices, the Fraser Institute does not even mention this — instead pointing the finger squarely at this government and its regulatory problems.

Yukoners know the government holds the Fraser Institute survey in high regard. They couldn't stop talking about it when the Yukon was moving up in the rankings. Now that the Yukon is sliding down the rankings, the world mineral prices are all to blame; YESAA is to blame.

There is money in the budget to work on a mine licensing improvement initiative, which, according to this government, will clarify the roles of the regulatory agencies and make sure that the many levels of our regulatory system work well together. This project has been mentioned a few times in recent months but, strangely enough, there has been no information about it on the government's website. There's a brief outline of it on the Water Board's website, for some reason. It is work that should have been done five years ago but, nonetheless, it is now underway. I wish the government every success on this project, and I hope it avoids the approach that it took with regard to Bill S-6 and the participation of Yukon First Nations.

I'm afraid that, when you add it all up, it's a little too late for this government to help the mining industry. The damage in our industry is already done; the regulatory uncertainty and the antagonistic approach to First Nation relations mean that it's too late for Yukon Party's mining vision.

I'm going to move on to the speech delivered last week. It is clear from the blueprint announced last week that an election is definitely coming. The Yukon Party government's plan is to try to buy Yukoners' hearts and minds with their own money. This is the main theme of the document.

As our economy falters, the government is throwing every dollar it can into public circulation. A look at the long-term plan, however, shows a huge spike in the capital spending for this year and it drops off dramatically after the next election. What the territory needs is a consistent project-building schedule that ensures local contractors receive the lion's share of the work and keeps those dollars in the Yukon.

Mining is boom-and-bust; government spending should not be.

The only thing holding the government back from spending even more on capital in the lead-up to the election is the massive growth in operation and maintenance costs of the government itself. A look at the historical increases show that, since 2016, O&M is up \$234 million, while capital spending is only up \$69 million. Once again, this is the party that is continually trumpeting its private sector beliefs while the reality is something very different — larger and larger governments, more and more spending on itself. In the last 12 months, the number of private sector jobs in the Yukon dropped by 900 — so much for the private sector growth the government likes to hang its hat on. Our economy is once again being driven by how much money comes out of Ottawa and, luckily for this government, that number continues to grow every year.

The document also shows the Yukon Party government has spent down the surplus. They spent it down from \$223 million to \$52 million in just the last two years alone as it ramps up spending. This has become the typical cycle with this government. As an election approaches, they begin building more new projects than local contractors can handle, resulting in employment for larger firms in the south. This kind of pre-election spending leads to rushed, poorly planned and overbudget projects. Trying to cram a great deal of spending into a short window will also result in more jobs going to Outside contractors. I met with business groups last week that had been watching this approach being tried over and over again. The result is always the same, they say — Outside contractors coming up and picking up the extra work with no extra benefit going to Yukon workers or the Yukon at all. The short-term political goals of the government are the top priority, not properly managed and well-timed spending.

Mr. Speaker, the largest project in the budget — the continuing care facility for seniors in Whistle Bend — is being built by an Outside contractor; we all know that. This is a project that wasn't even mentioned, by the way, in the Yukon Party's platform. The second-largest project, the new hospital, is also being built by an Outside contractor. The latest contract for Faro cleanup was just awarded by this government to a company from Alberta.

Another large project, the overbudget F.H. Collins school, was just completed by an Outside contractor. Now, the Premier was busy telling Yukoners to buy local on budget day. If only this government practised what it preached. These three projects alone total over \$200 million, and many of the jobs have been and will be filled by Outside residents. Most of the profits will also flow outside the territory.

Speaking of F.H. Collins and given this government's poor record when it comes to managing these capital projects, I was not surprised to see that another \$4.3 million has been added to the cost of F.H. Collins school, bringing the total to \$55.3 million. In the last year, the government has been forced to return to Management Board to ask, yet again, for more money on this overbudget project. This is an example of a project that was rushed before the 2011 election. We all

remember the Premier and a former Minister of Education with their golden shovels out before the last election to mark the beginning of the construction of the new school. Two and a half years later, construction had not even started and the contract for the building of the school was finally awarded to a company from Alberta. This was done on purpose, I might add, because of the way the government wrote their tender. It made it virtually impossible for a Yukon company to win the bid.

Now we know at least \$6 million was spent on a now-scraped design. This money was wasted and lost. Next to the overbudget and behind-schedule rural hospitals, this project is the poster child for what happens when government tries to ram projects through based on political, and not practical or well-reasoned, deadlines. When the dust settles, we'll see what the total cost is for this project.

Mr. Speaker, years late and millions of dollars overbudget, F.H. Collins did get built. The same cannot be said about the new rec centre in my home community of Dawson. I was disappointed to see that the entire term of this government will pass without the Yukon Party 2011 campaign promise to build a new rec centre being fulfilled. That broken promise has left my community once bitten, twice shy when hearing claims about the Yukon Party planning to pave the runway in Dawson — not in this budget, but after the election. Dawson is too smart for that, Mr. Speaker. All we heard was the commitment to pave the Dawson Airport runway was left out of this budget. It is another broken promise.

This is one of the projects on the government's growing IOU list as we head into this year's election. The budget fails to deliver on promises of a new francophone school, a mental health strategy or a fibre optic line. These are all now just political promises that voters will be left making a decision on. The fibre project is especially interesting considering that the government announced that this project was ready to go last fall.

With all the Premier's talk about the private sector, I'm sure the business community was looking for an update on the red tape review announced two Budget Addresses ago. Anyone looking will be disappointed because there is no mention of this in the entire budget. In fact, there hasn't been any word of this for almost two years now. Mr. Speaker, we support this red tape review.

Just for the record, I'll let the government know where the Yukon Liberals stand on a few other issues that we've heard in this reply so far. The Yukon Liberals — we support the free-entry system for mining. Yukon Liberals also support hydro development. Yukon Liberals support the use of LNG as a diesel alternative. We do not support fracking in the Yukon. The Yukon Liberals support oil and gas development and always has.

We know the NDP opposes fracking. We're not too sure where it stands on conventional oil and gas development. We will find out very soon, I'm sure, as we all start going into platform mode.

There are several things that I wish were in this budget, and the mental health strategy is one of those examples. We

will draw down on that new money that has been announced, but I must say that \$1 million over a five-year period does not make a mental health strategy. Having more services for mental health outside of Whitehorse is another thing that we absolutely need — a long-term solution for recycling instead of the stop-gap measures that have been announced so far.

Another initiative that the Premier mentioned in his speech is the so-called reconciliation agreements with Yukon's unsigned First Nations. This could be a great idea. It's hard to tell, given how little the government has divulged to date about what is on the table. There has been very little information made public about the mandate of these talks, the budget, the goals and the objectives, how the talks are proceeding, et cetera. Perhaps in ECO debate the Premier can shed some light on these decisions.

The major item in this budget area of Highways and Public Works is Shakwak funding, or lack thereof. The budget before us contains \$12 million in funding for part of the Shakwak highway project. That's a far cry from the \$40 million spent in 2006 and even the \$25 million spent in 2012.

In recent years, this funding from the United States government for this project has dropped substantially. It gets worse. The funding for the project for future years was cut off by the United States in 2012. Since then, the government has been lobbying unsuccessfully to have this fund reinstated and has almost spent down what monies had been banked over the years. This reserve is now almost empty.

The Premier confirmed in his budget speech last year that the future of this money remains — and I quote: "in limbo". The Premier himself travelled to Washington to make his case on this funding and said — and I quote: "We will know in two or three months whether or not this work has been successful." Two years later and there has been no news at all. The Yukon Party's failure to keep an eye on the ball means that this valuable source of revenue has all but dried up. The lobbying efforts since 2012 have produced no results.

I want to move on now to health care and the government's plan for a 300-bed Whistle Bend institution for our seniors, but given this government's poor record when it comes to managing capital projects, I am alarmed to see \$67 million set aside to begin construction of this facility. The first phase is for 150 beds, but the building is being constructed so it can expand to 300 beds. With almost no consultation, the Government of Yukon has decided to proceed with this facility in Whitehorse. It will centralize continuing care in a one-size-fits-all kind of way.

At the same time, the government just completed the replacement of the McDonald Lodge in Dawson. There were plans to make this a 20-bed facility. Those have been scaled back to only 15 beds. People I have spoken to in my community and other rural centres are interested in staying in their communities. They don't want to move to a one-size-fits-all facility hundreds of miles away in Whitehorse.

The number 300 — where did that number come from? Not just Whitehorse. That number is from all of the Yukon. We're not sending our seniors and elders to a one-size-fits-all institution. They are asking why this government is pursuing

this centralized approach, instead of focusing on keeping our seniors in their home communities. In my view, the government missed an opportunity to have more beds in rural Yukon. It did so because it seemed to think the solution was one-size-fits-all in Whitehorse.

We can all agree that the demand for continuing care is growing. The Liberal caucus, however, disagrees fundamentally with this government on how to manage that growth. I would like to see the demand in rural Yukon being met in rural Yukon. The government's approach is to funnel all of our seniors into Whitehorse. One of the planning studies the government is relying on, as it proceeds with the continuing care decision, says that the only new beds built in the future will all be in Whitehorse. We have already heard the concerns of First Nation elders who will not be comfortable in such a large institution. The lack of consultation on this facility speaks volumes about how little this government has learned in its office in five years.

I'm going to change over to Education here. Last year's budget speech devoted four entire pages to announcing yet another new vision for education. The entire final section of the budget outlined yet another attempt of this government to redesign our education system. It is the third try in a decade, by my count, and it follows the New Horizons project that was just implemented in 2014.

Yukoners, I'm sure, will follow with interest and plenty of scepticism as yet another master plan for education looms. This year's budget speech barely mentions the new plan. It makes no mention at all of the complete K to 12 curriculum that was promised just a year ago.

It's hard to put a dollar figure on the relationship of the Yukon government with First Nation governments, although it seems to be the most important measurement this government relies on. We hear regularly of the money that this government says it is giving to First Nations and how we should understand that this means that they are getting along just fine. It is hard to measure distrust in relations with First Nations, but I don't think anybody will disagree that this government's willingness and ability to walk side by side with First Nations has been nothing short of a failure. The record is marked by battlegrounds and broken relationships. The Peel case, the Ross River case, Bill S-6 — Mr. Speaker, we need to do better. I am pleased to see actually that the Ross River waste-water treatment facility and the expansion of our water-monitoring network are both included in the estimates before us. Ross River housing is a whole other issue.

I only have 40 minutes for this response, so there are many items I won't be able to get into, including the government's position on fracking, the new dam project, the proposed Keno power line, land use planning and the future of the Dawson waste-water treatment facility. We will get to that as the days tick on here in the spring Legislature.

Over the past decade, the politics and policies of successive Yukon Party governments have disrespected First Nation governments and they can now add municipal and federal governments into that mix. They have put their economic eggs into one basket and now, as mineral prices

drop, our economy is slowing down. With our resources, our natural beauty and our bright, hard-working citizens, we all have the potential to be a model of success for the entire country. I believe that the potential is not being harnessed, and I also believe that we need a new form of leadership. We need leadership that empowers First Nation governments and consults openly and fairly. We need leadership that listens to our public servants instead of muting them and interfering with their decisions. We need leadership that enables our private sector instead of entangling them in red tape. We need leadership that brings about a better type of politics in the Yukon instead of this us-versus-them approach. The polarizing divides us and ignores our common bonds.

In closing, I want to thank the public sector employees for all the work that they do in preparing this budget, but on behalf of Yukoners, I would like to challenge the Yukon Party government to do better. Yukoners deserve better planning. They work too hard for their money to be wasted, and Yukoners deserve better listening. They are too important to have to fight to be heard.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I know that the Premier and other ministers will have an opportunity to respond to the Member for Klondike as we get into specific departments as well. The Premier will of course close debate here at second reading on the budget, but I do have to note one thing. Here we are, April 12 of the final Sitting. We are in the third day of the final Sitting of this Legislature. There has been a lot accomplished by members of this Legislature over the past number of years and I think we should all be very proud of it.

One exciting thing, I guess for us, is that finally we had some positions put forward by the Liberal Party. I think I counted five or so. Four of them were ours and one of them was the NDP's. Nevertheless there were some positions put forward. Previously I referred to — and I guess this was something that is timely — given the Timbits hockey tournament that took place over the weekend, that the Liberals reminded me of the Timbits hockey players, all chasing the puck around with no real plan and that is certainly something that we see.

With respect to the New Democrats, certainly I know they've put forward a number of positions over the past five years. I don't agree with very many of them and we've put forward positions that they don't agree with. But the Liberal Party here, as we work toward the next election, will perhaps be able to come up with some positions of their own. They won't continue to try to be on everybody's side, as they have over the past number of years — as this leader and the previous leader of the Liberal Party certainly did to essentially chase me and other members of the Liberal Party out of that party over the past number of years — and are now proud members of the Yukon Party or perhaps even proud members of the New Democrats.

So Mr. Speaker, with that, I know the Member for Klondike once — we had a gallery full of schoolchildren here and he talked about being kinder and gentler, so I will move

into that kinder and gentler type of response to the Premier's budget speech.

I too would like to thank the constituents of Riverdale North. It has been a pleasure representing him here in this Legislature over the past number of years. It's very enjoyable obviously; a subdivision that I share representation for with the Member for Riverdale South across the way. It's a very exciting place to live and an awesome place to live. I've been in the Yukon for 43 years and have spent all but 10 years of that time living in the Riverdale subdivision, but of course time moves on and circumstances change. My wife and I and my young son will be relocating to the riding of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes in early June. We're excited for an opportunity to live on the shores of Marsh Lake and raise our son there on a beautiful piece of property. I'm looking forward to moving out there and certainly continuing as a representative for the riding of Riverdale North and making sure that their issues are adhered to as we move toward the next election.

It's an opportunity as my last response during this current Legislative Assembly to highlight some of the riding initiatives that have taken place over the past number of years that I think are extremely exciting and are great opportunities for things that we should be proud of in Riverdale. Of course the MRI at the Whitehorse General Hospital — the first MRI in Canada north of 60. A lot of blood, sweat and tears from volunteers and individuals involved with the Yukon Hospital Foundation have gone into the purchase of that machine over the past number of years, and the Yukon government worked with the foundation to install that.

Of course, we've seen some other improvements taking place at the hospital. We do have an ambulance station in Riverdale that has been secured and will continue to service not only my constituents, but Riverdale South constituents and members in the immediate vicinity. I think that's an important piece of infrastructure that needs to be recognized. It's something that I'm happy is included on the hospital campus as well to service those who live in the downtown and Riverdale areas.

The Emergency expansion at the hospital, as well, is of benefit to my constituents and constituents from across the city and the territory. It will be a tremendous addition to what we already have at the hospital and what we have for quality health care here in the Yukon.

I'll speak in a little more detail about the F.H. Collins project, but again, F.H. Collins is open — 639, I believe, students attending the new school in Riverdale. It's certainly an exciting opportunity for them as we approach the inaugural graduating class from the new F.H. Collins. Of course, many of us in this Legislature were graduates of the original F.H. Collins as well. We're happy for those students to be able transition out of the older school into the new learning facility.

I haven't had the opportunity to get over to the school. I was through there a number of times during construction and the lead-up to fit-out. But I did run into the vice-principal today and she made a point of inviting me over to do a tour.

I'll of course check with my colleague, the Minister of Education, and arrange an opportunity to get into the school.

There are a number of smaller projects that have taken place in Riverdale over the past while, but they're good projects for the community. The Yukon government invested in 18 Yukon schools for new playground equipment. Installations took place in 2014-15 and 2015-16 fiscal years. The approximate budget for Yukon government was \$1.57 million, and I'm happy that a couple of schools in the Riverdale area received new playground equipment. Selkirk school received new equipment, as did Christ the King Elementary School. I know they're very well-utilized by the students who run around there. My son's favourite playground is at Selkirk, so we get down there quite often. I will note that there is a playground close to our new place out at New Constabulary as well, so we're excited about that.

The Liard park in Riverdale — the Riverdale Community Association put forward a CDF application and was accepted. A lot of hard work — I'll single out Mr. Matt Ball, who is a Riverdale North constituent. I know he was one of the leaders in getting the Riverdale Community Association to put forward that application. Now they have a hockey rink with a hard surface in the Liard park that I understand gets an awful lot of use — again, another excellent recreational infrastructure addition to what we have in Riverdale.

Below the ground in Riverdale at some of the government-owned facilities have been some oil tanks that have been replaced over the past number of years — Selkirk school, for instance. I think Vanier is up this year; Macaulay Lodge will be getting a new oil tank. Of course, that's important from an environmental standpoint, as the Riverdale aquifer provides a lot of the drinking water for the City of Whitehorse. As we continue to reduce our environmental liabilities, removing those oil tanks and replacing them with above-ground modern oil tanks is something that's also very important.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to mention one other thing. Mr. Matt Ball and his wife, Michelle Ball — perhaps it's Michelle Boleen, so I apologize if she still goes by her maiden name — approached me and the Minister of Education — I think it was last year at some point — about French immersion and the challenges they were having getting their children into the kindergarten. Very quickly the Minister of Education moved to expand the French immersion program and add a classroom to Selkirk Street School. I know it's something that has been very well-received at the school. They added a kindergarten class. I believe this upcoming fall there will be a kindergarten and a grade 1 class, and we'll move through the grades to expand the French immersion program — something that's extremely important to my constituents. I believe Michelle actually has joined the Selkirk school council as well, so a big thank you to that family for making additional French immersion opportunities available in the Riverdale area.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Highways and Public Works and Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, I'm going to spend a little bit of time highlighting some of the new

opportunities and perhaps addressing some of the accomplishments if I have an opportunity when it comes to both of those departments. Property Management Division has produced a document that I'll be tabling here in the next week or so in the Legislative Assembly with respect to some of the projects and some of the new initiatives that they've undertaken.

When we look at the top 15 major capital works contracts that were awarded between 2010-2011 and 2014-2015, over 70 percent of the dollar value of those were awarded to local companies — that's just over \$77 million. A little bit less than 30 percent were awarded to an Outside company — that being the F.H. Collins contract. It had a value of \$31.14 million approximately, but the project averaged 75-percent local labour participation over the course of construction. So again, this is different from the narrative being put forward by the Member for Klondike, the Leader of the Liberal Party.

That's a project that not only those students are benefiting from — those who will be attending it this year and for years to come — but there were also local labour components that benefited from that project.

When it comes to some of the other opportunities and activities that are being set up by the Property Management Division, there are a couple that I would like to highlight as priorities for 2016-17.

The first is a client service unit that is being set up at PMD. Of course the PMD clients are many departments within the Yukon government. As we look at the evolution of the Property Management Division within the government — for those long-time government employees, it started out being housed within Government Services more than 15 years ago, then reorganized as the Property Management Agency through the end of 2008, and now the Property Management Division remains a unique service organization within our government where nearly all of its clients are government employees and departments. This new client service unit that will be formed is going to be utilizing a data-driven and evidence-based approach to enhance PMD service delivery.

Starting this spring and continuing through the rest of 2016, PMD client service unit will begin working with departments to identify areas of both strengths and weaknesses in the current relationship and target areas where improvements can be implemented to create shared-value outcomes. This will include refreshing service level agreements and service standards with all departments.

PMD prides itself on walking the talk of exceptional client service and intends to demonstrate that commitment. Our goal is to ensure that we deliver our programs and services while meeting our clients' needs with full accountability, integrity and respect. From space renovation requests to capital maintenance projects, PMD has begun simplifying and improving access to all of its core client services.

This is something that I look for — I've communicated this to my Cabinet colleagues and I know that at the deputy minister level and at the assistant deputy minister level, it has also been communicated. I would like to recognize the

leadership of the ADM of Property Management Division, Mr. Paul McConnell and his team in bringing forward this opportunity for a client services unit. It's something that I think is necessary and will prove very strong.

The other priority initiative that PMD has identified is a sustainable energy management team. As a three-year pilot project, PMD will be launching an energy unit within the division, guided by a multi-year sustainable energy management plan. The plan includes projects and other action items focused on the implementation of energy-efficiency and conservation measures.

With more than 65 percent of all annual YG greenhouse gas emissions stemming from buildings in the portfolio, PMD aims to leverage its facility and project management expertise to drive meaningful and measurable climate action. Look for PMD to continue building on the progress of recent successful energy performance projects like the new F.H. Collins and the renovations that are currently underway at the main administration building here, which will reduce annual heating costs by more than \$225,000 while reducing greenhouse gas emissions by more than 400 tonnes each year.

Mr. Speaker, I think that gives us an opportunity to be a leader in this country when it comes to energy efficiency and climate change action. There are a number of initiatives underway across departments that will lead to better energy efficiency so that we don't have to put a price on carbon, as the opposition parties would like to do.

We know that we are doing our part. We are doing our heavy lifting. Ninety-five percent of our electricity is derived from renewable sources. The transportation and space heating sectors are the next ones we need to tackle. These energy-efficiency initiatives and the work of the Property Management Division on the sustainable energy management plan will certainly help out as we move forward.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other priorities and new initiatives that we've set out in both Highways and Public Works and Energy, Mines and Resources that I will speak to now, starting in HPW. The Vimy Place functional plan is being led by the Yukon Housing Corporation, and HPW is assisting the Vimy Heritage Housing Society with a functional plan covering space and structural considerations for the proposed supportive independent housing facility. I know this project is something that we identified in our platform and we've been working with representatives of the housing society for a number of years. My colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services, spoke recently at their AGM and talked about this functional planning. There has been a kickoff meeting with the organization. I know, Mr. Speaker, that this is something that you too are extremely interested in as an MLA and a representative of that community. We're excited to see this advance. Again, I would like to thank all of those volunteers, board members and others who have put in an awful lot of work in getting us to this stage. This is similar to what we've accomplished with CSFY with respect to the francophone high school and other functional planning exercises that are moving forward.

Some of the other new initiatives when it comes to Highways and Public Works include making strategic investments in Yukon's infrastructure. We have a functional plan for the Alaska Highway. This project involves the provision of engineering services to develop a functional plan for the Alaska Highway from the British Columbia border to approximately Golden Horn subdivision, for HPW to use in prioritizing improvements. The value of this is estimated to be \$368,000 in this fiscal year.

We will see renovations to the Burwash air terminal building. The project involves renovations to that air terminal building valued at \$500,000. This an initiative that I am very excited about because it is something that I think has been asked for by the community of Carmacks for quite some time, and that is the initiation of the environmental assessment on the Carmacks bypass. I know we have heard that from many community members in Carmacks, and I think they will be quite excited for us to do that. It certainly will give us the opportunity to bring to a shovel-ready state a bypass that will divert industrial traffic from the Mount Nansen Road and the Freegold and Casino roads around the community of Carmacks and outside of the residential areas that it currently uses. That is something that I am extremely happy with. I have informed the Mayor of Carmacks and the Chief of the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation via letter that we would be putting forward in this fiscal year an application for the environmental assessment, going through the YESAA process.

The other environmental assessment that we will be undertaking this year is with respect to the Dawson Gold Field Road. As members will recall from the Fall Sitting, we spoke about access through the Dawson Gold Field Road to Kaminak's Coffee property as one of the northern accesses into the Dawson Range. There are existing public roads in that area — the Dawson Gold Field Road — and we will also be in this fiscal year going through the environmental assessment for that as well so that we can get it to shovel-ready.

Members know that we have approached the federal government looking for a funding partnership and investments in these resource roads, this one being one of the ones that will benefit not only the hardrock properties and exploration plays in the northern part of the Dawson range, but the many placer mines and placer operations in the Dawson gold fields. This is something that we heard directly from representatives of the Klondike region last year at a meeting that we had, and I continue to hear from Klondike Placer Miners' Association representatives about the importance of upgrading those roads.

Mr. Speaker, the Dawson airport development plan — this project includes assessing current infrastructure, including the surfaces, runways, taxiways, aprons, vehicle access, as well as the buildings — both existing ones and required ones — to determine the level of investment required to meet the identified needs and prepare construction sequencing plans.

That sounds very bureaucratic, but I did have a discussion last week with the members of the Dawson City Chamber of Commerce, and we talked about the functional planning for the Dawson airport. There are a number of requirements there,

but the thing of interest to the Dawson City Chamber of Commerce is, of course, paving the runway. That's something that I wrote a letter to Mr. Dick Van Oostrom from the Dawson City chamber about — our plans to pave in 2017. Again, he recognizes that there's work to be done, but even as late as this week, we still haven't received the written sign-off from Transport Canada with respect to the approach for the jet service in there.

I understand there has been some information requested from Air North and through one of the representatives of Air North that's on the Dawson City chamber, he has mentioned to me that he will be taking a lead role on behalf of Air North in addressing the approach issues that are still outstanding. I mean, again, we've received verbal assurances from Transport Canada but nothing in writing. This was something that I actually discussed with the new Minister of Transport Canada in Ottawa when I was there in early February, Mr. Marc Garneau. He identified that there was still some outstanding requirements — and I believe, at the time, he did identify something with Air North and they're working to get it resolved — exciting news for them. Of course, they will be flying in this summer and next summer, I believe, Holland America passengers from Fairbanks. The other thing that we have to be mindful of with paving the Dawson runway — the example that HPW officials have used is that we had to shut down the Whitehorse runway for 14 days when we paved it. Thankfully, it was an auxiliary runway and we still had the main runway to use. That's not a luxury that we have in Dawson, so scheduling will be extremely important so that we manage the disruption at the Dawson City Airport and make sure that it's minimized for not only Air North, but for the other people who use it, including of course the very important medevac service that requires the use of that runway.

I'm happy to report that since we spoke in the fall the geotech assessment proved that there's very little permafrost underneath the existing runway, so something that could have been a challenge is now something that we don't see as an impediment any more.

Again, I'm happy to be working on it and have offered the Dawson City Chamber of Commerce to be a full partner on the functional planning, given their vested interest in seeing the improvements to the airport and, in particular, the paving. We look forward to answering all the questions that we need to during the development plan and getting on with paving, barring any showstoppers in the 2017 season.

Mr. Speaker, we're planning to replace a number of bridges. Fox Creek bridge replacement will be undertaken this year. There is some rehabilitation work on the Nahanni Range Road; the Silver Trail will be receiving rehabilitation and culvert replacement; we have functional plans for a number of other roads, including the Tagish Road; Top of the World highway and of course we have \$1.5 million set aside for renovations at the Whitehorse air terminal building. This project is a suite of upgrades selected to improve the passenger experience and the operational

efficiency of the building. The scope of the work includes renovations to the washrooms and the check-in area and increasing the capacity of the main hold room, which are the major aspects, as well as repurposing the second floor vacant shelf space in the new terminal. We look forward to that project proceeding once the substantive tourism season is over in the fall, as I understand is the sequencing for that project.

Two highway maintenance camps will be receiving new living quarters — Swift River and Drury Creek — both of which will be replaced at a combined estimate of \$2.558 million. We are seeing significant investments in other airports and aerodromes. Additional investments of \$2.444 million at the Whitehorse airport include: developing lease lots on the south and north sides of apron 2; design work for the ATB baggage handling system upgrade; and rehabilitation of the north apron and pavement patching. Projects in the communities include: repairing drainage issues at the Dawson Airport; resurfacing and dust control at the Faro aerodrome; resurfacing at the Pelly aerodrome; and a fencing extension and dust control at the Old Crow aerodrome. The value of those community aerodromes is \$2.99 million.

There will be Alaska Highway rehabilitation and restoration valued at just over \$2 million for a number of locations on the Alaska Highway that continue to develop sections of settlement due to permafrost degradation and consolidation of soft soil. The Shakwak project of course was mentioned earlier here today with just over \$12 million invested in the northern part of that highway. Building maintenance and space planning, \$3.57 million; building overhead is just over \$1 million; corporate information technology, \$5.2 million. These funds will support the information and technology requirements and meet the business needs, including network infrastructure, systems development and workstations. This initiative includes Highways and Public Works systems development projects, further development of e-services and improvements to the mobile radio system and telecommunications network.

We are continuing to invest in reconstruction and rehabilitation of the Robert Campbell Highway. The Dempster Highway erosion control will see just over \$3 million; Klondike Highway erosion control and rehabilitation, \$1.2 million; \$1.5 million for the Nares River bridge replacement in Carcross; \$50,000 in this year's budget for design, permitting and geotech work at the Nisutlin Bay bridge rehabilitation with construction expected to start in 2018-19; \$5.4 million in transportation planning and engineering, so a variety of projects that will be undertaken under that; and the main admin building upgrade, enhancing the energy efficiency of this building — I spoke about it earlier — \$4.484 million in this budget for that activity as well.

Again there are quite a few initiatives that are underway in Highways and Public Works. These are some of the new initiatives that are underway. It doesn't touch on all of the expenditures, but I'll look forward in debate when

we get into Highways and Public Works to discussing that further.

I'm going to touch briefly on a few of the new initiatives in Energy, Mines and Resources.

The oil and gas action plan is designed to fulfill our government's responsibility to manage and support the sustainable development of oil and gas. The plan also addresses the recommendations of the Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing. As I have done in the past, I would like to thank the members from the government side of the House as well as the three members from the opposition side who put forward those recommendations that we accepted last year.

The plan will comprise four components carried out over a number of years: engagement strategy, First Nation government-to-government engagement, technical projects, and the regulatory regime. Again, some of these funds will be used to drill wells for monitoring water in the Liard Basin. We have baseline work being done on seismic in the Liard Basin as well. Mr. Speaker, unlike other jurisdictions, we're out in front of any potential shale gas activity, as we've mentioned in the past. Our government is open to shale gas activity in the Liard Basin, provided we have the support of the affected First Nations.

I know this certainly sets us apart from other parties in this Legislative Assembly — that we want to explore the opportunities associated with shale gas done in a responsible way. Part of that responsibility, as I mentioned, is that we have baseline information being gathered prior to any activity. I think we may be one of the only jurisdictions in North America or, indeed, the world that has had the opportunity to do that.

Of course there was the recent announcement as well that the Liard Basin has shale gas potential — one of the top basins in the world. I think it's the second-highest basin in North America. I would like to thank the Yukon Geological Survey, as well as the other provincial and territorial geological agencies that participated in that. I believe the National Energy Board as well participated in that study. I would like to thank them for bringing science to the fore and giving us a proper assessment of what the shale gas potential is in the Liard Basin.

Mr. Speaker, this year Yukon will be hosting forestry ministers from across the country. It's scheduled for early June and gives us an excellent opportunity to discuss important matters affecting not only Canada's forest sector, but also to increase the profile of Yukon and its forest industry to a national audience. We will be hosting this in Dawson City, as I mentioned, in early June.

The late Bill Bowie of course was a very strong and tireless advocate for the forest industry here in the territory. His mill, I believe, still supplies the chips to the biomass facility that we have in Dawson City and I was able to tour that last year and was very excited by the opportunities that exist there and helped to inform the biomass strategy that EMR has put together as well as space-heating opportunities that we'll be identifying in two rural communities —

Haines Junction and Watson Lake — and looking for opportunities to heat government buildings. These are space-heating opportunities in government with the potential for private buildings as well to be added on in those communities.

The wind turbines — I know the Member for Kluane mentioned those in his response. EMR is providing \$1 million over the next two and a half years to the Kluane Community Development Corporation to install three wind turbines. Electricity will be supplied to the communities of Burwash Landing and Destruction Bay via the existing microgrid.

Another exciting thing that we've established here in the past number of months is the Strategic Initiatives Division. The new unit in EMR is dedicated to working on strategic initiatives, including the devolution transfer agreement protocol, mine licensing improvement initiative and the mineral development strategy. I look forward to getting into details on all three of those initiatives, once we get into EMR debate later on in the session.

When it comes to land development — Fifth and Rogers — a joint news release between us and the City of Whitehorse went out last week. There is a master planning exercise underway for future development at that site in downtown Whitehorse. A further \$300,000 will be allocated in this budget to complete that work.

The rural land development program, as members will know, transferred over to Energy, Mines and Resources a number of years ago. We have land development protocols signed with Watson Lake, Carmacks, Dawson City, Faro, Haines Junction, Mayo and Teslin. What they do is outline a proactive and collaborative approach that fosters plan development to meet community needs for affordable lots. We will see rural land development occurring in this budget year in Carcross, Carmacks and Dawson City.

I just announced urban and country residential lots in planning, industrial lots in Faro, additional lots in Haines Junction. The largest expenditure will be \$1 million in Mayo for country residential and industrial lots. Teslin will receive \$100,000 in additional development and planning of residential lots. Watson Lake — planning and development of urban and country residential lots. A number of different areas — Ibex Valley, Sunnydale, and Marshall Creek — will receive money for agricultural lot development.

I guess the other land piece that I want to touch on before I conclude remarks is the cottage lots close to Dutch Harbour on Kluane Lake. I know that's another exciting opportunity for us to provide titled recreational lots to Yukoners. It's something that we did at Bennett and Tagish lakes last year. It is something that we are looking forward to moving on this year as well.

Motion to adjourn debate

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I move that debate be now adjourned.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Highways and Public Works that debate be now adjourned.

Motion to adjourn debate on Bill No. 23 agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 253

1st Session

33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, April 13, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER — Hon. David Laxton, MLA, Porter Creek Centre

DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Darrell Pasloski	Mountainview	Premier Minister responsible for Finance; Executive Council Office
Hon. Elaine Taylor	Whitehorse West	Deputy Premier Minister responsible for Tourism and Culture; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Justice; Yukon Development Corporation/ Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Doug Graham	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Education
Hon. Scott Kent	Riverdale North	Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources; Highways and Public Works
Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Community Services; Public Service Commission
Hon. Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Minister responsible for Environment
Hon. Mike Nixon	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin	Minister responsible for Economic Development; Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Party

Darius Elias	Government House Leader Vuntut Gwitchin
Hon. David Laxton	Porter Creek Centre
Patti McLeod	Watson Lake

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

New Democratic Party

Elizabeth Hanson	Leader of the Official Opposition Whitehorse Centre
Jan Stick	Official Opposition House Leader Riverdale South
Kevin Barr	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes
Lois Moorcroft	Copperbelt South
Jim Tredger	Mayo-Tatchun
Kate White	Takhini-Kopper King

Liberal Party

Sandy Silver	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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Sergeant-at-Arms	Rudy Couture
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Doris McLean
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, April 13, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will now proceed with the Order Paper. Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Volunteer Week

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I rise today to pay tribute to the many Yukoners who give their time and efforts to others as volunteers in their communities.

People across Canada are celebrating National Volunteer Week, which began on Sunday and continues until April 16. Yukoners volunteer to feed our hungry, protect our vulnerable, comfort the lonely and educate our children. Volunteers support the cultural, recreation and sporting events we attend and participate in. They beautify our greenspaces and they nourish our souls.

Whether they volunteer for a one-time event or become a board or committee member for many years, volunteers make a difference. We thank volunteers for all that they do to make Yukon a great place to live, work, play and raise a family.

Mr. Speaker, in the gallery today we have representatives from some of the volunteer community organizations. I would like to pause for a moment and honour them: Doug Caldwell is acting director of Volunteer Bénévoles Yukon; Bruno Bourdache is executive director for Volunteer Bénévoles Yukon; Dion Zdunic is communications officer for Volunteer Bénévoles Yukon; Dave Whiteside is president of the United Way Yukon; I also see Eileen Melnychuck up there and she's also with Volunteer Bénévoles Yukon as well.

Thank you to all of you for all that you and your organizations give back to Yukon and to Yukoners.

Yesterday, the Governor General awarded the inaugural Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers to 55 Canadians. Two Yukon volunteers are among that generous group: Marg White and Ruth Armson.

Marg has been a volunteer for more than 25 years with Yukon Curling Association and Athletics Yukon. She is also a member of the Sport Yukon Hall of Fame and a highly regarded official in both curling and in athletics.

Marg's devotion and efforts have led to the success of Whitehorse's athletic community, where she has provided local athletes with opportunities to learn and grow. Marg has been timing running and walking events since the 1980s — in the rain, in the sun, in the snow — and always with a smile and an encouraging word for the athletes, most of whom she knows by name.

For more than 30 years, Ruth Armson has fostered the development of creativity and self-confidence through

literature and theatre. She has volunteered thousands of hours in multiple roles with the Yukon Arts Centre as a teacher, a mentorship program coordinator and a facilitator for the seniors' memoir writing class. Ruth is also a former winner of the Commissioner's Award for Public Service. I congratulate them both on receiving this sovereign medal for volunteers and thank them for all that they have done for sports and arts in Whitehorse. Yukoners are proud to call them our own and, collectively, we are inspired by their tireless efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I know that each of my colleagues in this House can name volunteers like Ruth and Marg — Yukoners who have made a difference in their communities.

At this point, I would just actually like to acknowledge my wife, who has volunteered for many years with the kindergarten classes at Elijah Smith Elementary School and Takhini Elementary and just really enjoyed herself also as a volunteer for the Haywood Ski Nationals.

Our community libraries are run by volunteer boards and enhanced by community members who assist with programs and special events. Yukon has an incredibly high number of non-profit organizations that thrive because of the dedication of volunteers. The cultural identity of our territory is brought to light by volunteers in our numerous arts, culture and tourism organizations. Sporting events like ski loppets, bike races and broomball tournaments happen throughout the territory because of the time and the dedication of volunteers.

There are parents and families who are deeply involved in their children's education and classrooms, through field trips, school councils and committees. First Nation elders and community members pass their wisdom, knowledge and their languages on to the next generation in school programs.

We have many volunteers who give countless hours to better the lives of residents in our continuing care facilities. They assist with recreational activities, visit residents one-on-one, bring their dogs to visit, provide medical escorts, and so much more. There are volunteers participating in sports and tutoring programs in true community spirit, setting a great example for our kids.

Major events, like the softball world championships, the recent Haywood Ski Nationals and the annual Native Hockey Tournament, unite us as volunteers and as sports fans. Our 28 Yukon sport organizations and many more special recreation groups like Girl Guides and Boy Scouts, Special Olympics Yukon and Skookum Jim Friendship Centre — just to name a few, Mr. Speaker — can operate because volunteers believe in the value that these programs bring to our communities and of course to our citizens.

Our communities are made safer by volunteer emergency responders. We all live better knowing that there are well-trained, well-equipped volunteers providing firefighting, search and rescue and emergency medical services throughout our territory. Hundreds of Yukoners have stepped forward to be heroes in their communities. This kind of volunteer work isn't easy. Our first responders invest time and training to learn new skills. They perform physically and emotionally challenging tasks and they have to take time away from their home lives to do it; but they do it because they are building

the kind of community they want to be a part of. They do it because they see the difference it makes for their friends and for their neighbours.

They do it because it makes them grow. It makes them proud. It makes them better. For that, the volunteer first responders have my thanks and admiration.

Of course, they are not only heroes in their communities; countless volunteers work to change our lives and shape our communities in ways we might not even realize — for example, those who work tirelessly on our local advisory councils to help make their communities a better place to live.

Finally, I would like to mention the Yukon Community Crime Stoppers Association that was incorporated in March 2016 and will be launched this spring with the aim of enhancing public reporting and prevention of crime. This association is the result of the work of a number of volunteers from a variety of backgrounds who are all committed to making a difference in our communities.

For all the ways volunteers make our lives and our communities vibrant, healthy and connected, Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize National Volunteer Week. I invite all of my colleagues here in this Legislative Assembly and my fellow Yukoners to again give a round of applause to those volunteers sitting in the gallery and to join me in collectively saying a huge thank you to our tireless and dedicated Yukon volunteers. Our lives would not be the same without volunteers dedicating their time to making a difference.

Applause

Mr. Barr: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the NDP Official Opposition to pay tribute to the thousands of Yukon volunteers during National Volunteer Week. Government offers up the framework of the territory, but it is the hundreds of volunteers who fill in all the gaps. Government could never afford to replace similar services or the hundreds of thousands of hours donated by volunteers.

We thank them for those early-morning hours put in by hockey and swimming coaches — people who are often out of bed before the birds start to sing, encouraging kids with their love of sport. We are thankful for those late-night hours put in by emergency response volunteers while we're safe in our beds. These volunteers, who give their time to fire, EMS, search and rescue — to name a few — these volunteers make sure we're safe and secure in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I think back to that first beautiful Sunday afternoon a couple of weeks ago when I was out in Tagish and I went by the volunteer fire department. There were firefighters gathered there to train, and they had been there on the Saturday also and practised in Tagish. We might take for granted that when we go to spend our beautiful spring days enjoying things like the celebration of the swans, these volunteers are training to better protect us when the crisis arrives.

Every sport organization in the territory — from soccer to lawn bowling, basketball to softball; for the young to the old — is run with the help of volunteers. Many parents at one point or another will coach a sport team and many of those

continue coaching long after their children have moved on. Volunteers make sure that we all have a chance to play and participate in sport.

Economic drivers like music and arts and cultural festivals wouldn't be possible without the countless volunteers that support these important threads that join our communities together. Nothing joins a community together like a celebration, and Yukoners give of themselves freely to make them happen.

We can't forget organizations or groups that embrace those who have fallen on tough times. From the volunteers at soup kitchens and food banks, to church groups, our neighbours, and volunteer organizations that tackle tough social issues, these folks are a smile, a bowl of soup, or a hug in our time of greatest need. We can't forget our friends and neighbours who shovel our driveways when we aren't able or bring us food when we are sick. Just last month, my neighbour brought me food a few times and it's a very kind gesture. They offer us support in our times of need to stop or help change tires on the side of the road. All these actions are freely given to help to strengthen our communities.

Mr. Speaker, there are far too many groups and individuals to list, but we feel their contributions to our communities each and every day — these contributions of time, energy and effort are a large part of what lures the people to the Yukon to visit, but convinces them to stay.

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I also want to rise and pay tribute to National Volunteer Week.

I want to talk specifically about my community. We had some great tributes here about the generalities, but I wanted to draw down on some specific volunteers in my town. It was employment that brought me to Dawson City, Mr. Speaker, but it was the spirit of volunteerism and the community involvement that made this vibrant community my home.

One of the first people that I met in the community was a guy by the name of Jason Barber. He was a city employee at that time and he spent tireless hours going above and beyond his position in the town. Because of his long-time volunteerism and also because of Parks, the city and Property Management, private businesses knew that anything he would borrow for whatever event that he was volunteering for, they knew he would take things back in better condition than he borrowed it. He had a key for every single building in the town. It was guys like Jason and others who really made me want to be part of that community.

At the same time, our current mayor, Mayor Wayne Potoroka, was the head of the "bull gang" for the Dawson City Music Festival my very first year in Dawson City. The bull gang — if members don't already know — is the group of community members who spent a week or longer leading up to the Dawson City Music Festival setting up the grounds and the large tents for the festival goers. The group of volunteers who were on that bull gang my very first summer made me know that this was my home. The Dawson City Music Festival is put on mostly by volunteers and brings visitors from all over Dawson City and all over the Yukon

who turn up and support this beautiful festival — Canada's perfect tiny festival — which ends up making us a very unique community.

Whether it is the Klondike Visitors Association that puts on the annual Thaw di Gras festival in early March, requiring many volunteers and participants from our town, the volunteers organize events like road hockey tournaments, snowshoe baseball tournaments, dog and cat shows, chili cook-offs, tea-boiling contests and many others — all in the spirit of community and getting people out of their winter hibernation.

Another great example is the Sled Dawgs. It is a non-profit organization based in Dawson City that again relies on a number of volunteers to host such events as Trek Over the Top or the Yukon Quest. They maintain winter trails and they promote an active lifestyle in and around Dawson — again, made up of volunteers. I would like to take the opportunity as well to give one particular individual credit for his volunteer time: Steve Laszlo. Steve Laszlo is the local physical education teacher, and he coaches children of all ages in a variety of sports, filling almost every available weekend and evening. He is not only coaching students, but adults: women's hockey teams and men's hockey teams.

I think it's important to recognize Steve for this reason. Steve is a teacher. His job ends every weekday at 4:00 p.m., but he and the rest of our volunteers believe in a community responsibility to go beyond the job description. The spirit of coaching teaches fairness and inclusion, while promoting a healthy lifestyle — all of which contribute to a healthy and a vibrant community. I'm very, very proud to represent the Klondike constituency, which has a vast number of community members who volunteer for a number of societies and organizations, all of whom deserve personal credit. The groups help and support the community, which has a profound impact on the quality of life for all of our community members.

To all of the volunteers, thank you very, very much for all of your work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

In recognition of International Day of Pink

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud today to rise on behalf of all members of the Legislature to pay tribute to the International Day of Pink.

May I begin first by applauding all members for the various ways that they have found to honour this day through their choice of garment or clothing — some in various ways, different ways — but I applaud everyone for making the effort to wear at least a garment of some kind of pink today.

Annual days of observance such as this one can start to feel routine after a time, but we must not lose sight of the importance of this particular day as evidenced by the degree to which it has been embraced around the world in such a relatively short time. What has now become an international day — a phenomenon really — began right here in Canada.

Members no doubt know the basic story but bear with me because I believe it bears retelling. David Shepherd and

Travis Price, seniors at Central Kings Rural High School in Cambridge, Nova Scotia, witnessed a grade 9 student being bullied in 2007. The student was wearing a pink t-shirt to school that day. David and Travis intervened in the incident and afterwards, they decided to take action to prevent future occurrences of such bullying in their school. They went out and purchased dozens of pink women's tank tops and took them to school the next day. The message was also being spread by social media and through other means and the next day, the school became a sea of pink with not dozens, but hundreds of students — 80 percent of the student body — standing in solidarity with the bullied student.

Travis explained his motivation in a recent television interview. To quote him: "For me it was like standing up for myself because I was bullied as well when I was a kid; throughout all of school, so it was a way for me to stand up for myself. It was a way for me to stand up for this grade 9 student. It was a way for me to really make a difference in my school."

"A way to make a difference in my school", Mr. Speaker — that's truly an understatement. Travis' and David's actions and those of their schoolmates have gone beyond — far beyond — their own school in rural Nova Scotia. In solidarity with David and Travis, Yukon schools participated in Sea of Pink in November of 2007 and have done so every year since then. Pink Shirt Day is now an annual event in Canada, observed in schools all across the country every February.

In 2012, the United Nations declared an annual anti-bullying day, which is now recognized in more than 25 countries worldwide and involves literally millions of people.

Of course we have the International Day of Pink, the second Wednesday in April, which we are honouring here today. While pink may have specific gender connotations in North America, that's not true in every part of the world or in every culture, and it has certainly not been true throughout history.

In the 1980s, a pink suit — a silk suit — with floral embroidery would have been considered very masculine. Pink after all is a shade of red, a colour that has historically been seen as warlike. In a June 1918 edition of the trade publication *Earnshaw's Infants' Department*, a children's fashion magazine, we read this: "The generally accepted rule is pink for the boys, and blue for the girls. The reason is that pink, being a more decided and stronger color, is more suitable for the boy, while blue, which is more delicate and dainty, is prettier for the girl." For reasons unknown, the situation changed to the exact opposite in the 1940s when clothing manufacturers decided on pink for girls and blue for boys.

I mention all of this Mr. Speaker, to point out the powerful and changing societal associations with colour. The simple act of one student wearing a particular colour outside of a current norm triggered bullying behaviour at a school in Nova Scotia, and the single act of many students doing the same triggered an international movement to stand together against this kind of behaviour.

In closing I would like to acknowledge the very good work being done in Yukon schools by administrators, teachers

and students to build safe and caring school communities. Our safe and caring schools policy, available for all to read on the department website, is much more than words. To quote from the policy, “The Safe and Caring Schools policy is a commitment of the school community to plan, strategize and create a respectful, safe and nurturing educational environment for everyone. Incidents of bullying, harassment, discrimination, intimidation or any unwelcome behavior that degrade a person on the basis of personal characteristics, gender, sexual orientation, race or disability will be addressed in a timely, effective and consistent manner in order to...” ensure all students feel welcome at school.

I’m very proud of this, Mr. Speaker, and I believe that all members of this Legislature should be proud to be part of the process that implemented this policy in Yukon schools. I applaud all of you who have embraced the policy in spirit and in practice to make all of our schools safe and caring environments for Yukon children.

I leave members with this one final thought: a pink shirt doesn’t stop bullying; all of us do.

Applause

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I rise to acknowledge in the gallery today Mr. Collin Young.

Mr. Collin Young is a chartered accountant. He owns a local business. He’s a constituent and to me, most importantly, he is a friend as well. Along with him is his brother Chris, who is, I’m sure, well known by all members of this Legislative Assembly. He works in our offices.

I would invite all members of this Legislature to welcome them.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I would like to introduce two people. First — this individual has already been recognized in the gallery — is David Whiteside, who is an incredible volunteer with United Way and a constituent of Porter Creek South. David, thank you for your tireless hours and welcome to the gallery. As well, a long-time friend of mine and a Health and Social Services employee working with residential youth treatment services and a constituent of Copperbelt South — a long-time friend, Ryan Hannah. Ryan, welcome to the gallery.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I would like to ask all members to join me in welcoming two constituents to the gallery. Peter Wojtowicz has joined us here again today — welcome, Peter — and although he has already been introduced, I would like to also recognize Doug Caldwell, a constituent of many years. Doug and his wife, Chris, have lived in my riding for quite some time. Chris, as members will know, is a well-known local artist whose art can be found not only in homes and businesses across the territory, but on the coasters that we

have here in our Legislative Assembly on the desks of many members.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 99: *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I move that Bill No. 99, entitled *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 99, entitled *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 99 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?

Bill No. 97: *Chartered Professional Accountants Act* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I move that Bill No. 97, entitled *Chartered Professional Accountants Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 97, entitled *Chartered Professional Accountants Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 97 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?

Bill No. 201: *Act to Amend the Placer Mining Act and the Quartz Mining Act* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Kent: I move that Bill No. 201, entitled *Act to Amend the Placer Mining Act and the Quartz Mining Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that Bill No. 201, entitled *Act to Amend the Placer Mining Act and the Quartz Mining Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

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

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Governor of the Bank of Canada to:

(1) in featuring iconic Canadian women on new banknotes, to include Martha Louise Black, known as “Yukon’s First Lady”, a champion of the territory, who was the first foreign-born woman to be elected to the House of Commons and the second woman in Canada to become a Member of Parliament;

(2) ensure Canadian women continue to be featured on Canadian banknotes in recognition of their many contributions to shaping history and life in Canada, including outstanding leadership, achievement or distinction in any field, benefitting the people of Canada, or in the service of Canada; and

(3) ensure Yukon and northern perspectives are taken into account by expanding the Bank of Canada’s Advisory Council to include representation from Yukon and northern women.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to commit to develop and invest in a territorial suicide prevention plan in collaboration with non-governmental organizations providing mental health services in communities, mental health professionals, First Nation governments, youth organizations and the public.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to take immediate steps to address the unacceptably long wait times for alcohol and drug services counselling.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Government surplus

Ms. Hanson: When the Premier tabled his first budget in 2012, he forecast an \$80-million surplus. He touted strong Yukon Party economics and values to justify his agenda. Four years later, as he stood here in the Legislative Assembly, his surplus had dwindled down to \$1.25 million, almost \$79 million less than when he took office. The money went down the drain thanks to poor fiscal planning. We all know that Cabinet gives direction on the budget’s political priorities and, each year, the Yukon Party Cabinet has come up short-sighted and uninspired. We also know, thanks to indexed transfer payments from the federal government, how much money Yukon can expect to have several years in advance.

Mr. Speaker, what does the Premier have to say to Yukoners, whose \$80-million surplus he drained away?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, this gives me an opportunity to talk a little bit about the recent statement by the Yukon Chamber of Commerce. This is regarding our 2016-17 budget, a budget that is a result of 60 community meetings in

all communities across this territory, talking to hundreds of Yukoners. I want to thank those Yukoners for providing their input to help us with this budget. For example, investments in infrastructure — the chamber gives us a grade of A, saying that improvements to roads, airfields, and fibre optic and cellular infrastructure are excellent. Investments identified are all beneficial to the economy and the prudence of the government in both identifying and investigating capital expenditures should be commended.

Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of this budget.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, this spring the Conference Board of Canada reminded all Canadians that Yukon’s gross domestic product shrank for the third straight year. Yukon is facing hard times, despite the Premier’s glossy glow. Those hard times are a direct result of this government’s inability to plan for the future and, in the process of not being able to plan, they have dwindled our territory’s \$80-million surplus.

How can the Premier claim to have any credibility on economic issues when he took office with a large surplus and stable revenue and is now leaving it with no surplus and three years of recession?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: We continue to hear that both the NDP and Liberals are living under a rock. This government continues to invest during this economic downturn. We continue to keep taxes low for Yukoners, keeping more money in their pockets.

To go back to the Yukon Chamber of Commerce — when they talk about investments in community, it is another A grade. The Yukon Chamber of Commerce is pleased with the level of capital investment in Yukon community facilities from water and sewer systems to subdivision planning and to fire halls. When it comes to taxation — another A; no tax increases for families or businesses. The Yukon currently has some of the lowest corporate tax rates in the country, which is positive for attracting and retaining business. We are listening to Yukoners and we are delivering for Yukoners.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I note he did not read the grade for procurement.

You know, we aren’t the only people with questions about the Yukon Party government’s strange approach to budgeting. The C.D. Howe Institute gave Yukon a failing grade in 2014 for consistently mismanaging the territory’s finances. The Auditor General has accused the Yukon Party government of lacking strategic planning and poor implementation of budget policy. These are well-respected and impartial economic bodies.

Will the Premier take the C.D. Howe Institute and the Auditor General’s words to heart and admit that the Yukon Party has failed to deliver an economic strategy for Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the Leader of the NDP has brought up procurement because that was in fact the lowest mark that we had — an overall grade of B-plus, but we did get a C in procurement. Let me quote the chamber. It says that the government has recognized it has a problem here and is undertaking to do something about it.

When it comes to the C.D. Howe report, let me just tell you that they acknowledge the recent change in processes

made by Yukon by stating — and I quote: “Yukon also deserves a compliment. Its budgets are now consistent with public accounts, making it the one territory where our reader would be able to find the comparable numbers.” Those are changes that have occurred since I became Premier and Finance minister. At the end of the day, our fiscal position, our strong fiscal position, the envious position of this entire country, ultimately is the statement of our financial position. That continues to be very strong.

Question re: School supplies funding

Mr. Tredger: Last week, the Yukon Party government tabled a budget flush with pre-election promises and giveaways targeted to help them buy another term in office. What takes the cake, though, is the fact that they plan to send Yukon families with children a cheque for \$100 for school supplies per child just weeks before an anticipated election call. That is over \$520,000 that could be better spent supporting strategically identified needs of students in the classroom.

Yukoners have told us that they’re tired of the ad hoc, cynical Yukon Party tactics. Does this government really think that Yukon families will let themselves be bought with token handouts while our children and teachers really need evidence-based, strategic investments in our schools?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I am really disappointed in the member opposite. In the first place, what we did is promise \$100 for every student in the school system. That money will go to school councils throughout the territory to be spent on school supplies.

We’ve responded to a request from the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees. In fact, I attended their meeting on Friday last week and was complimented because this is something that the association has asked for a number of times.

All members opposite have said that, during these difficult economic times, isn’t it great that we’re able to provide this money to school councils to ensure that every schoolchild receives adequate school supplies? I heard the member opposite just the other day saying “fair, equal territory”. This will make it fair and equal, because not only children attending schools in our territory, but those students being homeschooled will receive the same funding.

Mr. Tredger: It sounds good on paper. Many Yukon parents dread that annual list of school supplies. It always seems to get longer. We know that school supplies are one part of the classroom, but so are the people who help our children grow and learn. While government hands out vote-buying cheques to Yukon parents, fees for school essentials like field trips and educational activities remain significant barriers to some Yukon students. Often teachers will pay for these fees out-of-pocket when their students can’t afford to themselves.

Can the minister assure this Legislature that no student is denied the chance to go on a school-authorized field trip or take part in special projects due to a lack of funding?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Once again, the member opposite has shown how far out of touch he is with the Yukon school community. As I just stated, this money will be going to school councils throughout the territory.

Now, what we’ve also done is, in cooperation with the school councils in the territory, we will determine exactly what this money that will be allocated to each school may be used for. Over the next couple of weeks, we’ll determine the parameters for the spending, when the funding will be available to school councils, and how it can be dispensed — because what is a school supply to me or you may not be a school supply to someone else.

So all of the things, including school fees for specific events, will be discussed by the department and school councils in a cooperative manner as this government does throughout all of our dealings with the public, and we’ll try to ensure that the reasonable requests of students and teachers across the territory are met.

Mr. Tredger: That sounds like an administrative nightmare.

I worked in the Yukon’s educational system for several decades, and I know how much teachers and staff subsidize school activities and opportunities. Let’s hope some of this money finds a way to alleviate that.

The Auditor General of Canada has been very clear that this government has failed to do the strategic planning to support Yukon’s hard-working educators with a long-term vision. First Nations have raised concerns about the future of aboriginal language and cultural learning in public schools. The list goes on: mismanaged bus contracts; senior officials with phony credentials; cutting corners to assess special-needs students.

Mr. Speaker, does this government really believe that Yukon families will forget their poor track record on education because of a \$100 pre-election promise?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, I am extremely disappointed hearing these comments from the member opposite, especially when his own colleague stated just the other day what great school councils we have in the territory and how her husband, a teacher himself, had to — as many other teachers do — take funding out of his own pockets to assist students by buying school supplies.

Mr. Speaker, that’s what this funding will alleviate. We realize it will be an administrative burden to some schools, especially the larger schools around the territory; however, we believe that those school administrations will accept the challenge of receiving this funding from the school councils. I’m sure the school councils will give school administrations every ability to be included in the discussions leading up to how this money will be spent.

Mr. Speaker, some of the other comments the member opposite made such as we’re out of touch with First Nations — all we have to look at is the joint education action plan. All we have to look at are the number of agreements that we have signed with individual First Nations across this territory. We have to look at the changes in curriculum and we have to look at the cooperation — the excellent cooperation — we have

received from First Nations and people across the territory with the new vision.

Question re: Economic growth

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Premier. In early March, the Yukon Party had taxpayers pay for a flyer that was mailed across the territory. It was a report to Yukoners that tried to make the case that this government is growing our economy. Our economy has in fact shrunk over the last three years.

Taxpayers are also paying to promote the Premier's budget in ads on Facebook. In bold letters, there's a quote from the Premier: "Government needs to support the economy, not become the economy."

I couldn't agree more, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, just the opposite is happening in today's Yukon. Under the failed economic policies of this government, private sector jobs have dropped by 600 in the last year and private sector jobs have increased by 500. Under the Yukon Party government, the private sector is shrinking and the public sector is growing. The government's own statistics prove that.

Mr. Speaker, why are taxpayers covering the costs for these misleading ads?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: It is important for the government to communicate with citizens in this Yukon Territory, as the other two parties do on a regular basis as well, Mr. Speaker.

What the piece of literature that the Leader of the Liberal Party was talking about was really very important because what it did was stated to Yukoners and showed very graphically what we have delivered on all our campaign commitments from 2011. We have either completed them or we're doing them. Here is a party that not only talks the talk but walks the walk. I got into politics simply because — one of the reasons was I was tired of politicians who made lots of promises and then failed to deliver. This is a party that made commitments and has delivered on those commitments.

Mr. Silver: I got into politics too, Mr. Speaker, because of a rec centre promise to my community, but we'll save that for another day.

Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Party likes to pretend that it's a champion for the private sector. When we go beyond that — the taxpayers' ads — the real story is plain to see. Last year, despite record spending from this government and record transfers from Ottawa, the number of private sector jobs dropped by 600 people. What is growing under this government's watch is the public sector — across the territory it is up 500 since this time last year. Over the same period the percentage of people working in the private sector has also dropped, while the percentage of people working for the government has increased. The public sector now employs 45.5 percent of working people in the Yukon. That's up from 43 percent just a year ago. Under the Yukon Party, the government is becoming the economy. No matter how many Facebook ads the government buys, it's not going to change that.

Why has this government failed to grow the private sector?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: What we heard is something that the public sector should get very fearful about. Look out, public sector. The public sector Yukoners want to know what jobs that the Liberal Party will cut when they come into power. Will it be teachers? Will it be nurses? Will it be people who look after our roads or our education assistants? That's what Yukoners want to know when it comes to the Liberal Party.

Let's also talk about long-term care. We heard yesterday that the Liberal leader would cancel the very much-needed long-term care facility in Whitehorse and what he would do is he will build one in all the communities. There are only two outcomes to that statement. One is the absolute bankruptcy of this government; the second one would be that he would just break his promise.

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, the Premier in both his budget speeches at the Chamber of Commerce and also his second budget speech here in the House is desperately clinging to this notion that this government is growing the economy and growing the private sector. Neither of these claims is backed up by the government's own stats.

The government's own economic forecast says that our economy has been in decline for three years in a row and that makes it the worst performing jurisdiction in all of Canada. Our economy has gotten smaller. Our private sector has gotten smaller as well. There are fewer private sector jobs than a year ago — 600 fewer — and the Premier will not address that issue.

Why won't the Premier simply level with Yukoners instead of continuing to pretend that the private sector is growing?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, I have already said it once today and here is an example. The Liberal leader is again living under a rock. Sadly he has no understanding of the economic forces that are at play.

This government continues to invest and is applauded by the Chamber of Commerce for our tremendous investment in capital to create jobs and build infrastructure for the future. They have just commended us on it.

We will continue to focus on our regulatory and permitting processes. We will continue to focus on diversifying our economy through the creation of a knowledge economy with fibre optic. With expansion of Yukon College, we'll continue to invest in all those infrastructure programs and training programs. We will come out of this downturn, Mr. Speaker, in a very good position and we're very confident and, as I said in the budget speech, my view of the territory's future is very, very optimistic under a Yukon Party government.

Question re: Reconciliation with Yukon First Nations

Ms. White: Last Friday, representatives from First Nations and the territorial and federal governments met for an intergovernmental forum. Representatives discussed the truth and reconciliation recommendations, infrastructure and the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women.

Mr. Speaker, reconciliation is a process that starts with the individual. Our choice of language is important when discussing the many injustices experienced by indigenous Canadians. For this reason, I was deeply disappointed to hear that the Premier state that the Yukon was — and I quote: “punching above its weight” on the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women. This is a territory suffering from distressingly high incidents of violence against women.

Mr. Speaker, there have been 39 missing or murdered indigenous women and girls identified in Yukon. This choice of phrase was inappropriate and victimizing in nature.

Does the Premier acknowledge that his language choice was offensive and contrary to the goals of reconciliation?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, this government is very proud of the work — the collaboration — that it has done over the past couple of years in respect to missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. That is, in fact, why this government has worked very diligently and very hard in collaboration with Yukon aboriginal women’s organizations and Yukon First Nation governments.

Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite will recall, we were very proud to be able to host Yukon’s regional roundtable on this issue. We have hosted a number of respective family gatherings and have listened directly from the families themselves, and are acting collaboratively together and working with the Government of Canada to fulfill those recommendations made by those families.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, the issue is the Premier using the line, “punching above its weight.” On Monday, for the second time in less than a week, we heard the Premier undermine the goals of reconciliation through an inappropriate remark. When questioned about this government’s track record on reconciliation, the Premier stated — and I quote again: “There are many paths to reconciliation. I will give an example of one that occurred very recently. That was the 39th annual Native Hockey Tournament that the Minister of Education and I — I think we refereed 12 or 13 games each.”

Mr. Speaker, many were rightfully offended to hear the Premier’s comments. Stable funding and access to community sports programs that reflect the cultures and traditions and aboriginal peoples would be a step toward reconciliation by this government, but the Premier refereeing a hockey game is not.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier apologize to Yukoners for the disregard he showed for reconciliation through these comments?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I guess, when I brought up the 39th annual Native Hockey Tournament, there was a bit of plagiarism there, because I have to admit that the person who actually brought it up during our meeting with the federal minister and all the First Nation chiefs about what an example of reconciliation this was, was none other than Chief Doris Bill. She was the one who identified how important that Native Hockey Tournament was to this, and how it is indeed, as I have said many times, just one of the things that we need to do toward the path of reconciliation.

We are indeed very proud of the work that we have done on the issue of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. I’m very proud of the work of the Deputy Premier, the work of Chief Doris Bill and Chief Carl Sidney, and the leaders of the Yukon aboriginal women’s organizations, and the strength that we’ve had — the representation of Yukon families representing Yukon at the national roundtable. Yukon Territory has had two regional roundtables. We’ve had a family gathering. We have done some incredible work. They have done some incredible work that we very much support. I will very proudly again say we are the envy of this country when it comes to the progress that we’ve made on this issue.

Ms. White: It appears that this Premier is living under a rock. This government claims to support reconciliation; however, we see the goals of reconciliation undermined time and time again by this government and this Premier. Reconciliation —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Order, please.

The Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Elias: I just heard the member opposite personalize debate in addressing the Honourable Premier as undermining reconciliation. I believe that is out of order in this Assembly. It’s inflammatory language that is going to cause discord in this Assembly.

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

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, I did not hear even a point of order in terms of which number was addressed here, but I really don’t think there was sudden discord in this Assembly, and I would say that this is just a dispute among members. Thank you.

Speaker’s statement

Speaker: I’ll take it under advisement and rule later, if it’s required.

Please continue.

Ms. White: This government claims to support reconciliation; however, we see the goals of reconciliation undermined time and time again by this very same government. Reconciliation must be a priority of this government and that starts with the individual actions of our Members of the Legislative Assembly.

When will the Premier apologize for the disregard he showed for reconciliation through his recent comments and choice of language?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: This government continues to work on a path to reconciliation through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s calls to action. Immediately upon those calls to action coming out, I tasked this government to do a review of where we are — what’s our progress report on what we’ve done so far? I shared that report with the Yukon First Nation leadership. From that, I also shared with them our desire that First Nations lead the

charge when it comes to finding the path forward to meet the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

At the meeting that we had last week with all the leadership and the federal minister, a proposal went forward to the Government of Canada — a proposal that was made by First Nation leadership on how we can move ahead to continue to deal with this. This is an issue that we all agree not only is the responsibility of the public government and First Nation governments, but all of us as individuals and all of us as organizations and service clubs. We'll continue down that path.

We continue to support the Yukon First Nation leadership as guiding the path in this process. We are very proud of the progress to date.

Question re: Government surplus

Ms. Moorcroft: In his budget speech, the Minister of Finance announced he had discovered the concept of innovative budgeting. Interesting.

When this version of the Yukon Party took responsibility for Yukon's financial well-being in 2012, the forecasted surplus was \$80 million. Now the 2015-16 supplementary budget forecasts our budget surplus at just \$1.2 million. Apparently, the idea behind innovative budgeting is to introduce ideas and concepts to make government more efficient in its use of public funds and allow for cost savings. This sounds a lot like results-based management, a concept being practised by many organizations and governments across Canada for years.

Mr. Speaker, why did the government wait until now, months before an election, to introduce the concept of results-based management?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, what I noted in my Budget Address is that we are seeing governments almost entirely across this country tabling deficits. I also took note to state that the net debt of the provinces and territories in this country is approximately \$600 billion. This territory has no net debt. We have money in the bank and, in fact, are the envy of this entire country.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, in his speech, the minister indicated this initiative would not result in layoffs or cuts in the level of services. Innovative budgeting is meant to be a process led by the public service to find efficiencies and reduce costs; however, the Premier did indicate that the government would be looking to save \$2 million in this fiscal year, but beyond this very few details seem to be available at this time.

Mr. Speaker, how did the Premier arrive at the \$2 million figure?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, this budget commitment on innovative budgeting is really a public service-led initiative aimed at fostering innovation in the Government of Yukon. We believe that innovation can improve services to Yukoners and save taxpayers' money without cutting any jobs or services. \$2 million is a very modest goal at this point when we look in the context of a budget that exceeds \$1.3 billion. Every dollar counts for this

government and we are confident that the public service-led initiative will be successful.

Ms. Moorcroft: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is another vague non-answer.

As part of the innovative budgeting initiative, this government indicates that they will access any third-party funds available to carry out important infrastructure or other projects in Yukon. This government always communicates the contributions it receives from Canada and the financial partnerships with other third parties whenever a project is announced. Isn't this something the Yukon Party should have been consistently doing to aid in the development of projects that benefit Yukon and Canada as a whole?

What's new and innovative about accessing third-party funds?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, we continue to partner with the federal government and continue to partner with First Nations and we will always continue to do that. This is an initiative to look to innovation to create some savings without cutting jobs, without cutting services and that is the commitment that is done. We are very confident in the public service and being able to do this.

Of course, we again hear the NDP — but of course the Liberals as well — try to interpret this and try to create what I believe is misinformation for members of the public. Sadly, we've heard it many times. Let's look back at F.H. Collins, which wasn't going to have enough insulation. It was going to be built for 400 students. Mr. Speaker, it goes on and on and on.

We're very proud of our accomplishments. We are focused on the territory. We know — Yukoners know — there is only one party in this territory that is not encumbered to be affiliated with a federal party. It is the Yukon Party.

While the NDP and the Liberals will continue to stand up for such things as a tax on carbon, we will be there to stand up for Yukoners.

Question re: Psychiatric services, Whitehorse General Hospital

Ms. Stick: Last fall, we asked this government about the lack of psychiatric support for patients at Whitehorse General Hospital. At that time the hospital had gone five months without a psychiatrist and previously seven months with just one on-call psychiatrist. When questioned, the minister indicated that his department was working with the hospital on recruitment and retention.

In the 2015-16 budget, the government transferred over \$3 million to the Yukon Medical Association for physician recruitment and retention initiatives. Have these funds, or any of these funds, been used to recruit a psychiatrist for the Whitehorse General Hospital?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: In addressing the member opposite, it gives me an opportunity to highlight some of the work and the good relationship that we have, not only with the Yukon Hospital Corporation but also with the Yukon Medical Association.

I have just recently had a meeting with the president of the Yukon Medical Association, Alison O’Hearn, now Freeman. Those discussions and the retention and recruitment components continue to be a pressing issue in the hospital and we certainly are well aware of that. The Yukon Hospital Corporation will continue down a path on that recruitment piece.

Yukon currently has two resident psychiatrists. As well we have itinerant psychiatrists for children, youth and seniors who provide services for our residents. Mental Health Services certainly delivers a host of programs to our residents. We have partners and NGOs — like Many Rivers, and the list really goes on — providing a number of services to Yukoners both in the hospital and across the territory. This government is certainly appreciative of the work that is being carried out and we are appreciative of the positive working relationship that we have with YMA and Yukon Hospital Corporation.

Ms. Stick: But we still don’t have psychiatric services at Whitehorse General Hospital. Individuals going there do not receive the supports they require.

We do have the secure medical unit, but it’s not appropriate. It is there for a variety of people, not all psychiatric. To mix them, to include them, is not appropriate.

We have a gap. The chief of staff pointed this out. We have a gap in psychiatric services in hospitals, in communities, for people who are leaving the hospital. It’s not right and this has been going on for a long time.

Can the minister tell us what his department has done to address the lack of psychiatric care in Whitehorse General Hospital?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Again, it gives me the opportunity to highlight some of the work that is being done that I had discussed in my first response. We continue to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Medical Association on the recruitment and retention piece.

Certainly we support a host of NGOs across the territory providing services. Just a couple of weeks ago we announced a continued relationship with Many Rivers to provide mental health services in the communities of Ross River and Faro. Just last week we announced a \$1-million add-on to the Department of Health and Social Services specifically for community-based mental health services.

As I indicated in my first response, we currently have two resident psychiatrists; we have itinerant psychiatrists who work with children, youth and seniors and who provide those types of services for our residents. We are very fortunate to have the relationships with the Hospital Corporation and YMA that we do, and we will continue on with those relationships, providing the good services to the people of Yukon.

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, it still does not address my question. Visiting mental health nurses or counsellors in the communities are limited in what support they can provide due to travel and time constraints. These professionals work hard but they cannot provide emergency support. They cannot always be there to help individuals when they come back to the communities. Many individuals who leave Whitehorse

General Hospital after being treated, or come back from another institution Outside, are released to the communities without the appropriate supports and follow-up. Communities and families are often left struggling with an individual, unsure how to help them or support them.

What is this government’s plan for providing that coordinated and supportive after-care to individuals returning to their families, returning to their communities?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, again I thank the member opposite for her question. This is certainly an ongoing issue that we have had with Yukon Hospital Corporation. As I said before, we have a great working relationship with the Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Medical Association. We are working together with those entities to address the gaps in services that have been identified.

For the member opposite to indicate that there are no services at the hospital — certainly if there is not a psychiatrist on staff, the president of the Yukon Medical Association reaffirmed to me that there are services that they can access. Whether it is over the phone or online, I am not sure, but they certainly recognize that it has been very helpful for the staff at the hospital.

We will continue down the path with the recruitment and the retention. As the member opposite has indicated, this is certainly something that is very important to this government. We do appreciate the services and the support that are provided across the territory from many professionals, many NGOs, the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Medical Association.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 1133

Clerk: Motion No. 1133, standing in the name of Mr. Elias.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin:

THAT this House urges the Parliament of Canada to recognize the importance of encouraging families to adopt healthy lifestyles by fully reinstating the children’s fitness tax credit and the children’s art tax credit.

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, I’m honoured to rise today in support of this motion. I think it’s important to note that on our first Wednesday of private members’ business, our caucus was unanimous in supporting me putting forward this motion as it’s so important to so many of our citizens in our territory.

The federal government recently announced that they are cutting back both the children’s fitness and art tax credits to

50 percent for 2016 and eliminating them completely in 2017. Mr. Speaker, while some politicians may have called these “boutique tax credits”, they are in fact used and valued by many Yukoners.

My fellow Yukoners, it is my hope today to achieve unanimous approval by all of the members in the Assembly and send a united message to Ottawa about the importance of fitness and the arts to our children here in our territory.

Mr. Speaker, for the 2015 tax year, over 1,700 Yukoners claimed these tax credits. These credits were put in place not just to help parents financially, but to encourage children’s participation in sports and arts activities. These credits help to encourage families to adopt healthy lifestyles and participate in activities that teach life skills that last a lifetime.

That’s why we urge the Government of Canada to reinstate these credits. I am proud today to be able to say that our Premier, the Minister of Finance, has tabled legislation that will allow Yukoners to keep claiming these tax credits, even though the federal government is eliminating them. These tax credits support enrolment in everything from hockey to ballet to tutoring and many other programs. Our government believes in the differences that investing in sports and recreation can make to children, youth, families and our communities.

Just last week, the Minister of Community Services announced that we will be providing \$300,000 in core funding to Sport Yukon, Special Olympics Yukon, the Yukon Aboriginal Sport Circle and the Recreation and Parks Association of the Yukon with the passing of the 2016-17 budget. This frees up \$300,000 in funding for the Yukon Recreation Advisory Council to make available to other sport and recreation groups in the territory as these groups were previously funded out of that pot. These groups work tirelessly to see that the sports and recreation opportunities available in the Yukon are second to none.

Sport Yukon is made up of territorial sport governing bodies, clubs and associations that offer a variety of sport, recreation, and other community-based programs. They provide guidance to and facilitate communication between groups throughout the territory. They assist these groups by providing services and managing funds and resources. Sport Yukon also manages the Yukon Sports Hall of Fame and they contract to manage Team Yukon at events such as the Arctic Winter Games and Canada Games. Special Olympics Yukon is dedicated to enriching the lives, through sport, of Yukoners who have an intellectual disability.

Team Yukon and Special Olympics Yukon have seen many exceptional Yukoners take part in national and international sporting events. The Yukon Aboriginal Sport Circle is dedicated to advancing aboriginal recreation and sport throughout the Yukon. They have a variety of programs to increase participation and skill and are the sport governing body for Arctic sports, Dene games, archery and lacrosse. They too, have sent many exceptional Yukon athletes to national and international events.

Mr. Speaker, the Recreation and Parks Association of Yukon recently made the news, along with its partners in the

Northwest Territories and Nunavut, for winning the Arctic Inspiration Prize. These groups were awarded \$600,000 for their work on the tri-territorial recreation training project, which empowers people and communities by developing and delivering leadership training programs across the north. RPAY, as they are known, promotes healthier living in Yukon through active living, parks and recreation. They facilitate everything from activity promotion programs for children and adults, to leadership, fitness and professional development training for recreation leaders. These groups all do work that we can all be proud of as Yukoners. I am happy to be part of a government that supports all of these programs.

In 2015-16, more than \$1.7 million in annual funding was disbursed to Yukon athletes, sport and recreation groups. Revisions to Yukon’s recreation regulations in 2015 provided an increase in the annual community recreation assistance grant, providing over \$800,000 to Yukon’s unincorporated communities for sports and recreation funding. Believe me when I say, Mr. Speaker, my community is very thankful for this investment in our isolated northern community of Old Crow.

We continue to support the Arctic Winter Games, this past year spending more than \$1 million to support Team Yukon in Nuuk, Greenland. Yukon will once again host the Arctic Winter Games in 2020. We continue to help support our recreation facilities in Yukon with over \$160,000 across three government departments going to the Friends of Mount Sima Society to assist in their ability to open for an early season training facility. More and more skiing and snowboarding groups from across the country are coming to use Mount Sima for pre-season and other training. This is boosting Yukon’s reputation as a sports destination, as well as allowing Mount Sima to prosper.

The Yukon government has also focused on increased training and learning opportunities for recreation leaders in the Yukon. At the annual recreation gathering held at Marsh Lake last fall, the community recreation leaders’ guide was launched. This is a key training tool based on core competencies that will build leadership capacity in community recreation. Community Services has also developed a community recreation planning toolkit to go along with the leaders’ guide. This provides information and a checklist that will help communities in developing locally driven community recreation plans.

The Government of Yukon recently released a new *Yukon Sport Action Plan*. This plan aligns with the new Canadian Sport Policy, and will guide sporting direction, funding and focus for the next seven years across the territory. This plan will help build on our past successes, present strengths and future opportunities, and ensure that we develop sport across the Yukon that is inclusive, fun and fair. We will continue to invest in community leadership through our sport and recreation groups, which bring great benefit to athletes, coaches, officials, recreation enthusiasts and all Yukoners.

The government continues to support sport and recreation in schools. In 2013-14, the departments of Community Services and Education partnered with F.H. Collins Secondary

School and Sport Yukon on the first-ever Yukon sports school. The sports school had a very successful first year with 64 students registered. In 2015-16 it is still flourishing with 48 students enrolled. This program gives students in grades 10 to 12 opportunities to train and enhance physical performance to better excel in the sport of their choice. This program was developed from a very successful program in British Columbia. The sports school program allows Yukon students to improve both athletic and academic performance all within the school day. This year, we are providing \$10,000 for training, equipment and facility rental fees, guest presenters and workshops to the sports school program.

The Sport and Recreation branch of Community Services is also helping bring the Canadian Tire Active at School program to all of the Yukon in partnership with the Canadian Tire Corporation. Canadian Tire will contribute \$125,000 over three years in cash, equipment and in-kind support in order to promote physical activity for children and youth in our schools. In January of this year, every rural school was provided with a list of equipment that they could order for their school. The equipment arrived in Yukon in early February and each school's orders were distributed to them. The equipment ranged from mats to hockey sticks to snowshoes and much, much more.

Schools in Whitehorse will be given this opportunity next year. Our partners in sport, recreation and active living are providing training and assistance to teachers, ensuring the best use of the new equipment. Community Services continues to implement the renewed active living strategy by providing \$250,000 annually to support training, build rural community capacity and develop programs during and after school. This strategy is designed to promote and keep Yukon children, youth and adults active and healthy. We have also invested in infrastructure that benefits the sports community and all of Yukon. We delivered a brand new recreation centre in Ross River, which was completed in 2014. We have committed dollars to hockey arenas, skateboard parks and all manner of recreation infrastructure, both directly and through program funding such as the community development fund across the whole territory. In my own home community of Old Crow, this government has contributed \$2.7 million to support the construction of a new community and recreation centre.

I have personally experienced the difference that a connection to sport can make in a young person's life. I would be remiss if I didn't mention the new under-16 hockey program. This year Yukon hockey started an under-16 program where 15 athletes are enlisted, and it is in partnership with the Department of Education. Starting in September and continuing to June, every weekday at 7:00 a.m., the boys hit the ice and practice valuable skills. They are encouraged to be creative and open-minded with and without the puck for an hour and 15 minutes, and then they head off to school. They also participate in dryland strength and endurance training three times a week. They are coached by volunteer Martin Lawrie, and I want to thank Mr. Lawrie for his countless hours in making a positive difference in these boys' lives. He has done an excellent job in developing these young men into

a team — and I emphasize “team” — by holding his team of players accountable for their efforts, their attention to detail and, above all, their attitudes and the way they conduct themselves in public.

Mr. Speaker, I support this effort to promote and help build well-rounded men and women leaders through sport.

I don't want to start listing all of the under-16 hockey team's accomplishments but I will say that many of the U-16 team have been invited this year to BC's best ever competitions, national aboriginal competitions, and junior A and junior B identification camps throughout western Canada.

The primary focus of the program is to develop the long-term development of each of their athletes on the ice, in the classroom and throughout the community.

This May 13 to 15 is the under-16 identification camp and they will be seeking out motivated, passionate young hockey players to participate in a structured environment surrounded by what I consider to be world-class coaches, staff and support systems. I have said it before and I will say it again: I believe that elite athletes need to be challenged, supported and mentored in all aspects of their lives.

It's important to note as well that in this, the first year of the under-16 hockey program, the corporate community has recognized the value of the program and also supports the 15 athletes. I look forward to another successful year next year.

On a little bit of a personal note, my son Johnny participates in this U-16 program this year and every morning at about 6:50 a.m. or right around 7:00 a.m., a group of hockey dads sit around a table — there are about five of us — and we discuss the topics of the day, whether they're local, national or international, but I wanted to say that the group of five of us — we are pretty darn smart at 7:00 in the morning in solving problems. I've encouraged all my fellow hockey dads to run for territorial politics because we need smart forward-thinking people in here — a big “L”, a big “O” and a big “L”.

Anyway, I thought I would get that in there.

What I've said today — this is just another part of the reason that I support these tax credits. All families in Yukon should have the option to enrol their children in sports and arts programming. While we are already doing many things to help enable this and make these programs more affordable, the children's fitness and art tax credits are another piece of this puzzle.

As you've heard, sports and recreation are very important to this government and very important to Yukoners. This is why we're urging everyone in this House to support this motion.

I have focused on sports and fitness in my opening comments. My distinguished colleagues will also be discussing the importance of the arts in children's lives.

I'll end my opening comments with a quote: “Growing up, if I hadn't had sports, I don't know where I'd be. God only knows what street corners I'd have been standing on and God only knows what I'd have been doing, but instead I played hockey and went to school and stayed out of trouble.” That was from the great Bobby Orr.

Ms. Stick: I thank the member opposite for bringing forward this motion, but I'm a bit confused because the motion states, "... the importance of encouraging families to adopt healthy lifestyles..." and then it goes on to say, "... reinstating the children's fitness tax credit and the children's art tax credit..."

The member opposite mentioned that this is something that all families can benefit from, and that's not true, Mr. Speaker, because these tax credits are available to families, usually, of higher income. It leaves out those of lower income. It does not meet their needs. It does not put money in their pockets to be able to afford sports or art activities for their family members.

We saw in the last federal budget that the fitness tax credit and the art tax credit will be reduced and then eliminated by 2017. What they've put in place is the new Canada child benefit, starting in July of this year. Those two tax credits that will be eliminated — the federal government reduced the fitness tax credit to \$500 in 2016. They calculate using the lowest rate of 15 percent so a family could receive a maximum of \$150 per child, assuming that they had paid for a \$1,000 activity, and they could do that up to a grand total of \$500. The requirements for eligible activities — to be supervised. The limited financial support provided by the children's fitness tax credit and the need for sufficient taxable income, for it to be of any value, tells us that the tax credit had little benefit for low-income families and little impact on the physical activities of children in low-income families; yet it's precisely these families that we do want to target.

The same goes for the arts. With the new Canada child benefit, there are many more benefits to many more families through this universal benefit, and it will do more to encourage healthy lifestyles. It's tax-free. Low- and middle-income families will receive more benefits. Families will see an average increase of almost \$2,300. It will provide a maximum benefit of up to \$6,400 per child under the age of six. This will be putting money into people's bank accounts, into their wallets, so that they can afford a healthier lifestyle and so that they can put their children into those activities.

We know that the increases will be more than what we've seen previously with the old child tax credit, and this is all great news. It's good for families; it's good for low-income families and for middle-income families. These are the families that need the help.

But there's one outstanding question that we have not heard an answer for yet. Under current practices, this government considers the income from the federal child tax credit as income, and for those individuals on social assistance receiving it, it is taken back — it's clawed back. They did not or do not directly benefit from it. Under the new federal government, they've been very clear in laying out their expectations that provinces and territories will not do that with this new Canada child benefit. We haven't heard yet what this government's intentions are.

But how else could we encourage families to adopt healthy lifestyles? There are many ways. We heard a great list

from the member opposite of all the sports organizations and the funding that goes to them. But how does this impact families who don't have that kind of income? For a family to be healthy — to have a healthy lifestyle — they need to know that they have safe, secure, affordable, appropriate housing, and not have to worry about high rents and how they're going to pay.

Families, to be active and healthy, need access to healthy, affordable food. Families in the Yukon do not have a sense of food security when they're relying on a food bank. It's not — I mean, let's be clear: it's the working poor who are attending the food bank. It's families where parents are working but still struggle — choosing to pay a bill or for food. Families do not have a sense of food security with the high cost of healthy food in the north, and often have to make the choice to purchase the less expensive, less nutritious, less healthy foods for their family and children.

Wages — we need to talk about and have conversations about living wages, about raising the minimum wage, about people being paid well so that they can afford the basics for their families. It's critical that we start talking about those things, because without it, families cannot afford arts and sports.

We need to talk about access to affordable daycare, where families are not struggling with a decision of — even with a child supplement or a daycare allowance, they're still struggling and trying to decide whether it would just be better if one of the parents quit their job rather than pay daycare fees.

These are the types of things that give support to families so they can be healthy and they can choose healthy activities. We know sports and arts programs are important for children, so let's increase the amount of money available through the kids rec fund. Right now, \$400 per child for a year — that will support swim lessons, soccer, softball. Many different groups and activities — maybe even a pass at the Canada Games Centre. It does not cover those more expensive sports. It does not cover travel that is sometimes required even within the Yukon or outside of the Yukon. \$400 a year will cover maybe eight hours of music lessons for a whole year. That's not much.

So let's ensure that every student in our schools has access to regular music class and instructions — every school should have a vibrant program. Let's ensure that every child who wants to join a school band can afford the instrument of their choice. We know the link between music education and the beneficial impact on the developing brain of a child, so let's ensure we have a vibrant, active music and arts program in all our schools. There are some great examples out there of what music professionals and arts programming is going on in some of our schools, but let's make sure it's in every school; in every classroom from K to 12, because arts and sports are important.

It used to be just a real critical part of our school. I picked up a school music book the other day that had come into my bookstore and it was old — it was from the 1960s — and it was for K to 5. I was looking at it and remembering some of

the songs myself. We were taught how to read music and how to sing and perform in choirs. We can see what happens at the current Rotary Music Festival, where there are some great programs going on, but we need to ensure that's in every school — every class K to 5. I often ask my young nephew if he has learned any songs and what he is doing in his class, to find out what's going on.

We need to know that all communities have access to safe, accessible recreational facilities if we want to promote fitness and recreation. Every community deserves that — every community, every family and every child. We should be looking at our communities, what their needs are and fulfilling them. There are many ways that families can become active and there are many that don't cost anything. We have wonderful trails. We have paved trails, trails through the woods, RPAY programs that you can log into, public education campaigns, running clubs, biking clubs, bike lanes and trails galore. There are many things with just being here in the Yukon close to the wilderness and close to the infrastructure that's been built that really do make healthy, active families an easier option perhaps than in some places. I can't imagine trying to teach a three-year-old in Vancouver on the busy streets to learn how to ride a bicycle, where here we know we've got these wonderful trails that we can go out on with our children and feel safe and not worry.

I did find a few — the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives applauded the government's decision to take care to reallocate these funds and make available this money to families because it goes far. It provides money to low-income families and hopefully lifting these children out of poverty.

When a family is living in poverty and struggling, a \$150 or \$500 tax credit has no meaning. If their income is not at a certain level, it doesn't apply to them. The ability to get out of poverty and the ability to have money to be involved in these things is important, Mr. Speaker. The Caledon institution also supported this. This is a better way of closing that gap that we increasingly see across Canada. If we want healthy families and healthy children, we have to ensure that we are focusing on those families and children who need it the most.

Unless I hear differently from other colleagues, we will not be supporting this. We do have a tax credit here in the Yukon. I see that's part of the income tax legislation that is coming forward for sports and arts. That is great. We supported it when we debated it in the House previously, but we will not be supporting this at this time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Silver: Thank you to the Member for Riverdale South for setting some context. I do agree with a lot of her comments. I want to maybe move a little bit further here past that context, just for some perspective here. We are almost being led to believe by the motion that somehow Yukon is missing out or losing because of what has happened in Ottawa, and I just want to clarify some things.

As part of the federal government's efforts to simplify the tax code and target support for families with children, the federal budget in 2016 proposed to reduce the maximum

eligible expenses for children's fitness and arts tax credits by half for 2016, and to eliminate both credits as of 2017. That much is true. The government's measures for families with children, combined with the middle class tax cuts, will provide these same families with additional net after-tax benefits of approximately \$14 billion during the 2015-16 to 2020-21 period. Now, the changes, in their entirety — this is important — means more money for families despite the elimination of the fitness and arts credits. As the Member for Riverdale South correctly pointed out, the focus is going to be on those who need the money the most.

The Government of Yukon has decided to continue for one year, at least — from what we can see so far — with its own portion of these two tax credits. The cost to the Government of Yukon, if I can remember correctly from the budget briefing, is \$125,000 per year. The motion today asks the Government of Canada to do more, which is interesting. This is a common refrain from the Yukon Party government these days — to blame everything under the sun on the new Government of Canada. Yet, in this particular case, I'm perplexed because the money, due to the simplification of the tax code, is going to bring in more money to Yukon families and it is going to target those who need it the most.

If the Yukon Party government really felt strongly about the negative impacts of this change, it could certainly have upped its contribution in the budget that is before us now in the Legislature. They chose not to. There is a surplus — and we keep on hearing about it from the Yukon Party government — in their bank account that they could have used. Instead of making that financial commitment, the government has chosen to wag its finger on a Wednesday afternoon and attack the Liberal government in Ottawa, whose changes, in their entirety mean more money for families, despite the elimination of the fitness and arts credit.

Mr. Speaker, I will agree with this motion. Record federal transfers, yes, and already more money from Ottawa for families — for sure; but let's ask for even more. If that's what the Yukon Party government wants to do, by all means.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: That was an interesting position by the Liberal leader. I'm honoured to rise in this House today in support of this motion by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin. I want to thank him for bringing it forward, urging the Government of Canada to recognize the importance of encouraging families to adopt healthy lifestyles by fully reinstating the children's fitness and arts tax credits. I would first like to express my full support of this motion, which aims to fill a void that was impacted on families this year by the Government of Canada's plan to reduce the children's fitness and arts tax credits by 50 percent in 2016, and eliminate the credits entirely in 2017.

I appreciate the comments by the Member for Riverdale South, but this debate is not about the federal government's Canada child benefit; this debate is about the fitness and arts tax credits.

I also want to acknowledge the MLA for Riverdale South for speaking about children from families that are less

fortunate. It will be really interesting, Mr. Speaker, to see how the NDP and the Liberals explain to Yukoners how the cost of milk, the cost of diapers, the cost of heating oil, the cost of fuel for their vehicles and the cost of everything will go up when they support and implement a tax on carbon, but I will leave that for another day.

The impact of the federal government's decision to ultimately eliminate these important tax credits creates an air of uncertainty for those who have factored those credits into the decisions to register their children in sports or arts programming this year and in future years. These tax credits are important to Yukoners and they give families that additional amount to help their children attend dance, soccer or hockey. They help their children get tutoring for math, or take art lessons or attend art classes to give them an outlet for their creativity. The value these programs and classes have on our children is immense and ensuring they are more accessible to families of different financial backgrounds is key to the success of all children.

Yukon government has clearly and consistently been in support of these tax credits. In December 2007, the children's fitness tax credit was introduced, which allowed Yukon families to claim a credit for each child's fitness-related activities, up to a maximum of \$500 per year. In October 2012, this government introduced the complementary tax credit for programs related to music, arts and tutoring. These credits were welcomed and appreciated by Yukon families, and the fitness tax credit was doubled in October of 2014 to \$1,000 per year.

Another welcome change to the fitness tax credit was made in March 2015. In order to allow families whose incomes are too low to incur taxes to benefit from the credit, it was changed from being a non-refundable tax credit to a refundable tax credit. Parents know that the costs for sports, art and music programming can add up. To families with a child in any type of activity, every little bit of help that they can get to ease the financial burden associated with enrolment fees helps. For those families with more than one child, this burden can be felt exponentially.

We have heard in this House before that these tax credits only help those with disposable income. I would argue that there are a number of families who do subscribe to these tax credits who do not have the definition of "disposable income", but rather do what they can to ensure that their children are involved in programming and may forego other luxuries to keep their children enrolled in some sort of program or another.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: It is really disappointing that the leaders of the other two political parties continue to talk and mock off-mic like schoolchildren, Mr. Speaker, almost — he described himself as a little girl, and that is disappointing and insulting to some people, I must admit.

Even those who enrol their children in more affordable, important programs such as swimming lessons are able to take advantage of this tax credit. The return may be small, but to some it means a lot. Mr. Speaker, every dollar counts. It

cannot be argued that the participation of children and youth in arts, music and sports can bring unlimited opportunities in their lifetime. The high program costs of many activities can be limiting to families who work hard to deliver even the necessities to their families. These tax credits provide alleviation to the parents who bear the brunt of the high costs of these activities. With approximately 1,700 families claiming the fitness credit and 650 claiming the arts credit, it is clear that these tax credits are being utilized by Yukon families and are helping to put money back into their pockets. It is estimated that these tax credits save Yukon taxpayers \$96,000, and \$25,000 annually. That is a huge savings.

The benefits extend far beyond a child learning to play a song on the piano or scoring a winning goal. They go beyond learning art techniques or becoming the most valuable player. Children who are presented with an opportunity to be involved in sports, music, arts and cultural activities are given the chance to harness their strengths and to steer their bodies and minds in a healthy direction. They are given the fundamental skills necessary to excel.

According to the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine, young people need continuous exposure to positive experiences, settings, people, as well as abundant opportunities to refine their life skills, so that they have the means to move into productive jobs and other roles that build fulfilling relationships. The benefits don't stop there. Take a child who attends school full-time but also has swimming two nights a week and dance on Saturdays. I can tell you first-hand that, as a father of four, now grown children, that children with scheduled activities not only have no time for idle hands, they begin to get a hold on the life skills that they will require in adulthood. They learn prioritization; they learn organization; they learn punctuality and respect. They learn to set personal goals and they work hard and strive to meet those goals. They learn how to fail or to lose; they learn to take direction and criticism, and also to question and create. They can learn to work independently or as part of a team to achieve their goals.

Social cohesion is introduced. Self-esteem is fostered in extracurricular environments and, in turn, has positive effects on mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. The benefits are never ending.

The 2009 Active Healthy Kids Canada report card on physical activity for children and youth states that children who are more physically active are more academically fit resulting in better scores in math and reading, higher grades, greater perceptual skills and overall academic readiness.

I believe in this statement. I believe that physical literacy in a child can be a dominating factor in the overall success of an adult. There is much to be said of the importance to foster a healthy environment in which our children can grow and develop to their maximum potential. The positive impact of physical and creative activities on the health and development of our children is a direct factor in the creation of a healthy community.

I see incredible value in encouraging our young people to participate in activities that create a sense of common identity,

a sense of belonging and a sense of accomplishment. Being part of inclusive and fun activities in youth can provide opportunities for a lifetime. I truly believe that extracurricular activities promote important values of respect and fair play, therefore promoting ethical behaviour and accountability.

Equitable access to arts, sport and recreation remains a cornerstone of this government's values, and access for families to these tax credits is a step toward achieving this goal. This government has invested in a number of programs and strategies aimed at promoting a better quality of life for Yukoners. These include investments in sport, recreation and active living initiatives.

Yukon active living strategy through the Community Services Sport and Recreation branch is funded annually with \$250,000 to promote healthy living by a way of training, building rural community capacity, and program development.

This was contemplated by a 2014-15 funding agreement with the Public Health Agency of Canada for \$2 million over five years to create the Yukon northern wellness project. Together with Yukon active living strategy, the northern wellness project provides active living opportunities for all Yukoners. The focus of implementation is during the after-school time period as well as the promotion of active-at-school options and resources for teachers to provide in-school opportunities.

Another important initiative geared toward healthy living is the Canadian Tire Active at School program, a partnership between Canadian Tire Corporation and the Sport and Recreation branch.

As part of this program, Canadian Tire will contribute \$125,000 over three years, beginning in cash, equipment and support to promote physical activity in schools for our Yukon students. Students are provided with equipment and assistance in using its equipment to its best potential. In addition, Yukon government is providing funding for after-school programs to enhance sports skills and awareness. Physical literacy has been a key aspect in program design and delivery.

2013-14 marked the partnership between the Department of Education, F.H. Collins Secondary School and Sport Yukon for the Yukon sports school and physical literacy project.

The sport school has enjoyed immense success and provides students the opportunity to participate in physical performance enhancement and training in the sport of their choice. The program provides students both a place to develop further in their chosen sport or gives them the groundwork to pursue the sport outside of school hours.

The idea of physical literacy has been branched into rural communities with goals of developing awareness of physical activity and healthy living, developing fundamental movement and sports skills, and building capacity of community leaders. The Yukon framework for physical literacy was developed in April 2015 to implement further the idea of physical literacy in communities and school curricula. These programs and initiatives are just a sample of the work that the Government of Yukon has done to support active living and healthy lifestyles in our children.

In 2015-16, over \$1.7 million was provided in support of Yukon athletes and sport and recreation groups. The importance of healthy, active living remains a priority for our government and we continue to deliver on programming and initiatives to promote a healthy path for our children.

I would also like to take a moment to touch on some of the programming that the Department of Education offers to Yukon students in regard to arts and music. Yukon Arts Ed-Venture, funded by the Department of Education, works to assist teachers in developing and delivering curriculum content that pertains to our students' variety of educational needs, reflective of cultures and languages. Artists work directly with teachers to develop rich cultural materials to ensure students are meeting the prescribed outcomes in the Yukon curriculum. These artists engage students in learning at the elementary school level by way of using art to deliver curriculum and provide teachers with tools to ensure the needs of the child are being met.

The Music, Arts and Drama — or MAD — program is offered to students in grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 and focuses on providing students with a solid foundation in creative dramatics, acting, stage craft, music, dance and playwriting fundamentals. This highly successful program provides students with a solid foundation to pursue further education in theatre and professional opportunities beyond that.

The children's art tax credit is a helpful benefit to encourage young people to explore the arts.

The Government of Yukon supports a number of programs through the Department of Tourism and Culture that assist our Yukon artists, organizations and art collectives in delivering their arts and programs to our communities. The awards and funding programs available directly support all types of arts — performing, visual and literary in Yukon. While programming strategies and initiatives relating to sports, arts and culture are a key focus of our government and community, it is important for families to have the initiative to provide further opportunities to their children. These tax credits are a way to provide families with a financial benefit to investing in their children's health and futures. The importance of harnessing the abilities of our children, and providing them with a platform in which to grow those abilities, is great and every family could use a credit to ease the financial impact of the high program and associated fees.

In closing, a priority of this government is to ensure Yukon youth can continue to enjoy the benefits of physical activity and participation in arts and culture.

The changes announced by the federal *Income Tax Act* last month are not in line with this priority. The federal government's elimination of the children's fitness credit and the children's art tax credit would be detrimental to Yukon families. My desire would be to have the full reinstatement of those important credits.

The Yukon Party government will do its part by amending the *Income Tax Act* to retain the Yukon portion of these two important tax credits.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I am certainly pleased to have the opportunity to rise in the Legislature today to provide my response to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin's motion and certainly would like to extend my thanks to him for bringing this motion forward today.

The member's motion urges the Government of Canada to recognize the importance of encouraging families to adopt healthy lifestyles by fully reinstating the children's fitness and art tax credit. This motion resonates with me in many ways, Mr. Speaker. It resonates with me as father of children who I work tirelessly for, ensuring that they are involved in activities that provide them a positive opportunity for mental and physical growth. It also resonates with me as the MLA for Porter Creek South as the former Minister of Tourism and Culture and in my current role as Minister of Health and Social Services.

Now, as the MLA for Porter Creek South, my constituents continuously emphasize to me how important it is to ensure that families, and particularly children and youth, have every opportunity to lead healthy lifestyles. My constituents don't just talk the talk on healthy living; they also walk the walk. I've taken many opportunities to run — literally run — through my amazing riding over the past several years. I've had the opportunity to speak to and to see many of my constituents. I see how many families and children are out riding bikes, playing catch, throwing Frisbees, playing road hockey or just spending time with their neighbours. I'm encouraged and I'm motivated by my constituents in many ways, and healthy living is certainly no exception. It's important to me that I ensure that my family and I maintain the healthy lifestyle that we have worked to create for ourselves. I am thankful that my family, friends and my constituents keep me honest with my running schedule. This support has reminded me what I've learned over the years, Mr. Speaker. Healthy living is about more than the individual. It's about a community network that we can encourage, support, ensuring that we all hold each other accountable to be individually healthy, but also that we remain healthy as a Yukon population.

Speaking of my constituents — whether it is at the doorstep in my office, at the rink, the dance studio, the track, the gymnastics club or any number of venues, they tell me about their priorities. They tell me that ensuring their families and their children have access to mentally and physically healthy activities is one of the most important things to them. They also tell me how disappointed they are in the Liberal government for their intent to reduce and eventually eliminate the children's fitness and arts tax credit.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand today and say that ensuring that Yukon families have every opportunity to engage in a healthy lifestyle in our great territory has been, and will continue to be, a priority of this Yukon Party government. Our government introduced the children's fitness tax credit in December of 2007, which enabled families to claim a credit related to children's physical activities up to \$500 per year. In 2012, our government introduced a similar credit for children enrolled in arts activities. In October of

2014, the maximum amount per child that could be claimed for the fitness credit was doubled to \$1,000 per year. Parents with children with disabilities are entitled to additional amounts when claiming either credit. Currently, there are approximately 1,700 families claiming the fitness credit and 600 families claiming the arts credit. These credits enable Yukoners to keep their hard-earned money in their pockets.

That's not all this government has done to ensure Yukoners have access to arts, to physical activity and to healthy living opportunities in this territory. As former Minister of Tourism and Culture and in my current role as Minister of Health and Social Services, I've had the great privilege to be a part of several investment initiatives that assisted Yukoners in their healthy lifestyle and encouraged others to seek one.

In 2013, I was happy to announce a partnership between Yukon government with the visual arts and crafts sector to develop a strategy to grow and expand the industry to benefit Yukon's economy and our way of life. This strategy signalled to Yukoners that the arts are alive and well in the territory and are a great option for youth, for adults and for seniors but, more importantly, for families alike.

The Yukon visual arts and crafts strategy followed the original strategy created in 2001. The 2013 strategy outlined the sector's mandate to facilitate career development and economic viability for those working in the sector and to contribute to Yukon's social and economic well-being.

Mr. Speaker, artisans play a key role in creating the vibrant culture scene that makes Yukon a great place to visit and to call home. The strategy is part of the government's ongoing commitment to support the talented individuals working in this dynamic sector. The strategy was developed by a steering committee, comprising 15 arts and crafts organizations with two visual artists. At a cost of \$65,000, the project was led by the Yukon Art Society and funded by the departments of Economic Development and Tourism and Culture.

In August of 2014, I was honoured to announce funding for eight arts projects totalling \$109,000 through the Yukon arts fund. This encouraged the development of the arts for the benefit of all Yukoners. The arts fund is instrumental in supporting groups and organizations in the development of the literary, visual and performing arts in Yukon. The groups that are awarded funding through this fund not only serve their membership, but also serve as a role model for individuals and groups alike who may want to pursue interests.

I was fortunate at that point in time to award the Yukon Film Society \$22,000, as well as the Yukon Educational Theatre Society, \$20,000; Fiddleheads Yukon organization, \$19,000; Suzuki Strings Association of the Yukon, \$16,000; Association franco-yukonnaise, \$9,000; Northern Lights School of Dance, \$8,295; Bringing Youth Towards Equality, \$8,190; and SingAlong Messiah Collective, \$7,500. All of these organizations provide opportunities for youth to engage in the arts. These organizations, as well as the families and youth who take part in the activities they offer, rely on governments to ensure there are minimal barriers. So while a

Liberal government has taken a stance to increase these barriers, your Yukon Party government will continue to fulfill our commitment to Yukoners — and we will reduce them.

As Minister of Health and Social Services, I want to start by underlining why healthy living, especially for our youth, is so very important. The health benefits of physical activity are well-documented. Healthy living and physical activity makes it less likely that risk factors for chronic diseases, such as heart disease, hypertension, type 2 diabetes and osteoporosis will develop later in life.

Healthy living and physical activity also assist young people to develop healthy musculoskeletal tissue, develop a healthy cardiovascular system, develop neuromuscular awareness and maintain a healthy body weight. Physical activity and healthy living has also been associated with mental health benefits in young people by improving their control over symptoms of anxiety and depression.

I have the great pleasure to be a part of many initiatives and many investments in my time as Minister of Health and Social Services. Many of these contribute to physical activity and mental well-being, or wellness, in our Yukon youth. As members are aware, the wellness plan for Yukon's children and families was released in 2014 and brings with it several activities that support wellness for children and families in our territory.

The wellness plan sets out three pathways for achieving wellness and preventing illness. The three pathways are: (1) getting a good start in life with nurturing adults in safe, stimulating surroundings; (2) raising kids who flourish by creating opportunities for children and young people to develop confidence, interest and positive relationships; and finally, (3) healthy living for all by making health choices easier and equipping all people with information, skills and opportunities to make good decisions. The Pathways to Wellness website provides evidence-based information on wellness and provides weekly e-tips for living a healthy life. Also under the wellness plan for Yukon's children and family is an interdepartmental committee within Yukon government. They meet regularly to coordinate initiatives related to healthy living in our territory. The wellness plan is available online at www.yukonwellness.ca.

Personal choice, the decisions we make and the actions that we take are important, but there are other influences that make it easier or harder to make lifestyle changes. Eating well, keeping active and productive, getting a good night's sleep are examples of how we keep ourselves and our families healthier. On paper this sounds straightforward, but in practice — I can tell you from first-hand experience — it is far more complex. The decisions we make every day are important, but not everyone has the same choices or the same chances to be healthy. We are also influenced by genetics and biology, how we are raised, our immediate environment and broader factors, such as educational opportunities, historic events and our economy. Taken together, these factors help explain why we got to this point in time in our lives and even more importantly, where we can go from here.

Now luck and coincidence also play a role in our lives, but we cannot control or plan for this. The best we can do is be open to opportunities that come our way and make the most of them, and this government doesn't believe in being a barrier to those opportunities.

This Yukon Party continues to invest in Yukoners. In fact, just last December I was happy to award more than \$19,850 through the health investment fund to the Boys and Club of Yukon, to the Yukon Academy of Martial Arts and to the Yukon Home Educators Society. The health investment fund is intended to provide financial support for short-term projects aimed at promoting well-being in order to strengthen communities and make them and their residents healthier. The organizations that received the funding through the health investment fund help to provide healthy lifestyle opportunities to youth in Yukon.

Healthy living is an important part of life in our territory. Our amazing outdoor wilderness and the many groups and organizations that build their activities around it are one of the biggest reasons why many people choose to remain or to relocate here.

Now I can say personally that because of organizations like the Polarettes Gymnastics Club, the All-City Band, the Northern Lights School of Dance, Whitehorse Minor Hockey Association, the Yukon Soccer Association and many, many more, healthy living is alive and very well in Yukon. My family is one of many that have utilized the children's fitness and art tax credits in the past. I hear from constituents about how this cut and elimination will affect not only their children's short-term physical health, but their long-term health and mental well-being.

I am thankful to be part of the government that stands up for Yukon families. This government will continue to advocate for the health and well-being of Yukon families and Yukon youth.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I've spoken at great length about how your Yukon Party government continues to invest in opportunities for Yukon youth, but let's give credit where credit is due. I would like to thank the Yukon moms and dads, the grandparents, aunts and uncles you see at the sidelines, cheering from the benches or watching from a gallery as their son or daughter, granddaughter or grandson plays, performs, and challenges themselves. Thank you so very much for keeping your children active.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to the motion today.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I would like to thank my colleague from Old Crow — Vuntut Gwitchin — for introducing this very important motion that is before the Assembly here today and also to my colleagues for their earlier comments in support of the motion.

It's a really timely motion and speaks to the very importance of active living, recreation, and the very importance of our cultural sectors in our territory. Over the weekend, as I may have alluded to in the budget address a couple of days ago, I had the opportunity to spend a

substantive amount of time at the Canada Games Centre. If one wants to have an appreciation of any given day in the territory, spend some time at that particular facility. We had just concluded our year-end hockey tournament for our particular division. Throughout the whole weekend, it was incredible — the number of families and friends sitting on the benches and being able to participate. To be able to actually see your children participate in the game of hockey — a game that we all love and subscribe to from time to time. I have to say that there are costs associated with participation in hockey, just like there are costs for participating in soccer and in swimming, but I guess the point that has been made over the course of the last hour is that there have been tremendous efforts made, thanks to the fantastic volunteers and organizations and the collaborative partnerships that have been garnered through the Government of Yukon with these organizations over the past number of years.

There were comments earlier about the active living strategy. That really sets a framework in the renewed active living strategy that came about in 2012 — and with that new investment of \$250,000 each and every year in support of active living grants in our schools, in our communities, capital grants and supportive after-school programs as well.

Earlier this year, I was really honoured to be able to join a number of community members from the territory to help celebrate the Arctic Inspiration Prize. That was an annual allotment of dollars that is awarded to organizations across the north. I know, Mr. Speaker, you too were part of that amazing ceremony that took place in Ottawa. I was really proud to be able to join individuals like Zach Bell, Olympian cyclist from my hometown of Watson Lake, and to be able to join individuals like him and other members of the Recreation and Parks Association of the Yukon and to be able to witness first-hand their organization being awarded some \$600,000 in funding.

Again, that was really in support of developing and delivering meaningful learning and sustainable training to be made available throughout the territory in our communities. The purpose of these dollars, in addition to dollars that are allotted to RPAY through the active living strategy and through other funding mechanisms, is to really build capacity in our communities — to provide that enhanced training, that delivery of skills to those community recreation leaders in our communities, whether it's recreation coordinators, volunteer leaders, directors, youth leaders, board members, coaches, fitness leaders, camp counsellors, after-school leaders throughout the territory. As a result of this additional funding and investment in this particular organization, it's going to really enhance the strengthening of the competencies of our staff and volunteers to help them better support our own kids, to help them better support our youth and adults in finding their own opportunities for social, physical and artistic expression to improve the health and to be able to socialize and interact with others — learning new skills, promoting fun and being able to find that life balance. In doing so, we're able to better engage each other in organizing and delivering better sport and recreation programs available for all.

I can't say enough — because I am the mother of an 11-year-old boy and I have seen first-hand the opportunities over the last 11 years — just what is available in our territory. To the coaches of my son's hockey team, to the coaches of my son's soccer team and to the dance instructors — the delivery of programs made available through organizations like Northern Lights School of Dance and Leaping Feats.

There are so many different organizations that are delivering programs available to thousands of children throughout the territory. Most of these individuals are volunteers. They do it because they love their community. They want to better their community. They want to assist kids in our communities and they do a great job.

As has already been stated, there is a significant amount of funding made available to different organizations, whether it's through Sport Yukon or RPAY, whether it's through the Aboriginal Sport Circle. That was something we heard directly through our 60-some meetings with hundreds of Yukoners over the past year — to have more dollars available to that particular organization to better enhance the delivery of programs available through our schools, a better reach.

We've heard that over the years, as well, in terms of making more opportunities on the cultural side in our schools and outside of the schools. I'm very proud to be part of a government that — since 2007, arts funding administered by my own Department of Tourism and Culture alone has increased by well over 60 percent. Arts organizations across the territory, whether it's the Northern Cultural Expressions Society, Dawson City Arts Society, the Yukon Art Centre and their delivery of programming through the Old Fire Hall's animation of the wharf — it all benefits each and every one of us.

Each and every year, we dedicate just shy of \$2 million to individual artists, arts organizations and artistic projects through our various arts funding programs. I was really proud to be able to deliver an increase to that funding a number of years ago and to incorporate new programs, like the touring artist fund through the artist in the school program. That was a program that traditionally received some \$25,000. We were able to increase that to \$100,000 a year. Again, it supports artists to be able to travel and contribute to schools throughout the territory to deliver arts programming. That is coupled with the programs delivered through the Department of Education.

We also know there are increased tutoring programs available through the Department of Education. I know one recently came about in Whitehorse Elementary School. I know that because an e-mail came our way to our family, promoting free tutoring made available, thanks to F.H. Collins French immersion students who are now giving back to elementary students in our school and others, to promote excellence in scholastics — in this case, in math and other subjects. What a great program — to be able to inspire leadership in our secondary school students and enhance the delivery of programming for those younger.

Through arts operating funds, we have been able to see increased assistance made available through a number of different programs. All City Band Society — I know I always

look forward to their annual concerts a couple times a year at the Yukon Arts Centre. It's amazing to see all the young musical minds within our territory and the collaboration between more senior, mature artists working again with our younger musicians and being able to celebrate those talents with the rest of the territory.

We've been able to again provide funding to other organizations, which in turn help promote the arts and sports and recreation to others throughout the territory, all of which is to say is that when it comes to delivering these particular programs they are of significant importance to our government, have been over the last number of years and will continue to be so.

This particular motion really speaks about enhancing those opportunities, ensuring that we continue to have those opportunities. So while we talk about tax credits for fitness or arts, to be clear, it's not the only suite of programs that this government is offering. In fact, to the contrary, it is but one of many different programs made available to our youth and to individuals across the territory.

It's something that makes us a very attractive place to live, to do business and to raise a family, and is something that I continue to hear at the door step. Last night, at the doorstep, I continued to hear — we've been able to promote our budget and speak to other initiatives — for example, the \$100 per child made available for school supplies. I shared that with a dad who was at the door — an oil burner mechanic; he's working hard to make a living for his family of three younger children. \$300 toward school supplies is a big deal. I said to him, "What do you think about that?" He appreciated that. He said, "You know what" — and I said, "I recognize this is a small expenditure," and he said, "You know what, for three kids, it's \$300. It's a big deal for me."

I think we can't underestimate the importance of expenditures such as this. I know we may not always agree in this Assembly, but I thought I would share that.

Likewise, it came up — and I didn't even raise this at the door last night, but another family who had a smaller child as well was asking, "Is your government not reinstating or continuing on with these tax credits in support of kids and recreation programs?" and I said, "Yeah, in fact it's great of you to raise that because that's something that we will be debating in the Assembly tomorrow." They said, "Well, we strongly encourage that. First of all, we appreciate that you're continuing those programs and, second of all, do anything that you can to encourage the Government of Canada to continue to carry on these programs because they mean something to us."

That is not to say that every family in this territory subscribes to these programs, but the point is that anything that we can do to help keep our kids active, even in the after-school programs delivered through the Boys and Girls Club of Yukon — they do an amazing job. There are many different organizations that provide active living programs after school. That is really what our renewed funding that was delivered a number of years ago when we renewed that strategy was for — it's to keep our kids active.

They say that from 3:00 to 6:00 in the afternoon is the most at-risk time for our kids because that is when kids are more susceptible to doing screen time, to watching television or maybe just doing other things. Any time that we can help fill that void with after-school programs that are more affordable — the Boys and Girls program is but one that comes readily to mind — through active living, school grants and being able to acquire capital, sports equipment or other equipment in support of active living, the better off our kids are going to be. There is always room for improvement.

There is always going to be more work to be done, but I want to congratulate and I want to thank the many individuals who are involved in the Rotary Music Festival that is going on this week. To those individuals who volunteer — again, as I mentioned, we will see lots of soccer teams on our school fields here in due time through the Whitehorse Minor Soccer Association and through hockey, and the list goes on. I want to say thank you very much to the many individuals who are really keeping our kids active and enhancing the skill sets of our children and adding to the quality of life that makes this such a great territory in this country and in the world.

To the individuals who are working hard in our departments like Community Services and the Sport and Recreation branch and also in our own Department of Tourism and Culture Cultural Services branch — they work directly with these organizations each and every day — and individual artists and individual athletes in improving the skill set, really adding to our workforce and enhancing our workforce. We talk about diversification; through many of these programs that were started, an individual like Zach Bell is now a world Olympian and is contributing on a whole different scale — an international scale to this day — assisting women cyclists. These programs are very important for our kids, but also through the whole spectrum of life.

I very much support this motion. I want to thank my colleague from Old Crow for bringing it forward and for all of the comments that have been made here today. Certainly I commend this motion to the rest of the House and look forward to hearing the final results.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Community Services and therefore the minister responsible for sport and recreation, I am very pleased to rise and speak in favour of this motion today. I would join my colleagues in thanking the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing it forward and for his words in opening debate on the subject.

I have appreciated hearing from my colleagues today about their thoughts on this particular motion and some of its relevance to not only them and their families, but to their constituents and a wide variety of Yukoners alike. Sport, of course, is very important to me, Mr. Speaker, and active lifestyles and fitness are all key goals of my department and are things that we have been working on very hard over the last number of years.

To that end, I was pleased to release recently the *Yukon Sport Action Plan*. That was something we released not too long ago and I believe that this motion and the actions

explained therein fit nicely within the sport action plan. Of course, the *Yukon Sport Action Plan* was developed and provided a vision for 2015 to 2022 and it was done in partnership with territorial sport organizations to map out our priorities in conjunction with the new Canadian sport policy. That plan will guide direction, funding, and focus for the future of sport in Yukon. Most importantly, that plan will help us build the type of sport we want to see in our territory, which is inclusive, fun and fair. From supporting community recreation to providing funding for the development of athletes, coaches and officials, we are committed to improving the opportunities for sport, recreation and active living available to Yukoners. As we act to deliver this plan, we'll continue to work collaboratively with our partners to build healthy, active Yukon communities. I think that, as I said earlier, this motion and the action requested in it fit very much within the priorities of the sport action plan.

Underpinning the sport action plan are six particular principles that form the philosophical basis of how we in the Department of Community Services develop and deliver and pursue excellence in sport in Yukon. Those are as follows: first, sport promotes ethical behaviour and the values of respect, fair play, and fun; second, sport for life, based on the long-term athletic development framework, promotes opportunities to participate, perform and excel over the lifespan, whether in the playground, the podium or the park; third, inclusion, equitable access and sport development in Yukon's rural and remote communities are essential elements of Yukon's sport system; fourth, partnerships and collaboration within the sport system strengthen capacity and impact sport deliver and success; fifth, quality sport requires capacity and training for athletes, coaches, officials, and volunteers; and finally, sixth, sustainability in our sport system demands accountability, monitoring and evaluation.

Those are the principles that underpin our *Yukon Sport Action Plan*. Of course, encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy choices for our youth is very important and that's why I thought the original children's fitness tax credit was an excellent idea.

Of course, there has been some discussion about the broader changes to the tax system that are being made by the federal government and some changes that go to a more universal style of support for families. While I appreciate that and think there's some merit to that, I do feel that it needs to be pointed out that, lost in that change, is the focus and promotion of sport and the focus and promotion of fitness.

While I appreciate the comments from the Leader of the Liberal Party about the broader implications of, at the federal level, his party's choices on the tax system, I respectfully disagree because of the removal of the promotion of active lifestyles and fitness and, of course, the arts as well. I'll focus my comments, I should note, Mr. Speaker, on the fitness side, because that's more my purview and I know that my colleagues have already spoken about the importance of the arts aspect of this.

The promotion of fitness and sports is very important, and it's disappointing to see the federal government move away

from that encouraging promotion of fitness through their tax changes. That being said, I am very proud to see the Premier and Finance minister put forward changes to the *Income Tax Act* earlier today that will see Yukon continue with our portion of these credits.

As the bill tabled by the Premier notes, the federal Minister of Finance introduced a notice of ways and means motion to amend the *Income Tax Act* of Canada. Among those proposed measures are the reduction of the federal personal income tax credits for children's arts and fitness programs for 2016 and their elimination for 2017 and later taxation years.

As we know, and as has been discussed already, Yukon's own children's fitness and children's arts tax credits are currently based on their federal counterparts in such a way that the proposed federal measures would automatically reduce and then eliminate Yukon's tax credits. Thankfully this bill that was tabled earlier today prevents that result and the bill amends the relevant Yukon *Income Tax Act* provisions.

Once that bill passes this House, the provisions will refer to the version of the federal rules that applied for the 2015 taxation year. That, of course, preserves the Yukon children's arts and fitness tax credits in their current form. The amendments apply for the 2016 and subsequent taxation years. However, because the federal legislation may not be enacted before this bill is assented to, the bill will come into force only on the proclamation by the Commissioner in Executive Council.

Mr. Speaker, as you see, the Yukon government is continuing with our portion of these changes because we recognize the importance of promoting healthy lifestyles through measures including the tax system. Again, while I said earlier that I appreciate that this particular change at the federal level is part of a broader change, I again wanted to reiterate my disagreement with the fact that we are moving away from encouraging healthy lifestyles and participation in sport and fitness by removing that tax credit.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would heartily endorse the motion brought forward by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin. I look forward to sharing the motion with members of the sports community here in the territory, once it has passed, assuming it is passed today. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I'll be sure to share the bill tabled by the Premier and Finance minister earlier today as evidence to groups and individuals, both my constituents and citizens otherwise, of our commitment to promoting healthy lifestyles, fitness and arts in the Yukon.

So with that I will conclude my remarks and commend this motion as we move forward.

Ms. White: I'm always grateful for the opportunity to add my two cents. I'm just going to break this down in different terms and is just something that for me just brings it back to kind of real-life situations.

I'm not going to pretend to be a tax maven and I go see someone and they help me with my taxes because I look at the forms and it's overwhelming. I think the first thing we need to talk about is what a tax credit is, because a tax credit is a

deduction from taxes owing. Providing that the tax credit can be used, each taxpayer receives the same tax relief of the tax credit regardless of his or her particular tax bracket.

If you spend the money then you can have that money — it can go toward that deduction. I think that's important. It is knowing that you need to have the money to spend first, which is I think the point we were trying to make on this side. It's great. No one's going to deny that recreation is a fantastic thing.

In April 2012, we debated Motion No. 162 in this House, and that's when the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin put forward a motion that urged the Yukon government to establish a tax credit for parents or guardians of children involved in music, arts or tutoring. We debated that motion and we heard a lot of similar arguments today that we did back in 2012. So this got created and that's good. The Minister of Finance pointed out that this year we put forward \$96,000 and that's what that will mean. He said that in 2015 — and I hope get these numbers right because I was listening, but I wasn't really listening that intently — so that 1,700 families or 1,700 people accessed the sports deduction and 650 kids accessed the arts deduction. These both represent numbers of children that accessed things through the program, so a total of 2,350 individuals — young people and their families — were able to access those tax credits.

For \$96,000, that means that each of those 2,350 individuals — their families — received \$40.81, which goes not very far to paying for \$400 dance lessons or \$400 bike programs or bicycles or hockey equipment.

I think that there is another number that we need to look at and we need to look at the Yukon census. In December 2015 — we have the list of all the children — and between zero- and four-year-olds, there were 2,130; between five- and nine-year-olds there were 2,049; between 10- to 14-year-olds there were 1,918; and between 15- and 19-year-olds there were 1,960. So that means in December there were 8,048 kids in the territory. Out of that, only 2,350 were able to qualify for that tax relief for their families. So what does it mean about the other kids? What happened to those kids?

I am a huge supporter of the kids recreation fund. I think that is a phenomenal program and, in 2012, I was really adamant in our caucus room that we talk about the increase to the kids rec fund because that is actually putting money in people's pockets to access recreation. We look at the amount of money — so it has been pretty stagnant. Right now, if your family qualifies — if they meet the financial means — each kid qualifies for up to \$400 in recreational funding. It's really interesting because this money funnels directly through to the sport organization or the store that is selling the sporting equipment, or those things. A parent identifies that they want a kid to cross-country ski; they'll go to the store, they'll find the skis, they'll put them aside. The kids recreation fund pays for the skis and the family picks it up, so I mean it's an economic driver as well.

We heard the Minister of Health and Social Services talk about personal choice, right? And it's true. We all have choices that we can make, but if you look at — I'm going to

look at a family of three because it's easy for me, two parents and three kids — so you're working, both people have jobs and I certainly hope that they make more than what the kids recreation fund says you have to make to access the funding. So in the kids recreation fund it's the net income, so that means it's your wages prior to any deductions. So if you make \$40,500 as your net income, with one child, it means that you make \$46,575 a year and that would mean if you were a single person working full-time, 40 hours a week, four weeks a month, 12 months a year, you would be making \$24.26 an hour. That is substantially more, we know, than minimum wage, which has just crested \$11. We know that is substantially more than what we — well, we on this side — consider a better wage, which would be \$15 an hour.

We know that if two parents were working and they qualified for that, it means that they would be making just over \$12 an hour, and that is a tough reality. So within that money, they would be paying rent, they would be paying food, they would be paying utilities and they would be paying things like — let's hope that they have some form of communication — so maybe a cellphone or a landline or whatever they choose and then on top of that, they're hoping that their child can participate in activities. So if they meet that requirement, then that one child can access \$400 entire dollars for an entire 12-month span for recreation. It doesn't seem like very much.

I know that a bike program that I participate in, where we ride with kids twice a week for two and a half months, is about \$385, and that is without the bike. Parents are going to tell you that's good value for money. Their kids ride for two hours with instructors. They get instruction; they have the best time ever — but that eats up almost the entire \$400 that you can access with the kids recreation fund.

Now, if we're talking about the next one — if you have two children, then you can earn more money. You can earn up to \$55,930 a year before taxes, which is not a lot — not a lot at all. So those two kids then also have the ability to get the \$400 per child for recreation.

What we're looking at for sports that they can afford — we're looking at indoor soccer, we're looking at softball — we might be looking at swimming lessons, but we're probably more looking at swim club, but even that's going to be close. We're certainly not talking about dance lessons all year-round. We are talking about picking one and hopefully you can scrape your pennies together to pay for the other stuff.

When we talk about personal choice, instead of looking at it like a family's choice about how they are going to try to juggle that money, we can talk about the personal choice of government. Right now, what we are saying is that we would like to ask the federal government to make sure that we can access that extra funding. By that extra funding, I mean you have to be able to spend the money before you can get that tax credit. You have to be able to spend the \$1,000 to access the maximum. You have to be able to spend the \$500 to access the maximum. I can tell you with great confidence, based on my own family, that my sister and her husband, with three children, work two full-time jobs, and to spend that kind of

money for their kids to recreate is almost an impossibility. It is not because they don't want to; it is because they can't. The interesting thing is that even they, who are making good fiscal decisions, can't access the kids recreation fund based on their earnings because they make too much to access that. I would suggest that maybe it is something that we can re-evaluate so that all kids have access to recreation because, as it stands right now, out of the 8,048 kids who were documented as living in the territory in December 2015, only 2,350 of them were able to access the Yukon's tax deductions — only 2,350 of them. Then I ask: Where are all the other kids in those numbers? We go through the census pages and try to figure out — in recreation, how many kids are participating in sport? They don't have those numbers.

The Member from Vuntut Gwitchin and all the other members who spoke about their involvement — I mean recreation is huge. I played outdoor soccer and indoor soccer when I was a kid, and I highland danced and all these things. When I discovered snowboarding as a teenager, I mean that is the reason why I graduated from high school. I had something to do on the weekend that was way more positive than what I could have been doing. I absolutely fundamentally believe that recreation is important, but a snowboard costs a bare minimum of \$400 and they cost typically a lot more than that. A season's pass is \$550, and you are not talking about bindings, boots, helmets, jackets or pants. How do we say that we think that recreation is so important that every kid should be able to participate when it is just financially not possible for many families to do that? It is just not possible. So then you do what you can for them on the side.

My nephew Kemper turns nine this year. He outgrew the bicycle that I bought him two years ago. Now I have to figure out a way that this kid doesn't think he is going to get a bicycle every birthday because that is essentially what it feels like. He is going to come and hang out with me and he is going to rake my lawn or something, and I am going to make him feel like he is working on it for a while because, right now, the bicycle is something that I will pick up because I am able to afford it more than his parents. That is a hard position to be in. That is a hard position, but I told my sister back when she was a single parent with one child that is the role that I would take. I would not buy clothes, I would not buy toys, but I would take care of things like bicycles and hockey equipment, because I want to make sure that my nephews have that opportunity.

But what if you don't have that ability to depend on your family to help you with those payments? You're certainly not going to be able to access the tax credit because you have to be able to spend that money before you get that small amount of money back. It's not an instant give and take. You have to spend that money, and then you put your tax forms in the next year, and then you see that little bit of difference on your tax rebate — hopefully you get an income tax rebate.

When we talk about personal choice, we could look at expanding the kids recreation fund. We could look at spreading that out so more kids could access it. We could look at expanding it, so maybe you had \$400 for the first six

months of this year and you had \$400 for the second part. That would mean that kids could participate in summer sports and winter sports; they could participate in sport all year-round.

Looking right now, I was online and I was trying to figure out what you could afford for \$400 a year for recreation, and I can tell you that you would have to be pretty creative. If we were talking about choice, I would have loved to talk about what we as the Yukon government could do for Yukon citizens, how we could make our decisions on how the money that we have to distribute could go. Instead of saying that we're looking outside for a little bit of help for parents, why couldn't we make a decision to offer a lot more help inside.

The kids recreation fund — if you have one child, you can't earn more than \$46,575 a year as a household income. That's not a lot. That's not a mortgage payment; that's living pretty tight. I think that's pretty small. I think you would have to be quite creative with that budgeting. If you have two children, you can't earn more than \$55,930 as a household. If you have three children, you can't earn more than \$63,262 as a household, and if you have four children or more, you can't earn more than \$70,000 to access that money.

We all know that kids are expensive and we know that keeping kids in clothes that fit and shoes that fit is one thing — making sure that they have healthy food to eat, making sure they have a roof over their heads. Just meeting those basic needs is going to be expensive, and that's not even talking about the ability to put them into recreation.

We're lucky that we live in this place where kids can go outside and they can play for free, and we're lucky that we live in a community where we have parks in every neighbourhood, but that's still not talking about the benefits that the members across were talking about, the benefits of organized sport, the benefits of coaching, the benefits of that leadership — because if you don't have the money to put your kid into organized sport, then you don't have the opportunity for them to see that and to experience that.

I think almost everyone in this Chamber has had a chance to play on a sports team, and you know how important it is — many of us have. It wasn't until I started snowboarding as a teenager that I realized that I wasn't really — I mean, I like team sports and I like teams, but I realized that I really liked doing sports on my own with other people around, which is why now I really like bicycles because I can go ride bikes with my friends, but it's just me on my bike.

I appreciate the point of this. What I don't understand is why we weren't looking at what we could do in Yukon for Yukoners. What I don't understand is why we're not looking at what role Yukon government can play to make sure that every kid in the Yukon has a chance to participate in recreation in whichever way they choose — whether you want to play the violin or you want to play the piano, go to singing lessons or go to dance lessons, or whether you want to play soccer or you want to bike camp, or maybe you want to go to the tennis and bike camp. This doesn't address that. This doesn't address how we can make sure that every kid has access to those things, which I think are really important.

When I talk about personal choice, I think every family realizes how important sport is and understands the value of sport, art and recreation. But I don't think every family has the ability to actually make that happen on the level that we've heard about today. What I would have really liked to have seen is how Yukon government was going to make sure that Yukon kids all had a chance to participate.

Ms. Moorcroft: I'm pleased to rise to debate the motion put forward by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin: "THAT this House urges the Parliament of Canada to recognize the importance of encouraging families to adopt healthy lifestyles by fully reinstating the children's fitness tax credit and the children's art tax credit."

Let me start by stating that the Yukon New Democrats support healthy lifestyles. Do you know what government introduced the healthy families program, which does much good work to this day in Health and Social Services? It was a Yukon NDP government.

We support sports and arts programs for children. Again, do you know what government introduced a kids recreation fund? It was a previous Yukon New Democratic government.

There is no question that the Yukon New Democrats support and have demonstrated that support for healthy lifestyles and for sports and arts programs.

There are, however, better ways to make them happen than a tax credit that serves no benefit to poor families. If a family is too poor to pay taxes in the first place, then that family will not be eligible for a tax credit for sports or arts.

The Premier in his debate said that this motion had nothing to do with the new federal budget's Canada child benefit and I want to argue that the Premier is mistaken in that. Taxes and tax regimes are about political choices. The new Canada child benefit is a political choice of the federal government. That's what governments do — make budget choices. This is not a cut, as the Minister of Health and Social Services suggested. In fact the new Canada child benefit is supported by the alternate federal budget from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and Choices. The new Canada child benefit is supported by the Caledon Institute, and the new Canada child benefit is supported by the Yukon NDP on the floor of the Legislative Assembly today.

The Harper Conservatives' tax regime that this motion buys into and urges us to go back to for child benefits was one that boosted child payments for the middle- and high-income voters. I want to briefly make reference to a document from the Caledon Institute from June 2015 by Ken Battle. It's called *Renewing Canada's Social Architecture — Child Benefits in Canada — Politics Versus Policy*.

The policy objective stated is for child benefits in our social architecture to build a single, streamlined and progressive support with a strong poverty-reduction impact and improved income security for modest- and middle-income families. The article states that the Harper Conservatives' tax benefits related to meeting children's needs were a classic case of social policy by stealth. The benefits that were in place were subject to federal and provincial/territorial income taxes,

so most families did not end up with the full annual amount per child. The new Canada child benefit is not taxable.

Just to outline the introduction of the Canada child benefit, looking at the budget statement, the benefits are: that it will be simpler; that families will receive a single payment every month; that it will be tax-free and families will not have to pay back part of the amount received when they file their tax returns; that it would be better targeted to those who most need it; low- and middle-income families will receive more benefits, and those with the higher incomes, generally over \$150,000 in taxable income, will receive lower benefits than under the current system. The new Canada child benefit is also much more generous. Families benefiting will see an average increase in child benefits of almost \$2,300 in the 2016-17 benefit year.

The Canada child benefit will provide a maximum annual benefit of up to \$6,400 per child under the age of six and up to \$5,400 per child for those of ages six through 17. Families earning less than \$30,000 in net income will receive the maximum benefit.

The first speaker from the opposition asked the government whether the Yukon Party government will be clawing back this Canada child benefit. Several ministers spoke to the motion and none of them have indicated whether this government will be clawing that back. Certainly the federal government has clearly set out that it hopes provinces and territories will not claw back this new Canada child benefit, which will see lower-income families getting more financial support.

Some of the things we can do to promote arts, music and recreation are to ensure that there are music programs in all of our schools and, as the Member for Takhini-Kopper King talked about, to look at what the kids recreation fund can do and how it might offer more in the way of support for low-income families.

What would be most effective of all to help support healthy living is to end poverty. If it's interested in poverty-reduction strategies, the Yukon Party can do a lot better than ask Ottawa for limited tax credits that aren't available to low-income families that can't afford to pay for music lessons or sports activities. A tax credit won't help a family that doesn't pay taxes because their income is too low. If they can't afford to pay taxes, they can't afford to pay for art classes, for music lessons or for sports.

How do we address poverty? We look at income equality, we look at pay equity — women in Canada still earn 75 cents on the dollar to their male counterparts — and we look at a higher minimum wage. We've seen campaigns for the federal government to adopt a \$15-per-hour minimum wage for federal workers. We offer better health and social programs by recognizing the social determinants of health — again, income inequality, inadequate housing, precarious employment, unemployment and underemployment, and access to basic, nutritious food.

I want to return to pay equity for a moment. When women get equal pay for work of equal value, they will be more likely to have a good enough income to support their

family's participation in sports, arts or whatever their priorities are.

Let's just look for a minute at the social income statistics. Last fall, the Minister of Health and Social Services provided those numbers to the House. There are 157 families with 293 children on social assistance. Those are families most in need, and those are families that will not be eligible for the tax credits that this motion urges us to ask the federal government to bring back.

Governments can't do everything. The federal government has chosen to take the money that was in the tax credit programs and reallocate them to a more generous Canada child benefits plan — a more progressive plan.

We've laid out our reasons for not being in support of this motion, and we urge this government to do more to address poverty and inequality.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Elias: I thank everybody today who stood up and spoke on the motion debate today.

I guess my intention here was to enhance and promote the opportunity for Yukon youth to live healthy lifestyles, in mind and body, through a fitness and art tax credit from the federal government. It wasn't meant to be all-encompassing or to capture everything with regard to fitness and art in the territory. I wanted to keep this piece of the puzzle available to well over 2,000 Yukoners who utilize the program.

I respectfully disagree with the assertions from the New Democratic Party with regard to who can and who can't benefit from these tax credits. It's just simply not my understanding and not the understanding of many of my colleagues on this side of the House.

For the Leader of the Yukon Liberal Party to suggest that I was somehow blaming the federal government with simply urging them to reinstate the children's fitness tax credit and the children's art tax credit, he seems to be a bit sensitive. I'm on record urging the federal Conservative government on a vast array of motions in this Assembly. It doesn't matter to me who holds the power in Ottawa. I'm never going to shirk or shy away from being a voice for my constituents and my fellow Yukoners.

It's important to mention that so many of our Yukon schools around the territory are becoming partners with local clubs, whether it be soccer, curling, swimming or other sports teams — hockey for that matter — in our own capital city. All of the students are able to access those types of sports, and so I don't see anything wrong with that. It's good to hear that the Liberal leader actually supports this motion. I hope that it gets to a vote because it's important to so many Yukoners.

I think that it's important. Mr. Speaker, the Stanley Cup playoffs start tonight and I, for one, would love to see a Yukoner battling for the hardest sports championship on this planet to win. These are the types of efforts that could possibly bear fruit one day. Thank you again for everyone who spoke today, and I look forward to a vote.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Disagree.

Ms. Stick: Disagree.

Ms. Moorcroft: Disagree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Mr. Tredger: Disagree.

Mr. Barr: Disagree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 12 yeas and six nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 1033 agreed to

Motion No. 1134

Clerk: Motion No. 1134, standing in the name of Mr. Elias.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin:

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America to recognize the 141st meridian as the offshore northern maritime boundary between Canada and the United States of America.

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, Canada and the United States share a maritime boundary in the Beaufort Sea that extends seaward from boundary monument No. 1 near Demarcation Point located on the 141st meridian in the northern part of my riding. Both states agree on the beginning point of the boundary, Boundary Monument No. 1, but that is where the agreement ends. Both states dispute the other's claim as to the seaward extension of the 141st meridian land boundary. The settlement of this boundary remains as one of the major boundary issues between Canada and the United States. Canada maintains that the boundary was established as the 141st meridian during the 1903 Alaska boundary arbitration. The United States contends that the boundary follows the equidistant line from the Yukon and Alaska coastlines. There is considerable history behind this dispute.

In 1825, Russia and Great Britain signed a treaty covering the territory of Alaska that limited the expansion of Russia southward and defined the possessions of each state. The boundary to the Beaufort Sea was defined in article 3 of the treaty as — and I quote: “... the line of demarcation shall follow the summit of the mountains situated parallel to the coast, as far as the point of intersection of the 141st degree of west longitude (of the same meridian); and, finally, from the said point of intersection, the said meridian-line of the 141st degree, in its prolongation as far as the Frozen Ocean, shall form the limit between the Russian and British possessions on the continent of America to the north-west.”

In 1867, in the same year of Canadian federation, Russia seceded all of its North American possessions to the United States. In the treaty of secession, the eastern boundaries of Alaska were defined by simply quoting articles 2, 3 and 4 of the 1825 Russia-Great Britain treaty.

In the Beaufort Sea region, Canada, acting in its own right, made the first indication as to what the seaward boundaries should be in the Arctic region in 1897. In that year, the sector principle was introduced as an order-in-council, establishing Canada’s Arctic region as delineated by an area between the 141st meridian on the west and the 60th meridian on the east. Canada thus extended its jurisdiction and state sovereignty to cover all of the Arctic regions to the North Pole between the two longitudes.

Further use of the 141st meridian as the international boundary between Canada and Alaska occurred in 1898 with the creation of the Yukon Territory. The boundary of the Yukon Territory was described as — and I quote: “Beginning at the intersection of the 141st meridian of west longitude from Greenwich with a point on the Arctic Sea, which is approximate north latitude, 69° 39’, and named on the Admiralty charts ‘Demarcation Point;’ thence due south, on said meridian (which is also the boundary line between Canada and Alaska) for a distance...”

Although an acceptance of the 141st meridian as the international boundary for part of the Alaska-Canada border, the land boundary had been accepted by the end of the 19th century and a dispute did arise in 1903 that required an arbitrated decision as to what the Canada-Alaska boundary truly was.

On October 20, 1903, a decision was rendered by the Alaska Boundary Tribunal that was seen as accepting the 141st meridian as the western boundary. This tribunal was established by Great Britain-Canada and the United States through a convention to resolve the whole Alaska boundary issue.

Throughout the hearings, the 141st meridian was accepted by all as the westward limit of Alaska and the wording of the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1825. For example — and I quote: “as far as the frozen Ocean” gave rise to no dispute with respect to the northward extension of this line. The land boundary was subsequently surveyed and monumented in 1906 with the beginning point of the boundary, boundary monument No. 1, established on the coast of the Beaufort Sea.

Following Canada’s endorsement of the sector principle as the maritime boundary in the Beaufort Sea, there was no concerted effort to further define or negotiate a seaward extension to the boundary. The United States, for its part, has never agreed to the sector theory or other national claims to the Arctic basin. In 1929, the United States government asked its navy if it was advisable to convene a conference on dividing the Arctic into five national sectors. The answer was unequivocal: a division of this kind would in fact constitute claims for sovereignty over the high seas and a novel attempt to artificially create a closed area, thereby infringing on the rights of all nations to the free use of the area.

The emergence of Arctic Ocean issues and in particular, pollution problems in the 1960s, prompted Canada to enact the *Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act* in 1970. When oil was discovered in 1968 at Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, and in 1969, the Government of Canada began granting exploration permits in the Beaufort Sea — once again using the 141st meridian in defining the territory available for oil leases. By 1970, the Canadian government had issued offshore oil and gas exploration permits covering approximately 150 million acres in the Arctic. Some of these permits covered tracts more than 140 miles off the coast and in waters more than 2,600 metres deep. Canada was using the 141st meridian as the dividing line while extending its control and sovereignty and began hydrographic activity in 1969 off the Yukon coast that continued until the mid-1980s. The United States has adamantly refused to accept the 141st meridian as claimed by Canada and instead insists the equidistant line is the proper offshore boundary line.

The establishment of a line by the equidistant principles is fully accepted as an equitable solution by international law. Canada, for its part, has agreed to an equidistant line in a treaty with Denmark and has supported the equidistant line for two of the other three US boundaries; for example, the Dixon Entrance and the Juan de Fuca Strait. One aspect of international law, however, supports the sector theory and hence, the 141st meridian as a dividing line. It is known as the *Grisbadarna Principle*. This principle originated from a dispute between Norway and Sweden that was settled by the Permanent Court of Arbitration that decided the maritime boundary between the two countries over the *Grisbadarna* lobster bank.

The *Grisbadarna Principle* — and I quote: “... is a settled principle of the law of nations that a state of things which actually exists and has existed for a long time should be changed as little as possible; and this rule is especially applicable in a case of private interests which, if once neglected, cannot be effectively safeguarded by any manner of sacrifice on the part of the Government of which the interested parties are subjects”. The application of this principle in the Beaufort Sea would be based on the United States’ acquiescence to the historical claim of Canada’s use of the sector principle — Canada’s hydrographic work in the area and its granting of oil and gas leases for the area.

Using the equidistant formula and based on the shape of the two countries respective coastlines bulging northward on

the Alaska side and indented on the Canadian side would give the United States control over a triangle-shaped 21,500 square kilometre wedge of Yukon waters in the Beaufort that Canada claims for itself. But the joint Canada-US seabed surveys in 2009 and 2009 showed each country's claims could extend much further toward the North Pole than previously imagined, doubling or even tripling the ultimate size of the dispute zone once continental shelf submissions are made. Under the US equidistant formula for determining the Maritime boundary, the presence of Canada's Banks Island on the Beaufort's eastern side radically alters where the border between the two countries would be drawn in areas further out to sea.

A bizarre development in the long-standing Beaufort Sea border dispute came to light following a conference in Alaska in 2010 involving Canadian and US experts on Arctic politics and international law. What emerged from the meeting was the realization that a large swath of ocean north of Alaska in the central and northern Beaufort would come under Canadian jurisdiction using the controversial American formula for drawing the international boundary. In effect, the dispute over a Lake-Ontario-sized section of the Beaufort in what should be Yukon offshore waters could grow to include a northern overlap zone as big as Lake Superior, potentially quadrupling the area of contested waters. The issue came into focus because both Canada and the US are gathering geological data in a bid to gain undersea territorial extensions in the outer Beaufort, beyond each country's 370-kilometre economic zone under a UN treaty on continental shelves. Thus according to the US's equidistant formula position, Alaska's northward sloping coastline means the sea's southern Maritime boundary veers slightly eastward of the Yukon-Alaska land boundary, giving the US a greater amount of marine jurisdiction. However, the overlap in the northern expanse of the Beaufort would be much larger and reversed, with the boundary under the US formula swinging far to the west because of Banks Island, giving Canada a greater amount of Maritime jurisdiction.

Ironically, Canada's sector or longitude formula for determining the boundary would give the US more seabed territory in the outer Beaufort. This geographic anomaly flips each country's interests in the central and northern Beaufort and offers a potential win-win opportunity to resolve the boundary dispute, giving both Canada and the United States a greater share of potential resources than either country had previously imagined — including shipping lanes I might add.

To summarize, the US portion, when applied to the central and northern parts of the Beaufort Sea, would favour Canada, pushing the boundary between the two countries on a roughly 45-degree angle farther to the northwest and eventually to a point 80 degrees north, where it would intersect with the US-Russia maritime boundary. Similarly, Canada's position would favour Yukon in the southern Beaufort, but entitle the US to more undersea territory at northern latitudes.

Mr. Speaker, I believe there is an opportunity to resolve this long-standing dispute — a dispute that pre-dates Canadian

confederation. There is an old adage: strike while the iron is hot.

On March 10, 2016, Prime Minister Trudeau and President Obama jointly pledged to protect the Arctic from overfishing and development. They were silent on the disputed territory in the Beaufort Sea, while on March 15, 2016, the US Bureau of Ocean Energy Management released its five-year oil and gas program for 2017 to 2022. The program includes three potential lease sales off the coast of Alaska between 2020 and 2022, including one that includes a section of what should be Yukon waters.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States to agree that the 141st meridian is an international offshore boundary in the Beaufort Sea that is a win-win for both countries, and I urge them to resolve this dispute prior to the next US federal election to be held in November 2016.

I commend this motion to all members of the House and look forward to further debate.

Mr. Tredger: It gives me pleasure to rise to speak to the motion brought forward by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, which is that the House urges the Government of Canada and the Government of United States of America to recognize 141st meridian as the offshore northern maritime boundary between Canada and the United States of America.

Given the obvious complexity and history of this issue and the attention being paid to it by both our federal government and the US federal government, I'm not sure what our debate and discussion can add to this issue, but I will proceed.

The 141st boundary dispute is over a section of the Beaufort Sea, just north of Yukon and Alaska. The Government of Canada asserts that the maritime boundary ought to follow the borderline between Alaska and the Yukon, based on the 1825 treaty Britain had signed with Russia. The 1825 treaty states that the border should extend as far as the frozen ocean, but does this mean that it ends where the ocean begins? Does it mean that it ends once it hits the Arctic sea ice? These are shifting targets. What does it mean when there may be no more ice? Again, it's difficult to know. The ambiguity in this line has led to the difference in claims.

The United States argues that the line should stop at the frozen ocean, while Canada believes it should carry on into the ocean. Because the United States believes that the line stops at the ocean, they claim an equidistant line should be set that accounts for the southerly slope of the Canadian shoreline. The equidistance principle is a well-established protocol for settling marine boundary disputes.

Into this mixture, seabed surveys of Beaufort Sea have revealed that there are significant oil and gas potential reserves underneath the seafloor, making the disputed area very valuable. Both nations have taken advantage of this by selling drilling and exploration rights to several major oil companies. One outstanding issue is that in 1984, the western Inuvialuit land claim settlement region is based on the Canadian position. Canada has been referencing this

agreement as evidence for their claim. This leads us to a wider issue that I would like to touch on when it comes to Arctic sovereignty: the history of using Canada's indigenous peoples as a tools for making sovereignty claims.

I will reflect a little on the experience of the Inuit and the use of their claims for Arctic sovereignty. The influence of the Inuit on Canada's Arctic sovereignty goes back to the earliest Arctic disputes. In 1930, Norwegian fishermen and hunters applied to Canada to exploit the areas around the Sverdrup Islands for commercial purposes. In response, Canada said it would willingly grant natural resource exploration rights; however, by order-in-council, Canada was required to deny the Norwegian request "... to protect the Arctic areas as hunting and trapping preserves for the sole use of the aboriginal population of the Northwest Territories, in order to avert the danger of want and starvation through the exploitation of the wild life by white hunters and traders." The Norwegian government acknowledged the obligations of the Canadian government and accepted the rejection of their application. This set out the precedent of using indigenous use and occupation to claim Arctic sovereignty.

As the debate surrounding the Arctic increased in the 1980s, Canada claimed that waterways were internal waters after drawing straight baselines around the archipelago. Once again, Canada's claim emphasized the Inuit by using their hundreds of years of Arctic inhabitation as an example of use and occupancy.

The most tragic contribution that the Inuit have made toward Canada's claim to Arctic sovereignty was the High Arctic relocation when 17 families were moved from northern Quebec to settlements in Grise Fiord and Resolute Bay. These families were promised assistance and plentiful hunting grounds. However, there was no snow for them to make igloos. The area was unsuitable for their hunting techniques. The relocated Inuit suffered greatly but, in the winters following their relocation, they were able to adapt to the location, climate and food sources.

The High Arctic relocation is and has been a contentious issue between Canada and the Inuit. Though it was never described as such, the relocation was almost certainly done to assert Canadian sovereignty in the High Arctic, as it coincided with a perceived threat from Denmark and the United States. The relocation, which bolstered Canada's sovereignty claim through Inuit use and occupation, has led some to call the peoples of Grise Fiord and Resolute Bay as human flagpoles.

It is obvious that the history, use and occupation of Canada's indigenous peoples in the Arctic forms one of Canada's strongest claims for Arctic sovereignty, but for far too long this has been a fact only brought up during boundary disputes. The Inuit and the Inuvialuit are Canadians, but our governments have only recognized this fact when it benefits them.

The boundary dispute over the Beaufort Sea region is an example that highlights the generally peaceful nature of all Arctic territorial disputes. In fact, as far as respectful boundary disputes go, this is a model that all countries should aspire to. Former Prime Minister Harper enjoyed touring the

Arctic and pledging financial support for the Armed Forces to counter threats. His fear-based approach to engaging Canadians was not only morally wrong, but it was factually incorrect.

President Barack Obama commented — and I quote: "The Arctic region is peaceful, stable, and free of conflict." All of the parties in the Arctic have had good relations, and the perception of strained relations among Arctic nations over territorial claims was cultivated from a prime minister and a political party more concerned about domestic image than international boundary disputes. Canada and the United States have been working together to find a solution about the disputed area.

Recently, Canadian and American icebreakers have been working together to map the sea floor. Canada and the United States are in an excellent position to resolve this dispute. There is a precedent for working together in the Beaufort Sea. In fact, in 1977 both countries had agreed to share the cost of development and the profits associated with the development of hydrocarbons in the disputed area. Though this never occurred, it would have allowed them to develop the area without worrying about the boundary dispute.

This brings up a point of real concern. I hope that the Yukon Party's sudden interest in this dispute is not an underhanded way to pursue Yukon Party support for an outdated oil and gas industry. I will quote from the Premier: "Work with the Governments of Canada and the Northwest Territories to resolve the outstanding offshore jurisdictional boundary issues between the NWT and Yukon including the right of the Government of Yukon to share the government revenues derived from oil and gas development in what should be recognized as the Yukon's portion of the Beaufort Sea."

Working out this boundary dispute to access the oil and gas in the Beaufort Sea is beyond naïve. There are simply no assurances that can be provided at this time to make sure that the drilling that occurs can be done safely. In fact, this was recently noted by our Premier — and I'll quote: "At this point there isn't an appetite for such drilling offshore and for the Americans to be putting leases in what we feel is Canadian jurisdiction, at a time when there's still so much uncertainty around the safety of offshore drilling, this is a real issue."

It sounds to me like the Premier means that it's safe for us to drill, but not for the United States. This provides another example of the Yukon Party talking about protecting the environment when it's convenient, but ignoring concerns otherwise. What we need is a government that will say what they mean and mean what they say.

We saw recently that Canada doesn't have the capacity to adequately respond to a spill in Vancouver's English Bay. Mitigating spills or wellhead leaks in the Arctic would be impossible with our current spill-response regime. Imagine a wellhead leak, like the Deepwater Horizon incident that occurred in the Gulf of Mexico that leaked before it was capped. Imagine that, instead of being in an accessible, forgiving location, it was in the Arctic, and then remember that Arctic ecosystems are far more fragile and that oil takes

longer to break down in cold water. Only after considering these facts does one start to understand the recklessness that developing oil and gas deposits in the area carries.

It is also important to understand that if we were to argue that this territory is ours, due to the deep ties to the land of Canada's indigenous peoples, it would be disingenuous to then pursue development that would put their way of life, their culture, and their traditional practices at risk. The Government of Canada and Yukon must work with the Arctic Council and indigenous peoples of the north to ensure that their rights and voices in the north remain strong and that the Arctic and their way of life remain viable.

Mr. Speaker, the world does not need more oil. The world is awash in oil and gas. Science tells us that we cannot burn what we have already discovered and developed. Across southern Canada, productive wells are being shut in and decommissioned. There are tens of thousands of unemployed, skilled oil and gas workers. Investing our time in fossil fuels when the rest of world is divesting is wrong-headed. The economy of the 21st century and the jobs of the 21st century will be based on green, renewable industry. The science is clear, the economics are clear, and the people of Yukon have been clear.

To invest time and money in oil and gas plays that will come online just as our agreements to create a low carbon economy are being realized is wrong-headed.

The Yukon Party's recognition of climate change and endorsement of the COP agreements in Paris at the same time as pursuing oil and gas development is an example of what George Orwell would call "double think" — that is the ability to hold two conflicting statements in one's mind at the same time.

We will support this motion but we will also insist that this government work with the Government of Canada and the indigenous governments and peoples to ensure the preservation and protection of the Arctic for all peoples now and in the future in a spirit of neighbours and cooperation.

Speaker: Sir, were you proposing a motion or an amendment?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: It was just the way it was phrased.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I am pleased to rise here today in support of this motion. I would like to thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing it forward. Certainly one of the things leading up to raising this issue once again, although not for the first time on the national and international agenda, was the recent move by the United States to indicate an interest in issuing oil and gas leases offshore in the disputed area and, with those potential lease sales by the US Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and releasing their five-year program, it caused some concern and the desire for us to express what will hopefully be a unanimous statement to the Government of Canada and to the Government of the United States, and once again raising this issue on the international agenda.

In preparation for debate, I looked through a number of documents, including Yukon government legal opinions

dating back to the 1990s regarding interpretation of the agreements and the statutes dating all the way back to 1825. In the treaty that my colleague, the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, referenced between Russia and Great Britain, which covered the territory of Alaska and limited the expansion of Russia southwards and identified the 141st meridian as the dividing line between Russia and British possessions — and, of course, the Russian possessions were then subsequently sold to the United States government and then became the State of Alaska.

This issue, from my perspective, is about several things including, first and foremost, sovereignty. It's about management of offshore waters and the environment and resources in those areas, including the ability of the Government of Canada and the Government of Yukon to ensure that we are protecting our interests and the interests of the people of Canada and the people of the Yukon Territory.

As my colleague noted, the line began with the 1825 recognition in the treaty between Russia and Great Britain covering the territory of Alaska that defined the 141st meridian as the border.

In the Beaufort Sea region, Canada, acting in its own right, made the first indication as to what the seaward boundary should be in the Arctic region in 1897 — that for the reason of the fact that the original treaty made reference to the land interests and the border between Russia and Britain but was not as specific about the ocean boundaries, other than its references to the frozen ocean and the boundary between Russian and British possessions on a continent of America to the northwest.

In 1897, the year before the Yukon was created as a territory, the sector principle — that being the argument that the dividing line between Canada's and the United States' interests offshore follow the 141st meridian, just as the onshore land boundary does between Canada and the United States — Canada introduced that sector principle in an order-in-council establishing Canada's authority over the Arctic in 1897 and delineated that area as an area between the 141st meridian on the west and the 60th meridian on the east. Canada thus extended its jurisdiction and sovereignty to cover all of the Arctic region to the North Pole between those two longitudes.

I should also note that, as many members will be aware, at the time of the Klondike Gold Rush — of course, at the beginning of it, the Yukon did not exist as a territory on its own. It was created following the significant increase in population due to the Klondike Gold Rush. At one point in the early stages of the gold rush, the boundary line had not been firmly established and accepted by the United States government, and it was, in part, through the work of the North-West Mounted Police and the famous Sam Steele that the boundary was established through asserting our sovereignty through the installation of customs posts at the White Pass and the Chilkoot passes.

Although an acceptance of the 141st meridian as the international boundary for part of the Alaska-Canada border, the land boundary had been accepted by the end of the 19th

century. As my colleague referenced, a dispute did arise in 1903 that resulted in an arbitrated decision. A panel jointly established by Great Britain, Canada and United States — and on October 20, 1903, the decision rendered by the Alaska boundary tribunal accepted the 141st meridian as the western boundary.

I would again just very briefly reference the comments made by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin rightly noting that the principle in international law known as the Grisbadarna Principle does establish that, after a certain amount of time, the claim of a country to an area is strengthened simply by using it and that historical claim and usage of the area.

Therefore, I would note that this issue has been discussed by Canada and the United States previously. It has not been fully resolved. It is something that we believe does need to be resolved and should be resolved — recognizing the 141st meridian as the boundary between Canada and the United States in our offshore waters — and in fact, in doing so, as I noted, that has, from my perspective, the benefits to Canada and to the Yukon of clearly establishing our sovereignty in the area for all purposes, including economic sovereignty, usage, environmental protection and resource management. It establishes our legal ability to make regulations and to legislate — and I'm referring to "we" as both the Government of Canada and the Yukon government — in the offshore area if we have clearly established that boundary.

In the event of the likely increase in activity in the Arctic Ocean as the result of global warming and increased interest by a number of countries — including but not limited to Russia — in using the area, the importance of establishing our sovereignty and continuing to assert it within that area is something that, in my opinion, should be important to Canadians whatever their political stripe is or whatever their philosophy is — whether you are interested in using it for resource development and oil and gas revenues, or interested more in protecting the environment and managing shipping. For all of those reasons, it is important that the Government of Canada and the Yukon government have our authority to make decisions in that area clearly recognized.

I won't spend a lot of time talking about the issues between Yukon and the Northwest Territories, but I would just make a few comments in reference to those who have argued, as some have, that the Yukon, when it was created, was only carved out as the land portion of that area and that all of the offshore waters are the Northwest Territories', not Yukon's. In fact, there are a number of things — including the legal opinions that the Yukon government consistently has had throughout the years under governments of every political stripe going back to the 1990s interpreting the treaties in this area as well as Supreme Court of Canada reference cases. The further recognition of the Government of Canada and confirmation of who owns what includes a letter from then-Prime Minister Mulroney to then-Premier of the Yukon, Tony Penikett, in 1990 that referenced the offshore area. It includes the 1993 accord on oil and gas revenue sharing and resource management — the official title is *The Canada Yukon Oil and Gas Accord*, the accord between the

Government of Canada and the Government of Yukon on oil and gas revenue sharing and management. It was further strengthened and confirmed by the memorandum of understanding between Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Yukon Energy, Mines and Resources signed by Deputy Minister Angus Robertson in 2008 during which time I was actually minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources.

The point that I am making is for clarifying this and particularly for the Official Opposition. The member who spoke seemed to be questioning the timing of this and the intent behind this. I would argue that, just as with Yukon's constitutional development and devolution within our land area, there has been a consistent trend in Yukon since the establishment of responsible government that, regardless of political party, governments of all stripes have consistently supported increased control for Yukon citizens within our own territory and supported the strengthening of our powers under the Constitution and the recognition of the rights of the Yukon government and the Yukon people to make decisions within our boundaries.

I will again just briefly quote from a few excerpts — and again, when I refer to the recognition by the Government of Canada that the jurisdiction for the offshore waters was not in fact, as some have asserted, transferred to the NWT and solely to the NWT. The letter from March 28, 1990, addressed to then-Premier Penikett, signed by Prime Minister Mulroney notes — and I quote: "In your letter of October 27, 1989, you raised the issue of the Yukon-Northwest Territories boundary.

"The Northern Accord agreements-in-principle reflect this government's commitment to the political evolution of the North within the Canadian federation and its recognition of the interest of Yukon and the Northwest Territories in participating in the management and development of offshore oil and gas. The Government, you may rest assured, is committed to ensuring that both territories will share equitably in the benefits arising from such development.

"Although the Northern Accord agreements-in-principle recognize the common interest of both territories in the Beaufort Sea and in the development of Beaufort oil and gas, jurisdiction in the offshore will be retained by the federal government."

I will move on to another part of a letter that makes reference to a bill then before the Parliament of Canada, Bill C-39, the *Canadian Laws Offshore Application Act*, and the Prime Minister then confirms in the letter that the bill is neutral with respect to territorial boundaries, but the bill has been drafted in a way to allow the Government in Council, which is the federal Cabinet, if it is enacted, to apply Yukon laws throughout an offshore area adjacent to its coast.

Again, what I am attempting to clarify for members and for the public record in this area is that our view is that the letter from the Prime Minister to the Premier of the day makes it clear that offshore waters had not been transferred to either territory, but it provides the indication that Yukon and the Northwest Territories could, in future, enact laws to apply adjacent to the coast, and then it further indicates the

opportunity and the interest of both territories in federal waters beyond the immediate offshore area.

Again, a few other references I would just make with regard to the issue of Yukon's waters offshore is that, if members refer to the current legislation that sets out the boundaries of the Northwest Territories — that being the *Northwest Territories Act*, which, like the *Yukon Act*, is the federal legislation that effectively establishes the constitution and the legislative authority for the territories. The current *Northwest Territories Act* defines Northwest Territories as follows: “*Northwest Territories*’ means that part of Canada that is north of the 60th parallel of north latitude, west of the boundary described in Schedule I to the *Nunavut Act* and not within Yukon.”

Also among the definitions includes that “*onshore*’ means that part of Canada that is north of the 60th parallel of north latitude, west of the boundary described in Schedule I to the *Nunavut Act* and not within Yukon that consists of the following lands: “(a) lands, including lands under water, that lie landward of the low-waterline...” — some of this gets fairly lengthy.

Members can read it at their own discretion, but I will simply note that section A of the definition of onshore makes it clear that it applies to land and land underwater that is on the landward side of the low-water line, or the low-tide line. It makes reference also to the power over — land that is referenced in the NWT act includes land underwater within small, enclosed bays on the seacoast or by naturally occurring permanent islands. It also covers land, including land underwater that is on the land side of the low-water line. It clarifies, in referring to its definition of land — it again refers to land onshore.

I would note that, in the definition of “waters” — in the *Northwest Territories Act*, it defines it as “any inland waters — whether in a liquid or frozen state — that are on or below the surface of lands that are situated on the onshore.”

In referencing powers transferred to the NWT government, again in referring to the definition of the power to make regulation over water, there also is no indication that they have transferred all authority to water offshore. So again it is our view that the 141st meridian has long been established, though not recognized by the United States, as the boundary between first Russia and Great Britain, and then established by Canada through order-in-council over a hundred years ago in 1897. That remained uncontested for some time by the United States government.

In the case of the offshore, it is also our view that a number of things, including the letter from the then-Prime Minister to the then-Premier of the Yukon in 1990, as well as the 1993 accord on oil and gas revenue sharing and resource management and the 2008 MOU that was signed regarding the interim provisions of the Canada-Yukon oil and gas report in relation to the offshore — all of those documents, in our view, reinforce the Yukon's contention that, in fact, we clearly do have offshore waters and offshore interests. I think that covers the issue between the Yukon and the NWT border.

I understand my time is short and I would hope that this will reach a vote today and hope that all members will join us in voting for this and sending a unanimous indication to the federal government of the importance to both federal governments of Canada and the United States of resolving that long-standing border dispute for the purpose of ensuring that the Government of Canada, as well as the Government of Yukon, and the people of both Yukon and Canada, have the ability to effectively manage that offshore area for reasons including sovereignty, environmental protection and the revenue from resources.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will wrap up my comments and commend this motion to the House.

Mr. Silver: I'll be brief, Mr. Speaker. Essentially this is a matter for the Government of Canada to address, as a few different people have said today, including the Member for Lake Laberge.

There are legitimately unresolved issues because of the uncertainty surrounding our border with Alaska, with of course the main issue being offshore drilling.

Mr. Speaker, it was a campaign commitment of the Yukon Party in both 2006 and in 2011 to address this issue with the former Conservative government of Ottawa. The fact is that no progress has been made. It seems like an odd commitment for a territorial party to make but, nonetheless, the Yukon Party did make it — not once, but twice. I guess in that aspect, after 14 years in office, the commitment remains unfulfilled.

As noted, resolving this issue is absolutely important and is absolutely necessary, so I will be supporting the motion.

Ms. Hanson: I will be almost equally as brief as the Member for Klondike.

When this motion came forward, I was reminded of the Madison lecture about five or six years ago when Michael Byers was invited to speak. As people recall, he's an author of *Who Owns the Arctic?: Understanding Sovereignty Disputes in the North*, and he's also a Canada research chair in global politics and international law. He's very, very well regarded.

Mr. Byers has made the case numerous times over the years in many academic papers, as well as the *Globe and Mail* and other places, that the relationship between Canada and the US, when it comes to the Arctic — and actually among all of the Arctic nations — has been remarkable, in the sense that the notion of cooperation in the Arctic — because as much as the US would like to suggest, and we've seen, of course, that the US has already leased a number of seabed oil and gas interests in the Beaufort area, because they view and see the hydrocarbon potential there, but they have no presence.

The US, as the greatest naval power in the world, has very limited capabilities in the Arctic, so they do have to work with the Russians, with Canada and with other Arctic states.

We, of course, do support the motion brought forward by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin — and I thank the Member for Mayo-Tatchun for also setting some of the context for this

issue — but the reality is there has been no settlement to date because the US has signed, but not ratified, the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*.

If and when that treaty is ratified, it is understood that the issue would likely be settled at a tribunal, so this is not a matter — it's highly contentious — but it is, given the politics of the United States, that's what we're seeing. We have a senate that is staunchly opposed, as they are to almost anything that comes forward from the current president — and my goodness, one can't even guess what will come out of the slate that's currently before the media.

Despite that, the UNCLOS is still seen as a crucial instrument — I guess you would say — of international Maritime law, although Canada, among others — you know, this has been on the table for a very, very long time.

We will support this, but I would caution against holding your breath that there is going to be imminent change; that the US is going to be able to suddenly say: “Bob's your uncle. We agree.” They have internal politics that will mitigate against that.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I too would like to rise to speak in support of this motion. I would like to thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing this motion forward to ensure that the 141st meridian is recognized as the offshore northern boundary between Yukon and the State of Alaska. It is an issue that appears, as we have heard, in the Yukon Party's 2011 election platform, “Moving Forward Together”, and, in fact, it has been part of our platform for awhile.

I would like to just say that this is an issue that, as Premier, I have raised at the federal level. I have spoken with the former Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, about this a number of times and I have formally written to both former Prime Minister Stephen Harper and to Prime Minister Trudeau on this issue. I have actually raised it with the former Canadian Ambassador to the United States as well.

As already noted, it is an issue that predates the Canadian Confederation of 1867 and it predates the creation of the Yukon Territory in 1898. Canada's claim that the 141st meridian should be recognized as an offshore northern boundary in the Beaufort Sea between the United States and Canada stems from the 1825 treaty between Russia and Great Britain. Article 3 of that treaty states in part — and I quote: “... the said Meridian Line of the 141st Degree, in its prolongation as far as the Frozen Ocean, shall form the limit between the Russian and British Possessions on the Continent of America to the North West.” In 1867, the same year as Canadian Confederation, Russia ceded all of its North American possessions to the United States.

In the *Treaty of Cession*, the eastern boundary of Alaska was defined by quoting from the 1825 treaty between Russia and Great Britain. In 1898, prior to the creation of the Yukon Territory, Canada, acting on its own, made its first indication as to what the seaward boundary in the Arctic should be. In that year, the sector principle was introduced as an order-in-council establishing Canada's Arctic region as delineated by an area between the 141st meridian on the west and the 60th

meridian in the east. In this, Canada extended its jurisdiction and state sovereignty to cover all of the Yukon region to the North Pole between those two longitudes.

The creation of the Yukon Territory in 1898 was a further recognition of the 141st meridian as the international boundary between Canada and Alaska. While the land boundary had been accepted by the end of the 19th century, a dispute did arise in 1903 that required an arbitration decision as to what the Canada-Alaska land boundary truly was. Throughout the hearings, the 141st meridian was accepted by all as the westward limit of Alaska, and the wording of the Anglo-Russian treaty of 1825 as far as the “Frozen Ocean” was not disputed as the northward extension of the 141st meridian.

Boundary Monument No. 1 was established in 1906 on the coast of the Beaufort Sea. The United States has adamantly refused to accept the 141st meridian, as claimed by Canada, and instead insists the equidistant line is the proper offshore boundary line.

Canada, for its part, supports the sector principle making the 141st meridian the international offshore boundary, based on historic treaties. It must be acknowledged that the establishment of a line by the equidistant principle is fully accepted as an equitable solution by international law, and that two of three other offshore boundary disputes between Canada and the United States have been resolved by using the equidistant principle.

The emergence of Arctic Ocean issues — in particular pollution problems — in the 1960s promoted Canada to enact the *Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act* in 1970. Oil was discovered in 1968 in Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, and in 1969, Canada began granting exploration permits in the Beaufort Sea, using the 141st meridian in defining the territory available for leases. The dispute continues to this day. The US uses the equidistant formula, while Canada maintains the sector principle.

In 2010, however, the development occurred that could lead to a resolution of the long-standing issue by making the US more likely to accept Canada's 141st meridian sector principle. It was discovered that, by using the US' equidistant principle, a large area of the ocean north of Alaska, in central and northern Beaufort, would come under Canadian jurisdiction. While Canada would lose a section of the Beaufort in what should be Yukon waters, it would gain much more area on what Canada would recognize as American waters. Ironically, by accepting Canada's sector principle, the US gains more seabed territory in the outer Beaufort.

After all these years, a resolution may be possible, as using Canada's sector principles is a win-win for both countries. I urge the Prime Minister to use his good relationship with the President to meet and resolve this matter as soon as possible.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Elias: I thank all the members who spoke to this motion here today. This 141st meridian is a long outstanding

issue. It is within my riding and I think it's going to bode well for the Arctic offshore, should the United States government and our federal government come to an agreement that the 141st meridian be the boundary between our two countries — between our two sovereign nations. As the Arctic changes over the years, it's my hope that future generations and those yet unborn don't have to deal with this issue.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. Stick: Agree.

Ms. Moorcroft: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Barr: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 1134 agreed to

Mr. Elias: I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:19 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 254

1st Session

33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, April 14, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER — Hon. David Laxton, MLA, Porter Creek Centre

DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Darrell Pasloski	Mountainview	Premier Minister responsible for Finance; Executive Council Office
Hon. Elaine Taylor	Whitehorse West	Deputy Premier Minister responsible for Tourism and Culture; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Justice; Yukon Development Corporation/ Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Doug Graham	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Education
Hon. Scott Kent	Riverdale North	Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources; Highways and Public Works
Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Community Services; Public Service Commission
Hon. Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Minister responsible for Environment
Hon. Mike Nixon	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin	Minister responsible for Economic Development; Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Party

Darius Elias	Government House Leader Vuntut Gwitchin
Hon. David Laxton	Porter Creek Centre
Patti McLeod	Watson Lake

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Jan Stick	Official Opposition House Leader Riverdale South
Kevin Barr	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes
Lois Moorcroft	Copperbelt South
Jim Tredger	Mayo-Tatchun
Kate White	Takhini-Kopper King

Liberal Party

Sandy Silver	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, April 14, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will now proceed with the Order Paper. Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Parkinson's Awareness Month

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, today I ask my colleagues in this House to join me in recognizing April as Parkinson's Awareness Month. Parkinson's disease was first described by English physician Dr. James Parkinson in 1817. However, it was only four decades later that Dr. Jean-Martin Charcot finalized Dr. Parkinson's excellent clinical description and attached the name "Parkinson's disease" to the syndrome. Parkinson's is a chronic, degenerative neurological disease that is characterized by a loss of dopamine in the brain. The symptoms include resting tremor, slowness of movement, stiffness of muscles, difficulty with balance and walking, and changes in voice volume and speech.

Some individuals diagnosed with the disease might also see changes like depression, loss of sense of smell, sleep disturbances and cognitive changes. Currently there is no cure, but people can live with Parkinson's for years with a combination of physical and occupational therapy, speech therapy, exercise and medication. For some, surgery is also an option to manage the disease. Parkinson's disease is the second-most common neurodegenerative disorder after Alzheimer's disease in Canada. A 2011 study from Statistics Canada estimated that 55,000 Canadians live with Parkinson's disease, and it is anticipated that, by 2031, the number of Canadians diagnosed with Parkinson's will double to more than 163,700 people.

Parkinson's can progress at different rates for each person, and as symptoms change, medication is changed as well. People living with this disease have the highest rate of prescription drug use compared to other neurological conditions. This can put a significant strain on the family socio-economic situation and also on caregiver stress. It is not an easy disease to live with nor to watch.

Yukoners are not exempt from this disease. It touches families and individuals here as well. By asking my colleagues to take a minute today to recognize what these individuals and their families are going through, I hope to start to create a better understanding of the full impact of this disease so we can look for a better and more efficient use of the health care system to improve the quality of life for Parkinson's sufferers.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?
 Are there any reports of committees?

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Hon. Mr. Hassard: I have for presentation the 21st report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees.

Speaker: Are there any further reports of committees to be presented?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 96: *Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2016* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I move that Bill No. 96, entitled *Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2016*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 96, entitled *Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2016*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 96 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?

Bill No. 202: *Act to Amend the Education Act* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Graham: I move that Bill No. 202, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Education that Bill No. 202, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

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

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to amend the *Vital Statistics Act* to remove discriminatory provisions that require trans people undergo sex-reassignment surgery in order to have their gender designation changed.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?
 This brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: **Climate change action plan**

Ms. Hanson: Yukoners have become used to this Premier's refusal to seriously engage in action to combat climate change. In a recent First Ministers' Conference, the

Premier jumped to a no-carbon-tax position. He shut the door on Yukon's participation in the conversation about Canada's transition to a low-carbon economy by refusing to engage in a level-headed, mature and collaborative discussion.

As he so often does, the Premier has said what he would not do but did not offer any suggestions or solutions about what he would do. The Premier has withdrawn Yukon from the national conversation about transitioning to a low-carbon economy before it has even begun.

What measures will the Premier be proposing to support Canada's plan to transition to a national low-carbon economy?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I do thank the member opposite for the question.

Of course, Yukon government fully supports action to address climate change, and we've outlined that in our Yukon energy strategy and our climate action plan. The majority of the original 33 commitments in our climate change plan have been completed, and we have set out 28 new commitments in the 2015 climate change progress plan.

Our work includes the expansion of Yukon's hydro grid with reduced community reliance on diesel, the adoption of a territorial biomass strategy, the conversion of some of the Yukon's backup power to LNG from diesel, the development of new technology at the Cold Climate Innovation centre — and you just need to look in my riding with wind power with Kluane First Nation and some of the progress that we've made on next generation hydro, so the list goes on and we're doing our part.

Ms. Hanson: You know, Mr. Speaker, there is the difference. The Yukon NDP is prepared, along with Canada's industry leaders, to be part of the transition. Yesterday, Canada's largest mining association, which represents a number of industry players with interests in Yukon, said that they support the establishment of a broad-based carbon price. Industry leaders from all sectors across Canada have agreed that we need to transition off fossil fuels to move toward a low-carbon economy. Yukoners are eager to take part in this conversation, but this Premier has shut the door on our participation.

Why does the Premier disagree with the Canadian mining association when they say that we need to put a price on carbon?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I guess the NDP was not listening on the radio this morning when, on the CBC morning show, they did in fact host the CEO of the Mining Association of Canada and he said — and I quote: "Actually, I just listened to what your Premier said and I'll be honest. I have trouble disagreeing with him, and what you just quoted him saying, and our principles, I think, speak a lot to the issues that he was making in your Legislature."

We do talk about it in our principles — the importance of recognizing the sort of geographic circumstances, and the premiers and the Prime Minister, when they met in Vancouver, made the same recognition.

Mr. Speaker, this government will not stand for ideology. We'll stand for real solutions for Yukoners and not make sure

that everything costs more, which is exactly what the NDP and Liberal governments would do.

Ms. Hanson: The next thing that Mr. Gratton said: "I'm not saying 'exempt'" — is what he said. He said that it was clear that Yukon shouldn't be exempt from doing our part.

You know, this Premier is channelling his inner Harper. Just as the former Prime Minister embarrassed Canada internationally as "fossil of the year", this Premier is intent on doing the same across this country.

The difference between Canada's mining leaders and this Yukon Premier, Mr. Speaker — maturity. All across Canada there is a recognition that we need to have this conversation, but the Premier is unwilling to engage. Blind ideology has no place in this conversation. The reality is that carbon does have a price, whether the Premier likes it or not. Climate changes costs Yukoners millions every year, and anyone driving Yukon's roads in the spring knows it. Like the Canadian mining association, Yukoners want to be part of the solution, to engage with Canada.

Will the Premier commit to consulting Yukoners about how Yukon can participate in a transition to a low-carbon economy or —

Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, we certainly are doing our part, and our climate plan is working — where we provide more efficient energy systems, reduce emissions in government as we can see with what's been going on in the main administration building, and provide energy incentives to Yukoners. We will look for real solutions to Yukon's challenges. We do need to do our part and that is exactly what we're doing through our plan, but what we won't do is make food, gasoline, home heating fuels, diapers, milk and everything else cost more money. That is exactly what an NDP or Liberal government would do to Yukoners.

Question re: Internet connectivity

Ms. Hanson: You know, to date, the government has spent over \$600,000 on three reports looking at the options for a second fibre optic link in Yukon. Based on those reports, the Dempster option was chosen as the preferred route.

In this year's budget, the government has allocated an additional \$500,000 for another report and engineering study on the preferred route. This is expected to deliver the detailed breakdown of the costs and should be completed this summer.

The innovative budgeting initiative that this government presented mentions the application of available third-party funds for infrastructure projects in Yukon. What third-party sources of funding is the Yukon government pursuing to build the fibre optic link, and is the project contingent on receiving those third-party funds?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, of course this government understands the importance of fibre optic to the Yukon. You know we have talked about fast, affordable and reliable Internet service for the Yukon for a few years, and we realize that you don't get it all at once. We have to break it down and figure out which part needs to be done first for the

other two parts to follow. Of course the reliability part is the key component in starting.

We looked at options — what is the best way to do it — and we have determined that the Dempster route is the best. It is the best for Yukon; it is the best for northern Canada. The member opposite talked about the costs of engineering. We have to do the engineering; we have to do the studying; we have to do the planning. We don't just decide one day that we are building a fibre optic line across the country and go ahead and do it. We need to do the planning. We have to spend the taxpayers' dollars in a fiscally responsible way.

We will continue to do the good work and we will continue to plan for the future of Yukon.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker that was not an answer. I asked what sources of funding the minister was seeking. Maybe he will come back to it in his answer to this question: Initial cost estimates on the Dempster option as presented in the Stantec total cost of services report, dated September 2015, put the capital cost of the link at \$61 million. Where is it coming from? The Dempster right-of-way is also well-documented for sections of discontinuous permafrost. Does this cost estimate take into consideration the implication of building the fibre loop in areas of discontinuous permafrost? Is building this fibre optic link contingent on third-party sources of funding? If so, what are those third-party sources of funding?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my first response, we have to plan for these things.

The member opposite talks about the permafrost on the Dempster. That is all part of the engineering and the planning phase. I can't tell the member opposite which kilometres of the Dempster Highway we are going to run into permafrost. That is why we do the due diligence in moving forward. We have to engineer; we have to plan; we have to determine exact costs.

Yes, we have gone to the federal government looking for funding options, and I hope that we hear back very soon with some very positive results on those talks.

Like I said before, this is a very important subject to many Yukoners. We understand how important the IT sector is to the economy of the Yukon, and we cannot move the IT sector — well, it is much more challenging to move the IT sector forward without this diverse fibre link. We have listened to the people and we will continue to do the good work and we will continue to plan and engineer and figure out the best way to move forward.

Ms. Hanson: Good to hear that we're looking for sources of funding. He has not answered the question: Is the building of this fibre optic link contingent on getting that funding?

Let's go on to another area. In February of 2016, CBC reported that the public attention was brought to the serious construction issues on the Mackenzie Valley fibre link, to which the Dempster route would connect. Exposed cable in creeks, eroding trenches and segments of cable poking above ground are examples. A subsequent report in March reported that Ledcor, the main contractor on the project, has dismissed

its subcontractor responsible for laying the cable for mismanagement of the project.

Given the track record of the Yukon Party government in mismanaging projects, what assurances can this government give Yukoners that the Dempster link project will not have the mismanagement issues of the Mackenzie Valley fibre link?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: As I said in my first two responses, the planning stages are very important. We need to do the engineering; we need to plan.

We have committed to working with Northwestel on this project. We have not said that Ledcor or anyone else will be doing the construction of this project. I think it's also important that it's not my place to say whether Ledcor has done a good job or a poor job, and what has gone on with the Mackenzie Valley fibre link. Fortunately, by the sounds of it, that's not our project, and so I'm not willing to comment too much on what the Northwest Territories is doing with their project.

Question re: Midwifery regulations

Mr. Silver: I have a question for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Last year, the Premier said the government had accomplished all it was going to do in its mandate. I think Yukoners recognize that there's a host of projects and issues that this government has plenty of work left to do on. One is midwifery.

After nearly 14 years in office, the Yukon Party has failed to move forward on regulating this practice. This highlights the lack of planning and leadership shown on this topic by the Yukon Party. Over a year ago, the Minister of Health and Social Services told this House — and I quote: that the "... government is currently considering regulating the practice of midwifery in the territory." A year later, it's obvious that this work will be left to the next government.

Mr. Speaker, why has the Yukon Party failed to regulate midwifery after 14 years in office?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for this question. The relationship that we have built with the midwifery organization and those stakeholders that are involved is important. Mr. Speaker, as you know, the Yukon government struck a midwifery stakeholder working group to examine the practice of midwifery here in our territory, and we've provided funding to support a midwifery symposium which, I understand, will be held later this month, unless dates have changed — but I believe it is later this month.

We've had some great dialogue with the individuals who are involved in that working group and I look forward to the symposium, and we've provided funding to ensure that it happens. Perhaps the member opposite would be interested in attending that. We've created a great working relationship with the stakeholders and with the working group, and look forward to the symposium later this month.

Mr. Silver: I would love to attend the symposium, but there's a part there that I'm not allowed to attend, and that's where the government talks about how we can do this.

The minister did mention the symposium. I would love to go to that part — absolutely. For the record, Mr. Speaker, a

Liberal government would regulate the practice of midwifery. We wouldn't spend another 14 years talking about it.

Yukon is one of only two places in Canada that has no regulations or funding in place. There is currently no government funding for midwives as part of our health care system so mothers have to pay out of pocket for this service.

Will the minister confirm these regulations will not be ready before the next election?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Again, I thank the member opposite for the question. Midwifery, as I indicated in my first response, is certainly something that is very important to look at in the territory.

I did mention in my first response — and the member is well aware — that we have struck a midwifery stakeholder working group and that we have provided funding for a symposium that I can confirm is on April 24. Regulating a new profession requires time and resources. Yukon government introduced nurse practitioners into Yukon's health system just in 2012 and is currently undergoing the review of pharmacy and pharmacists legislation at this time.

As I mentioned in my first response, we're grateful for the working relationship that we have with the midwifery stakeholder working group and look forward to putting on this symposium on the 24th of this month.

Mr. Silver: It stands to be said that we will not be debating new legislation in this session of the Legislative Assembly. Women and families will be out of pocket for the entire time and midwives have to live with the stress and uncertainty of operating in an unregulated environment. This is a topic of importance especially for Yukon communities.

It highlights a lack of planning and leadership by the Yukon Party on this topic. After 14 years of doing nothing, in the last year of its mandate the government is trying to appear supportive on this issue. Unfortunately, many questions remain unanswered because this government is dragging its feet on the issue.

Here are some questions: Where is the money in this year's budget to actually work on these regulations? Are doctors supportive? Finally, how will rural communities be addressed if midwives must be within a close distance of a hospital?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Again, I thank the member opposite for bringing this to the floor of the Legislature.

As I indicated in my first response, Yukon government struck a stakeholder working group pertaining to midwifery in the territory. Yukon government has provided them with funding in order to move forward with a symposium that they requested on April 24. Over the last number of months, we have created a very positive working relationship with the stakeholders who are involved and certainly look forward to hearing the thoughts and concerns from those individuals at the symposium.

As I had indicated in my second response — and the member should well know this — regulating any profession takes time, it takes resources and it takes planning, and that's what this government is committed to do.

Question re: Yukon Housing Corporation programs

Ms. White: We know that the Yukon Housing Corporation manages a number of grant and loan programs that provide funding to qualified Yukoners to improve their homes or rental units. This budget contains a number of references to housing and rental unit funding schemes.

I would like to ask for the minister's response for the Yukon Housing Corporation for some background information. Can the minister explain to the Legislative Assembly the process through which the corporation disperses grant or loan funding?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: There are many different types of funding programs out there, so it would be beneficial to know which program in particular the member opposite is talking about.

I certainly don't know all of the programs off the top of my head with the exact process to go through for each one. I guess if the member opposite has a particular question and would like to forward that to me I could certainly go to the department and find out any answers that she may require.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I am going to get right to the point. In 2012, I retrofitted my own home using funds from the home repair program to make it more energy efficient. This program currently lets you access up to \$35,000. The terms of the loan program allowed my project's technical officer to claim reimbursements directly from the Yukon Housing Corporation on a weekly basis. The two-year accessibility enhancement program disburses grants of up to \$25,000 for approved projects, but Yukon Housing Corporation will only pay out the program's fund in two payments: one when 50 percent of the project has been completed; and the second when the rest of the project is completed, and only to the person who owns the house.

Why is the government asking Yukoners who are applying for accessibility grants to overcome the extra hurdle of fronting half the cost of up to \$12,500 of their accessibility improvement project? Does this seem fair and equitable?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, of course when the department goes about implementing any new program, they talk to stakeholders and speak to people to determine what will work and what won't work. Obviously, the department did their due diligence and have done the studying in determining how to best move forward with a loans program such as the one the member opposite is speaking to. I guess if the member opposite doesn't agree, well, I apologize and I can certainly take it under advisement and bring it to the department. I am certainly not going to commit on the floor of the House here today to start changing loan programs in Yukon Housing Corporation.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, it shows a lot right there when the minister was referring to a loan program, which is easy to access, and your technical officer can then get reimbursed weekly. My issue is with the accessibility grants, which means that the homeowner has to front up to \$12,500 until they meet the halfway point of the project before the money can be disbursed.

The accessibility enhancement program offers Yukon a \$400,000 envelope for projects costing up to \$25,000. That is about, in my experience, the cost of a covered wheelchair ramp. If you do that math, that means that only 16 households, or maybe more if the projects run underbudget, could access that money. I have heard from Yukoners with disabilities who need help now with the barriers they face accessing their own homes.

Does the Yukon Party government believe that this one-off program will do enough in two years to reduce barriers to accessible housing in Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the department has worked with NGOs and different organizations to determine what are the best programs to provide and how best to roll those programs out. I apologize for saying the loans program rather than the grant program.

I appreciate the member's concern, and I am certainly willing to go forward to the department and have a look at this, but as I said earlier as well, I am not willing to make changes to any grant or loan programs here on the floor of the Assembly.

Question re: Rights of trans Yukoners

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, on April 6, this government announced policy changes that will allow Yukoners to self-identify their gender on their drivers licences and other ID.

Progressive policy changes are good, but amendments to discriminatory legislation would be better. This government has continually resisted making amendments to the *Vital Statistics Act*, which requires a person to produce two separate affidavits from two medical practitioners, stating that the anatomical sex of the person has changed.

Mr. Speaker, it should be left to the individual to decide what surgery and what treatments they want. When will the minister direct a legislative change to the *Vital Statistics Act* to remove the discriminatory sections that require a person to go through surgery in order to affirm their gender identity?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I would note for the member opposite that, as she knows, this is an area of human rights law that is emerging across the country and is developing. The Yukon is assessing how other provinces and territories are addressing the issue of the rights of trans people. As we've indicated before, if there are specific situations that Yukoners run into within the current legislative framework or with policies, we would encourage them to contact either the department or ministerial offices. We may be able, as with the change that was made to the policy around drivers' licences, to address those individual matters while the broader review is taking place.

We do very much appreciate that it is an issue that needs to be addressed in a thoughtful matter. We are assessing what is being done across the country and are very committed to ensuring that we are reflecting human rights law across Canada in any changes we make to our legislation.

Ms. Moorcroft: I would like to thank the minister for his answer and thank the government for making those policy

changes, as it is a step that does deal with immediate discriminatory measures. However, yesterday in Newfoundland and Labrador, members of the House of Assembly unanimously agreed to changes to the *Vital Statistics Act, 2009* and the *Change of Name Act, 2009*. The changes mean sex-reassignment surgery is no longer required prior to changing the gender marker on birth and marriage certificates in that province. Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba and Nova Scotia have all taken similar steps, and the government has known about this for months.

The Yukon *Vital Statistics Act* is discriminatory against trans individuals. Why did this government decide to make a policy change instead of amending the *Vital Statistics Act* to remove its discriminatory provisions?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: What I would note for the member is that she just pointed out, by referencing the fact that the legislation — she's referring to the legislative change in Newfoundland and Labrador that was made just yesterday. This is something that is an emerging area of human rights law across the country. It is an area where we are certainly monitoring what is going on and, as we've said consistently, if there are specific issues within the current legislative framework, before changes are made to any piece of legislation that may be affected, and if there are specific issues that individuals who identify as trans run into, I would encourage them to contact either the department or the minister responsible. We may be able to resolve those in a shorter timeline, just as happened with the change to the driver's licence policy.

With regard to the member's specific question about why we changed the policy, the reason for changing the policy was not only to reinforce the decision made by the registrar last fall to issue the licence to the person who had submitted the complaint, but in fact it was a condition that flowed from settlement of their complaint to the Human Rights Commission. Government had an obligation to change that policy and to update it because that commitment had been made.

Question re: Whistle Bend continuing care facility

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, this government has committed \$67 million in this fiscal year for the building of the 150-bed continuing care facility in Whistle Bend. This was a project that was decided on prior to any clear public consultation, without the input of Yukon elders and seniors and without seeking the expert opinion of Yukon health care professionals. The current projected total cost of the three-year project is already estimated at \$146 million. This government has requested \$109.5 million in infrastructure investment from the federal government for construction of this facility.

Mr. Speaker, how will this government finance the construction of the continuing care facility if their request from the federal government is denied?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Yukon has yet to receive successfully any application under what is called the national portion of the Building Canada fund. It was our understanding, prior to the

budget, that the current federal government was interested in exploring new types of infrastructure for that funding — including, what they called at the time, social infrastructure. That was something that we didn't have clarity around — what exactly would be included — so we thought it would be worthwhile to apply for the funding under that particular type of funding that could have come out, with a letter from me to the federal Minister of Infrastructure and Communities.

We haven't heard back from the federal government on that request yet, but of course we provided a number of other projects under that national component of the infrastructure funding as well. Those included the fibre optic project that we discussed earlier today, some other road projects and a number of other projects throughout the Yukon, Mr. Speaker.

So when we hear back from the federal government about what exactly is included in that new type of funding for social infrastructure, we'll know better if this particular project will fit.

In the meantime, you'll see a significant amount of funding in this budget for the development of the continuing care facility in Whistle Bend, a project that we're very proud of and look forward to moving forward for the benefit of all Yukoners.

Ms. Stick: It sounds like we might be borrowing more money.

The operation and maintenance costs for continuing care in the territory is estimated at over \$40 million in this fiscal year. This budget accounts for program management, home care, and 190 beds in different residential care facilities. With the addition of 150 beds at Whistle Bend, we know these costs will skyrocket. The 100-bed facility was decided upon without analyzing seniors' health care needs across the continuum of care and without costing out other care options to support the health and well-being of our aging population.

Mr. Speaker, what will the annual projected costs of operations be for this new Whistle Bend continuing care facility?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I certainly appreciate the member opposite's question and the fact that she has highlighted the investments that we've made in health care, specifically around continuing care and home care.

Certainly the member opposite will be well aware that we've increased our home care budget over the last decade by some 350 percent. We have certainly increased investments in the continuum of care for seniors in our territory and we've been very good at planning for the future with respect to this 150-bed facility that we very much look forward to the completion of in Whistle Bend in 2018.

We'll continue on down that road of investing in Yukoners and investing in seniors. The government is being proactive in planning for the care needs of seniors and of our elders and the significant number of individuals who will be living with dementia in the near future.

Again I thank the member opposite for her question and just the fact that she has highlighted the significant investments we have made for our seniors.

Ms. Stick: What I didn't hear is what the O&M costs are going to be for this. It's an ongoing project. It seems to me the government would want to know that before they start building.

This facility is going to require not only major capital investment but a huge, ongoing commitment to fund the O&M and those costs will go on indefinitely.

The excessive costs of running a facility of this size will drain the budget of funds for seniors and elders who want to remain in their communities. This is not going to be sustainable.

How will this government ensure that there is money in the annual continuing care budget to support Yukon seniors and elders who might want to remain in their communities but who might require a higher level of support?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Let's be very, very clear to Yukoners out there. Both the Liberals and the NDP have stated that they would cancel this facility. The Liberal leader has gone even further to say that not only would he cancel Whistle Bend, but he would create long-term care facilities in the communities. He will say anything — make any promise — to get elected.

There are only two outcomes to such a promise. One is to drive this territory into bankruptcy, or two is to just simply break his promise.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Unparliamentary language

Speaker: That is out of order. I don't care whether it is heckling in debate or not. Retract that statement, sir, right now.

Withdrawal of remark

Mr. Silver: I will retract the statement.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I think the only thought that comes to my mind was how the Liberal Leader stood up here in front of all these children in the gallery one day making this pledge about how he was going to act in this Legislature. Congratulations — shame on you.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Government House Leader's report on length of Sitting

Mr. Elias: It is my pleasure to rise pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 75(4) to inform the House that the House Leaders have met for the purpose of achieving agreement on the maximum number of sitting days for the current Sitting. The House Leaders have agreed that the current Sitting should be a maximum of 28 sitting days, with the 28th sitting day being Thursday, May 26, 2016.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare the current Sitting shall be a maximum of 28 sitting days with the 28th sitting day being Thursday, May 26, 2016.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 23: *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17* — Second Reading — *adjourned debate*

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 23, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Pasloski; adjourned debate, the Hon. Mr. Kent.

Hon. Mr. Graham: My friend to my right here has decided that he had completed his comments, so I would like to begin by first of all thanking the residents of Porter Creek North, whom I have had the pleasure of representing for these last four and half years.

Porter Creek North — which I believe should be more properly named “Porter Creek North and Crestview” — is a fairly large riding, and it’s becoming even larger. It’s probably the second highest growth of any other riding in the territory — second only to Mr. Speaker’s riding, which has seen the Whistle Bend growth. It’s a very diverse riding. Just recently — as folks are aware — we have had a great deal of condo development there, as well as a low-cost housing development in the Crestview area, and we’re very proud of the fact that our growth is planned growth and it’s excellent for the City of Whitehorse.

Today, Madam Deputy Speaker, it’s a pleasure for me to rise and speak about education — specifically education. Today’s children are our future. We’ve heard that over and over and over again, but it is true. Today’s children are our future. One of the things that I mentioned to the Department of Education when I took over as minister was that, whenever we had discussions with senior management at the department, I wanted to make sure that our focus was on the kids. Education is about the children — not only the children who are in the school or the students who are in the schools at the present time, but it’s about the kids who will be coming after them. It’s our responsibility to invest in the children, make sure they grow into adults who are ready to take on the world, get well-paying jobs, have families of their own and hopefully remain in the territory.

That is why, Madam Deputy Speaker, this budget includes a number of new spending initiatives around the Department of Education.

One of the first was questioned in the Legislature just the other day — that was with respect to a budget item of \$520,000 to defray the cost of school supplies for every single school-aged child in the territory. I understand that there was some misunderstanding about how that money would be distributed, and I wanted to make sure that everybody understands. That money will be distributed to school councils throughout the territory. Those school councils are currently meeting with the Department of Education and they will determine the parameters of this funding, they will determine when the funding will be available to school councils and to the schools, and they will determine how that funding will be dispensed.

We see this \$100 for school supplies for every child in the system being utilized by school councils in order that no child in the territory is left without or left with inferior equipment compared to other children in the territory. We only had to listen to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun and the Member for Whitehorse South talk about how their spouses or themselves had to pay for children to either go on trips or outings or to supply essential school materials to children who were less than fortunate — and I agree with them that that shouldn’t be necessary.

That was one of the reasons that we took this step, and it was one of the reasons that, at the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees meeting on Friday, I was told by the vice-chair that school councils had been lobbying for this exact budget item, and they were very pleased that we had provided it, and they looked forward to the discussions to determine where the money would go. I think that they were very concerned about people who struggled to afford supplies, and they felt that it was one of those small things that parents shouldn’t have to worry about.

Beyond these kinds of smaller investments that our government is continuing to invest in, I want to talk about a couple of other items as well, one of which came up — I think it was the Leader of the Official Opposition who talked about a new vision of education and how we had not seen anything being done in the new vision for education. Well, we are well on our way to making our new vision for education a reality. We have allocated this year an additional \$190,000 to plan and to address challenges in four priority areas: mental health, career planning, flexible pathways for secondary students and early learning. We are working with all of our partners in education, including rural students, staff and school communities to build this new vision for education.

The goal of this process — I know I have said this over and over in this Legislature — is not to create another report or another document, it is to build a new vision and it is to take concrete action to move forward together to support the success of all Yukon students from early childhood to adult learners. We met with all of our partners on October 7, 2015, to begin this process and to hear their ideas and input through focus group discussions. Based on feedback from that meeting, we have done the following: we have established a steering committee to guide the process; we have reviewed past reports and recommendations about education in the Yukon; we have discussed identified items for priority actions, such as curriculum, early learning, mental health initiatives, ways to engage students in this process and supports for teachers.

The Deputy Minister of Education is also meeting with every school in the territory, every community and First Nation this year as part of this process to discuss their specific concerns and their ideas about education in the Yukon and their feedback for the steering committee. I have also had the opportunity to take part in many of these meetings. I have met with a number of First Nations. I have met with, as I have said before, all of the school councils at the association’s meeting, and I try to engage with as many of the schools as I possibly

can during my travels around the territory. It is always an interesting experience, and I think that one of the really great things that I saw was that the steering committee gave us very specific instructions. They set an initial three-year term for meetings of this committee. They wanted to ensure that representation was from a very broad spectrum so we invited teachers and the Yukon Teachers' Association; we invited parents and school councils; we invited CSFY; we invited the Council of Yukon First Nations; we invited the Catholic Education Association of Yukon; we invited Yukon College for their expertise in curriculum and curriculum development; we invited Advanced Education Public Schools branch; and we invited the Department of Health and Social Services.

The committee has met a number of times. The minutes are posted as quickly as possible, although on checking yesterday, I see that we may be behind a meeting or two, but the minutes are posted on the Department of Education website for anyone who is interested.

Our new vision for education in the Yukon is rooted in the collective values and aspirations of all these partners to equip Yukon students with essential skills, knowledge and personal qualities they need to thrive in life beyond school as well. We continue to welcome ideas from all of our partners, as we move forward together, and all new vision materials are intended to be living documents that will be revised over time.

Approaches to learning and learners are shifting from what students learn to how they learn. Canada's highest-performing regions in education — BC is one — are moving away from content memorization to skill development. We know that, to facilitate learning for everyone, we must look at the learner holistically. This includes the social, cultural, emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual elements of each student.

To move forward, the education system in Yukon, as a whole, must become collaborative and action-oriented, and it must include all people in the system. It must be strategically experimental to create the conditions that improve outcomes for all learners.

So we have developed a number of principles — the steering committee did. The principles are to: meet the diverse needs of all students and foster development of the key skills and competencies that students need for life in and beyond school; ensure all students have the foundational skills of reading, writing, speaking, mathematics and problem-solving; use a holistic approach to acknowledge and support the individual strengths and needs of each student, school and community; be accountable, using research and evidence to ask questions, make decisions and celebrate successful practices in the territory; integrate northern perspectives and Yukon context into the kindergarten to grade 9 learning opportunities and in individual courses for grades 10 to 12; embed more understanding of First Nation cultures, perspectives and the work of reconciliation into all grades and all curriculum documents; build capacity for staff and students to work together in a process that identifies student strengths and areas for growth and sets learning goals, offering

feedback and assessing progress; and engage students in their learning by providing more choices and options.

We know that these changes will take time but, by working with our partners, we will shift Yukon's education system over the next three to five years to improve learning outcomes for early to adult learners.

Yukon schools will progress at different paces and different areas for this shift, but we have specified areas that we are addressing since our October 7, 2015 meeting and these include mental health, increased choices and early learning. Implementation of the new vision in support of early to adult learners will begin in June. We will begin by identifying three educators per grade to work with the department on kindergarten to 12 curriculum changes. A deeper discussion, specifically about curriculum changes with grades 10 to 12 will begin next year. We know we're building a system that every Yukoner can take pride in.

Last year alone, our government signed memoranda of understanding with four First Nations: Kluane, Kwanlin Dün, Carcross/Tagish and Selkirk that either focused solely on education or include education as a major part of the memorandum. These agreements will help us work in partnership with First Nations to address issues as diverse as language proficiency to student attendance to staffing.

In the years ahead, we'll be including Yukon context and First Nations culture — as I said previously — in every grade level from kindergarten to 9, as well as course work for grades 10 to 12. Beyond curriculum, we are investing in educational assistants in every Yukon community. Since 2011, we have increased the number of assistants from 159 to 220 and we have increased funding for educational assistants by over \$3 million. That means children are benefitting from an extra 60,000 hours in the classroom.

Current achievement data indicates that almost one-third of the students in the system are not as successful as they might be — as they might be, Madam Deputy Speaker — with appropriate interventions and supports. The gap between those students who move successfully through the system and those who do not is most significant when we look at First Nations students. Additionally, the gap begins with the first assessments in kindergarten and extends to graduation rates. In order to combat this, we have budgeted \$450,000 for an early intervention pilot project in seven Yukon kindergarten classes at four different schools — Takhini, Jack Hulland, Elijah Smith and Tantalus — to strengthen the literacy skills of our early learners.

In a joint effort to address the challenges in the development of literacy skills, the current collective agreement between the Yukon Teachers' Association and the Yukon government was an agreement through a letter of understanding. YTA and Education agreed to undertake this pilot project to strengthen the literacy skills of early learners. A key priority in the Yukon is to have an education system that focuses on success for each learner. It's inclusive and demonstrates organizational excellence through alignment and accountability.

In addition to these initiatives, our government is also investing \$2.98 — almost \$3 million — in site development where the new F.H. Collins Secondary School currently sits. Some site development was done last summer, including new turning lanes at the Hospital Road intersection and other items with development on property. With this \$3 million, main elements of the project include additional parking and bus area modifications to unload students in a safe manner. We'll also work on paving of the loop. We'll build concrete curbs and sidewalks for the loading area, but we also need a new sidewalk from the school to the shop wing. As most people are aware, the shop tech wing will remain as it was and we need an area or a method for the students to get between the two areas. This work is planned for the summer of 2016 following the demolition of the old school, which is now well underway.

We have allocated \$400,000 for planning a new francophone high school. The Department of Education and the francophone school board's settlement committee continues to meet regularly to address outstanding issues raised during the recent court case. I understand that the francophone school committee put on an informal meeting or had an informal meeting with members of the opposition. I think that some of the things that the CSFY probably informed the members opposite about is that we've asked the court to put off all proceedings for a potential new trial until May 3, 2016, at which time we'll have a case management meeting with the judge and this will give the committee an opportunity to make progress on outstanding issues.

The settlement committee, as members probably know, is made up of six members — three from CSFY and three from the Department of Education — and the parties have agreed to keep negotiations private and out of the public eye, and when we make announcements they are joint announcements. To date, we have been very successful in that endeavour and these discussions have been very fruitful.

The committee is examining other areas that both sides agree are not as high a priority. This includes: management of staff; a French first language educational policy framework; issues related to CSFY's forecast growth of École Émilie Tremblay; participation in collective bargaining; management of buildings and property; finances; and disposal of funds from the Canada/Yukon bilateral agreement.

All of these will take a backseat to the three main priorities, such as construction of a French first language high school, which I have committed to in this House and for which we have put an additional \$400,000 for further planning in the budget. This is our government's priority. We also are looking forward to the clarification to the admissions policies and responsibilities for non-rights holders and I think we're very, very close to an agreement. We are also working on the clarification of policies and procedures for French first language distance education.

As members are aware, we made a commitment that CSFY should be in charge of distance education for their learners. We made changes to the legislation last year that were unanimously accepted by the Legislature, and I think

that, in part, helped to show CSFY that we're very committed to working with them to resolving all the outstanding issues.

The parties have formed a construction subcommittee that will oversee planning for the new school. A draft functional plan has been completed. I know the department and CSFY are working very hard with the draft functional plan. They'll be working toward finalizing that plan in the very near future.

The Education department has also submitted a proposal to Heritage Canada for funding for the community aspects of the new school, and I've recently had a discussion with our federal MP, and he's also committed to working with CSFY and the Department of Education to have Heritage Canada work on the funding for this new school. We believe it's a high priority here in the territory.

The City of Whitehorse has also been engaged, and I know they've hired a firm to assess the feasibility of CSFY's preferred site and what impacts that preferred site will have on traffic and the community of Riverdale.

In working on the issue of clarifying the admissions policies and responsibility for non-rights holders, it was determined that the French language instruction regulation gives the Minister of Education the authority to approve all French first language student admissions. However, we don't currently enforce the regulation. We are not asking CSFY to provide documentation of applicants for admission, and this minister, at least, is not determining eligibility.

The department and CSFY are negotiating the delegation of this authority for permission for non-rights holder student admissions. Any delegation and any agreement that we reach would clearly state the minister's power to take back this authority, should he have concerns that the French first language nature of the school has been under threat from non-French first language students. This has not been a problem in the past. CSFY has done an absolutely excellent job and we have every confidence in their ability to carry on well into the future.

In 2013, Education and CSFY, as I said, signed a memorandum of understanding giving CSFY authority over French first language distance education admissions, and that has been going well ever since.

Mr. Speaker, now I would like to move on to other issues in the Department of Education, one of which is the First Nation partner involvement in developing a new vision for education. We are working with Yukon First Nations constantly to develop and improve our delivery of Yukon First Nation culture, language and other programming in Yukon schools.

The Department of Education, in partnership with Yukon First Nations and Canada, has created a joint education action plan. This joint education action plan enables us to continue to work on improving educational outcomes with individual First Nations, and we have signed a number of intergovernmental accords, as I said previously.

We also work with CYFN to support the tripartite memorandum of understanding process on educational partnerships with the Yukon Native Language Centre and the CYFN education branch. The Department of Education also

works with individual First Nations on almost a daily basis to respond to the identified needs in their communities and in their schools. The First Nations Education Summit was held in March 2016 and shared the Yukon government First Nation student achievement report. CYFN Education reported on its educational initiatives, including policy and parental engagement, and working sessions were held on developing ideas for a Yukon First Nation engagement protocol and a Yukon First Nation cultural inclusion standard. Model partnership programs include the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Southern Tutchone bicultural program and the Old Crow experiential education project.

As I said, we have educational agreements with a number of First Nations, but we also have informal partnerships with many other Yukon First Nations such as Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, Selkirk First Nation and Na Cho Nyäk Dun. We have these partnerships to facilitate educational resource material development, working in cooperation with these various First Nations. The First Nation policy and planning department in Education is providing services at the Northern Tutchone schools to use their resources. We have developed a data-sharing strategy and policy protocol within the joint education action plan initiatives.

When our children graduate from public schools, we want to make it easier for them to pursue post-secondary education, and we want to be able to make it easy for them to do it closer to home. We know that when students study here, they are more likely to stay here. They are more likely to raise a family here, start a business here and give back to the economy of the territory. That is one of the reasons we are contributing \$1.5 million over three years to Yukon College. We want to help them develop into a Yukon university.

We realize that this isn't a quick process, and the member opposite the other day asked a number of questions, or made a number of observations, about the college. I thought I would just say a little bit about the transition to Yukon university over the coming years.

We are working with the college at the present time to establish a quality assurance process that will ensure that degrees offered at Yukon College and conferred by the institution when they become a university are transferable within Canada and, indeed, internationally. Beginning in 2017, the college hopes to offer a made-in-Yukon, three-year bachelor of policy studies in indigenous governance.

When I have spoken with the college on a number of occasions and said that we may not have the process for you in place by 2017, they have said that they would still like to go ahead with this bachelor of policy studies and they would do it in association with another university. Mr. Speaker, I say that especially because I know the member opposite the other day asked about the six programs that we're currently offering through other universities. Yukon College has every intention of continuing every partnership and every agreement that they can with universities and colleges, not only throughout Canada, but throughout the world. By doing that, they will provide their students with the best possible opportunity, not only to stay at home and learn but, if they so desire, to transfer

to other universities in Canada or other universities in other countries.

It's important for people to know that this has been a long process. Since 2011, Yukon College has been exploring the development of a post-secondary model. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I know that when I worked there prior to 2011, there was talk even then about how this process would be and how long it would take.

Yukon College is inspired by the Yukon's unique culture, economy and environment and they want to serve the north — not only the territory, but the other two territories as well — and that's why the Yukon Party platform during the last election included the following commitment: create a Yukon university by developing Yukon College into a northern university, and we would do that by exploring models and identifying which model is best suited for Yukoners and northerners.

We also knew that there were a number of phases necessary for the college to become a university. We don't want to rush through any of those phases. We need to complete a university report that outlines options for post-secondary models. They have done that. When I heard the member opposite yesterday say, "Where are the needs assessments?" — the college has been working on this since 2011, and there have been a number of reports completed that clearly show that a university in this territory is something that all people should aspire to.

The second thing that the college has to complete before becoming a university is to establish a quality assurance regime to ensure that newly created Yukon College degrees are transferrable. We worked first with Alberta. There was a change in government in Alberta, and I think that the current government has many things to do and they probably don't need to get into changing the universities act in Alberta, allowing their quality assurance group to look after a Yukon university, but it's still a possibility. In fact, as recently as this week we've had discussions with Alberta, and they believe that they've found a way around the requirement for a change in legislation, so we are working with them. We've also started work with the Saskatchewan government to implement an interim process, which will evolve over time, and it will require legislation here in the Legislature as well.

So then the college will have to establish Yukon College degrees. They have already completed, in part, an economic impact study and a business case for the university. We will need to develop legislation to create the university and, finally, we'll establish the university. I think that's a goal that we all look forward to. I know I do. I realize it's not a quick process, but it will transpire eventually here in this territory.

One example of the reasons we believe we have to continue this process is that, at the present time, we've allocated \$593,000 to extend the practical nursing program. This is part of our commitment to improving Yukoners' access to health care, preparing Yukoners for jobs and to improve Yukoners' access to higher education.

The practical nursing program is one that is run through Bow Valley College and, each year, the college must pay

Bow Valley a number of dollars for the curriculum for the practical nursing program. It's one of those things that — once the university is developed, we will have the ability to do this on our own.

I really look forward to the continuation of the practical nursing program, because nursing is the heart of our health care system. This program will help us provide the human resources needed to provide the best possible level of care. With this funding, up to 32 additional graduates can look forward to careers in a respected and rewarding profession.

The funding overall is \$1.95 million; it's effective July 4 of this year to May 29, 2020. The transfer agreement will allow time for the college to prepare and submit final report documents for expenses. This is a two-year program — the PN program. There will be two intakes over the course of this four-year agreement, and each intake can take up to 16 students.

As I understand it, Mr. Speaker, the last two graduating classes of the practical nursing program at Yukon College have been hired 100 percent by the Department of Health and Social Services. We not only have students taking the education here, but almost guaranteeing them jobs when they're completed.

I'm going to skip over a couple of others, which was the \$50,000 to expand the apprenticeship trades and school. The course registrations and the work being done by the college in the communities to ensure that, during this transition to a university, nothing is lost in the communities. In fact, the college was very clear to me in about four pages of notes that they have given me that they have actually expanded services to all of our small communities, and that will be part of any agreement that the Yukon government has with the college. We know how vital those college campuses are to each of our small communities around the territory.

The other issue I really wanted to speak about was mental health. Young people who experience mental health problems often struggle to succeed academically as well. According to the healthy behaviours of school-aged children survey in 2014, between 50 and 60 percent of Yukon students are feeling depressed or low at least once a week and their self-confidence was also reported to be quite poor.

There is a growing recognition, not only in the territory but across Canada, of the critical nature of improving mental health of young Canadians with a particular emphasis on positive mental health.

Toward that end, Yukon government combined with Bell Let's Talk and Northwestel, contributing \$500,000 to support the launch of the FRIENDS cognitive behaviour group-based intervention program throughout the territory. Positive school climate measures such as self-regulation and stress management initiatives have also been rolled out in Yukon schools. Physical activities are also promoted through Yukon schools. They're offered throughout the school as well as movement in classes through self-regulation initiatives. We've also provided training for our educators and students in the area of suicide prevention and intervention and mental health first aid. We've also got a number of policies related to

student health and wellness — the daily physical activity requirement safe and caring school policies — and a number of other initiatives that the Department of Education will announce and are completing throughout the territory.

We will soon have access to the \$1-million innovation pot, subject to legislative approval, to help meet the mental health needs of all of our citizens, including our young people. We're looking forward to taking advantage of that funding, because we think Yukon schools will benefit from having access to more resources and this fund is only one way of providing them with the support they need.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on for hours about the Department of Education and the initiatives that we're beginning and the wonderful things that are happening. We also realize that we're not doing everything that needs to be done in many of our schools because of limitations of one kind or another, but we're making the attempt and we will continue to work with all of our partners: First Nations, school councils, communities — all of our partners — parents, and students to make the school community in this territory a better place for all of our learners.

Ms. McLeod: It is my great pleasure to rise today and speak in support of this bill.

As the MLA for Watson Lake, I would really like to thank my constituents for their support and for their dedication to our community. It has been my honour to represent all of the residents from southeast Yukon. I see so many people in Watson Lake who work hard to make our town the best it can be — from our many volunteers, to the citizens who have stepped forward to seek election in municipal government and to those people who spend countless hours working with our youth. To them, I say thank you; we're lucky to have you.

I want to extend my thanks to Sergeant Cam Lockwood and his team of RCMP members. They work extremely well with the people of southeast Yukon. They are well respected and they are involved in the community in a lot of ways. It has had a really positive influence.

I would like to take this time to thank the Premier and all our caucus for the time they've spent putting this budget together. The deputy ministers and all their staff deserve our heartfelt thanks, as well, for their careful deliberations. As challenging as it is to decide where funding should go and what projects should advance, I believe this budget has Yukoners' best interests at heart.

It's not always easy living in rural Yukon, with the bulk of the population of the territory centred in Whitehorse. As I've heard personally during our community budget tours this winter, rural Yukon is faced with aging infrastructure, higher cost of replacement, higher transportation costs for goods, thousands of kilometres of highways to maintain, difficulty in recruiting health care professionals, teachers and other employees, along with an associated shortage of housing. There are many challenges.

I believe our government has done a commendable job over the years in addressing these challenges. Health care in

rural Yukon has improved steadily; 2013 saw community hospitals open in both Dawson City and Watson Lake. These hospitals not only provide a higher level of health care to different regions in Yukon, they also enable health care services to be provided more collaboratively. They see services, such as home care, public health, in-patient care and laboratory services housed under the same roof.

There was an announcement last week to secure doctors and medication dispensary services in Watson Lake hospital by relocating Parhelion Medical Services there. The people of Watson Lake have seen this as a positive move, and I want to thank the Minister of Health and Social Services and the Premier for all their support. The government will continue to work with Parhelion to recruit permanent doctors to Watson Lake.

The Watson Lake Chamber of Commerce has also been involved in helping locum doctors become familiar with our community and the many opportunities there. The Minister of Health and Social Services has worked very hard with his department and they, with the Public Service Alliance of Canada, continue to make strides in the recruitment and retention of community nurses.

As you've heard, Mr. Speaker, a new community addictions program has been developed to address areas of concern to our communities through Alcohol and Drug Services. This program was developed with the good work of Mental Health Services and Community Health Programs, along with First Nation health programs, Many Rivers and the Department of Justice. This program provides enhanced supports within communities to help address prevention, pre-treatment, counselling and after-care. There are now three community addictions workers working out of Haines Junction, Watson Lake and Dawson City.

There are two more workers based out of Whitehorse to serve the surrounding communities, and all these workers will travel to neighbouring communities to ensure that services are available throughout the Yukon.

The community addictions program uses a collaborative outreach model and works with existing service providers. The McDonald Lodge continuing care facility was rebuilt and just recently opened in Dawson City. The new facility is next to the hospital to allow for shared resources and additional assistance for residents.

We have significantly increased the amount of funding allocated to home care, with another increase this year. Since 2002, our government has increased the investment in home care by 364 percent from \$1.5 million to over \$5.5 million. We understand that seniors do not want to leave their homes and their communities if they don't have to. Investing in home care helps Yukoners age in place and reduces the chances that they will have to leave their communities sooner than necessary.

Our government has made many investments in affordable housing throughout Yukon, both for seniors and low-income renters. Recently a community housing project to build a six-plex was funded through the northern housing trust, and that was built in Carmacks. Through the northern

housing trust, we have also provided \$235,000 to the Carcross/Tagish management corporation for the construction of two affordable housing units. There was a new seniors housing complex in Mayo opened last year. Affordable housing for seniors is very important in all Yukon communities, and we will continue to work with First Nations and other groups on partnership opportunities for affordable housing options.

I would also like to give credit to the current and former ministers of Community Services. Between 2007 and 2015, there was \$265 million in infrastructure projects in Yukon funded through the Building Canada fund. With \$183 million from the Government of Canada, \$57 million from the Government of Yukon, and almost \$25 million in contributions from other partners, the Building Canada fund has had a big impact on Yukon infrastructure and Yukon jobs. \$152 million of that infrastructure funding was spent in rural Yukon, in both municipalities and unincorporated communities. This funding has enabled communities to replace aging water, waste-water treatment and solid-waste infrastructure. There have been energy upgrades such as the contributions to the Carmacks-Stewart transmission line that have been funded through the Building Canada fund. There have been road upgrades throughout all of Yukon on multiple highways. My riding has benefited from water, waste-water and road upgrades as well as a \$7.5-million investment in a new water treatment facility. This facility should be online within a very short period of time.

Just a few weeks ago, we received confirmation that some new projects under the Building Canada fund — small communities fund — were approved. These projects include \$2 million for the sewage treatment plant in Carmacks and over \$1 million for road and drainage work in Teslin. Also funded will be \$1.5 million for solid-waste improvements in the communities of Faro, Watson Lake and Haines Junction. These projects are so important in rural Yukon. Not only do they address outdated and failing infrastructure, but they also provide economic benefits and employment.

We have made, and are continuing to make, investments in the safety of Yukoners. Basic 911 service should be available in rural Yukon by the end of this summer. Along with that, there have been many communities undergoing the civic addressing exercise in order to ensure that they can be found easily in case of an emergency.

Carcross will see a new fire hall built within this budget. Beaver Creek recently opened their new fire hall in the fall. Dawson City, Ibex Valley, Tagish and Hootalinqua have received new fire trucks in the past few years. Initiatives like these provide our rural communities with much-needed resources.

I would like to take this time to thank the current and former ministers of Highways and Public Works. There have been huge investments made in the Robert Campbell Highway in my riding. Just last week, the minister announced almost \$11 million in funding to improve two more sections of the Campbell Highway. This highway is a very important transportation route in Yukon. Not only does it serve a very

mineral-resource-rich area, but it also allows transportation of goods to other rural Yukon communities from the south. I've heard from constituents just how much they appreciate these improvements.

Although mining is on a downturn right now, southeast Yukon remains mineral-rich, with many active claims and the potential for many large projects once the price of metals rises. Our government has put a lot of effort into ensuring that rural communities don't get forgotten.

Another welcome investment will be the building of the new living units at the Swift River grader station. This will allow employees to reside closer to their place of work and ease a shortage of staff housing units.

There are many projects coming that will increase economic opportunities in the communities. In Watson Lake specifically, we will see a new roof for the Watson Lake high school and fire alarm system upgrades for the Watson Lake high school as well. Painting in the Johnson Elementary School and the visitor information centre, and work on various heating and electrical systems throughout government buildings — while all of these projects may seem small when looked at individually, they amount to more contracting opportunities for businesses within communities.

During the community budget tour, we heard how much of a difference these smaller contracts can make to a local economy. From FireSmart to the community development fund, these projects and funds all provide jobs and other benefits in rural Yukon.

Just a word about the community development fund — I want to thank the ministers of Economic Development and Community Services for their continued support for this program. It has proven to be of great importance to all of Yukon. This is a program that is fully subscribed to, and I'm pleased to note that the Town of Watson Lake recently received funding in order to make improvements to our pool.

Just before I wrap up, I want to convey to the Minister of Highways and Public Works how much the residents of Upper Liard and all those driving through Upper Liard appreciate his and the department's support for the installation of additional lighting on the Alaska Highway. This stretch of road is so much safer. I look forward to improving the safety along the Campbell Highway with additional street lighting as well. My thanks go out to Mayor Justin Brown and his council for their willingness to move forward with this project.

I am proud to stand here today and support this budget, as this government has continually supported rural Yukon.

Hon. Mr. Hassard: It's truly a pleasure to rise today to speak about the 2016-17 budget that we have before us today. Of course, I would like to begin first by thanking my family first and foremost, of course, for their continued support and patience — yes, patience — and also to the constituents of the riding of Pelly-Nisutlin. You know, people have been so supportive and they really make the job much more pleasant.

I guess I would like to first thank the Premier for tabling another record budget, a budget that I believe is good for Yukon and good for Yukoners.

At almost \$1.4 billion — that's billion with a "B" in case anybody's wondering — and in excess of \$3 million in capital and still having an over \$9-million surplus — all of that without any rise in taxes and not even a whisper of a carbon tax. It's not bad, I say — good job, team.

As the MLA for Pelly-Nisutlin, I am very proud of what we see in this budget. It's very good for the great riding of Pelly-Nisutlin so I would just like to run through some of the highlights for my riding in particular.

In Ross River we see money for phase 2 of the Ross River suspension bridge and, let me tell you, there won't be many people happier than me to see that thing finished once and for all.

\$2.2 million for waste-water treatment — \$600,000 for the solid-waste facility and it's very much needed. The waste-water situation in Ross River is long overdue in getting fixed and replaced. I certainly welcome seeing that money in the budget of Community Services to look after that.

\$3 million for a six-plex for staff housing — and this project is duly beneficial in the fact that not only will it create new staff housing, but it will free up existing stock that could potentially be turned over to RRDC so that they can use that housing for their own citizens. I think the people in Ross River will certainly be happy to see that project move forward.

A few of the highlights for Faro include \$1.66 million for a new lagoon system and sludge-drying beds. I thought about how I could take some time to talk about that project, but it is probably best just to leave it at that and you can determine for yourselves what that's all about.

As well, \$1.255 million for Drury Creek living quarters and, Mr. Speaker, there aren't many places that are in more dire need to be replaced than that building, that's for sure, so I'm very happy to see that in the budget as well.

Some budget highlights for my hometown of Teslin include \$1.1 million for road and drainage upgrades, as well as \$100,000 for planning and development of residential lots and \$50,000 for design and permitting and geotechnical work for the Nisutlin Bay Bridge. With that, I hope to see the reconstruction of the bridge begin in 2018-19.

As the Member for Watson Lake already mentioned this — even though Swift River isn't in my riding, I try to tuck it under my wing every once and while and try to steal it back from her. I am really happy to see that Highways and Public Works has just over \$1.3 million for the replacement of the living quarters for those highway workers down there at Swift River. I am sure that they certainly will be appreciative of that as well.

A few other projects that I would like to make note of include some projects under the Community Services budget, and I would like to thank the minister responsible for Community Services for his input in that. We see a waste-water treatment plant in Burwash, a new reservoir in Mayo and more money in the minister from Kluane's riding for some new lift stations in Haines Junction. Carmacks will be seeing a new sewage system and improvements to their solid-waste management, and solid-waste management

improvements in Faro, Watson Lake and Haines Junction as well.

Of course, there is \$15 million for planning phases 3 through 7 of the Whistle Bend subdivision. I believe somebody mentioned it earlier as well, but I had it on my list that there is \$3 million for a new fire hall in Carcross. I am sure that the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes will be happy to see that in the budget because I know he has mentioned it on more than one occasion here in the Legislature over the last couple of years.

We also see continued support for sports and recreation. There is \$300,000 for four different organizations: Sport Yukon, Special Olympics Yukon, the Yukon Aboriginal Sport Circle and Recreation and Parks Association of the Yukon. As well, there is \$250,000 over the next two years for the 2017 Men's World Softball Championships; \$75,000 for Team Yukon to compete in the North American Indigenous Games in Toronto in 2017; and \$150,000 over two years for Team Yukon to attend the Canada Summer Games in Manitoba in 2017. Those monies are really invaluable. The experiences that the youth receive being able to attend functions like that are invaluable.

There are some items in the budget that I would like to bring your attention to that I have found to be — one item in particular that I found very beneficial to Yukoners is the continued support for the domestic water well drilling program. The Member for Lake Laberge and I have certainly done our fair share of work on getting this project implemented. I have spoken to so many Yukoners who have either taken advantage of the program or plan on taking advantage of it. They certainly are very grateful for it. I would like to again thank the Minister of Community Services for ensuring that we were able to continue on with that program.

There are so many things and so many department budgets. I'm just trying to highlight some of the ones I thought were very important to me and my constituents. I don't want anybody to be offended if I don't mention something that they find to be very beneficial.

A few things in the Department of Education I would like to bring your attention to — they continue to make those very important investments and I thank the minister responsible for Education for his continued support. We see \$368,000 to support the Aurora Virtual School and \$190,000 for the new vision. I believe it was just this afternoon that the Minister of Education was talking about that during Question Period.

That money is to address education challenges in four priority areas: mental health, career counselling, flexible pathways for secondary students and early learning. Also in Education, there is \$593,000 for the practical nursing program and \$450,000 for an early intervention pilot project in seven Yukon kindergarten classes to strengthen the literacy skills for early learners. As I mentioned, those are all very important initiatives.

EMR has allotted \$4.08 million for rural land development programs. I find that very important for all Yukoners, but for rural Yukoners in particular. We see \$75,000 for Carcross and Tagish access road; \$325,000 for

residential, country residential and industrial lots in Carmacks; \$425,000 for Dawson for city, urban, country residential and industrial lots and planning for that community; \$1 million for residential and industrial lots in Mayo; and Watson Lake will see \$150,000 for planning and development of urban and country residential lots.

An item in the budget that we don't see a lot of is agricultural lot development. I was very happy to see the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has \$420,000 in this budget for agricultural lot development in Ibex Valley, Sunnydale and Marshall Creek.

Mr. Speaker, it's important to recognize that lot development in rural Yukon is very vital to the communities. In order for communities to grow — or for any community to grow, for that matter — if you don't have somewhere for the community to grow to, obviously it's pretty hard to grow. So I thank the minister for that.

Probably the most exciting item out of the lot development is the 11 proposed recreational lots near Dutch Harbour. That was done in conjunction with the Kluane First Nation.

We've heard from so many Yukoners about the importance of creating some recreational lots where they can buy a piece of property, own a piece of the Yukon out in the wilderness and be able to call it their own, and take their families out there and enjoy the weekends and just enjoy a few of the wonderful things that the Yukon has to offer.

I'm also pleased to see \$1.4 million to promote and enhance mineral prospecting exploration in the Yukon. Madam Chair, as you well know, mining certainly is the cornerstone of the Yukon's economy and it's important to continue to support the mining industry in any way we can.

We also have \$5.5 million for the development of the forest sector trust, and that's with the Yukon First Nations. I'm happy to see that, as well, Madam Chair, especially for your riding and for the Member for Kluane as well, where the forest sector really has an opportunity to thrive.

I'm happy to see that the Department of Environment — the minister over there — has continued to listen to Yukoners and has allotted \$350,000 for campground and facility improvements. I definitely thank the minister in the department for that. We've heard that from many Yukoners on our trips around the Yukon about the importance of being able to take their families, go camping for the weekend and enjoy life a little bit.

As well, there is \$3.5 million for Yukon contaminated site cleanups. That's another very important initiative I believe.

We can't forget about the Department of Finance of course that we spoke about here in the Legislature here yesterday — the children's fitness tax credit and the children's art tax credit, so thank you to them.

As I mentioned earlier, I'm just trying to hit some highlights in the budget and I don't want to delve too far into Health and Social Services or Highways and Public Works, because it will take up my entire 40 minutes and I want to get to talk about other good things.

I would be remiss not to mention the \$244,000 in Health and Social Services to meet the growing demand for home care services to support keeping people in their own homes as long as possible. That's so important to citizens in my riding and probably all of the rural ridings in the Yukon here, so thank you for that.

Highways and Public Works — I have to thank the minister responsible for Highways and Public Works for the \$9.5 million in the IT envelope this year. That's more important to me than normal, I guess, because my Department of Economic Development works very closely with that IT sector and so thank you for that.

I would also like to recognize the Department of Tourism and Culture and their continued support for the museum and cultural centres — 11 museums and seven cultural centres. I'm very proud to say I have a cultural centre and a museum in my own home town and I know the importance of those facilities, so thank you to the minister for her continued support in that regard. If any of you here or anyone out there listening has not had the opportunity to visit either the George Johnston Museum or the Teslin Tlingit Heritage Centre, they're both worth the drive to Teslin to see. They are world-class facilities. I have to get a little dig in for Teslin whenever we can.

I would like to take a few minutes to talk about some of the great things in my own departments. I'll begin with the Yukon Housing Corporation. The first project is with the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and the Da Daghay Development Corporation. I would like to begin by just thanking Ben and everyone involved with the Da Daghay Development Corporation and Ta'an Kwäch'än, and their patience and understanding and dedication to the River Bend project.

The River Bend project is a 42-unit affordable rental housing project in Whistle Bend. Da Daghay has had a design unveiling on Monday evening and, Mr. Speaker, you were there. It's quite an impressive-looking project — so very happy to be there and help them celebrate the unveiling of that. The development corporation will continue to raise finances and move forward in constructing the building this summer. It really is a great project with the fact that not only is it creating more housing units in the city and in the territory, but there are opportunities for training. They've spoken at length about all of the possibilities and the mentorship and the training programs, as they move forward in building the project. It's a great thing to see.

The joint venture part of the project with Yukon Housing Corporation is that we have committed to enter into 30 rent supplements for a period of three years. It obviously helps Yukon Housing Corporation with their wait-list as well with 30 more units available to us, so it's great.

I mentioned briefly the \$3 million we have budgeted for construction of a six-unit residential staff building in the community of Ross River. There's almost \$10 million for Yukon Housing Corporation loan programs, including \$2.3 million for home repair programs, \$4 million for mortgages, \$500,000 for down payment assistance,

\$2.65 million in the owner-build loans program, and \$525,000 for secondary suite loans.

As well, there is: \$7.264 million for the investments in affordable housing; \$450,000 for rental assistance to help working households paying more than 30 percent of their household income toward shelter, which includes children in the household; \$400,000 to provide landlords with access to capital to assist with critical upgrades that will improve the quality of rental housing for the benefit of tenants and prolong the life of the assets; \$400,000 for accessibility enhancement grants for homeowners and landlords alike, with access to capital to improve accessibility of their homes and it helps enable seniors to age in place; \$416,000 for housing improvements and programs that benefit the victims of violence; \$250,000 for rent supplements to enable tenants to better access private market rentals; \$2.5 million for the municipal matching grant rental construction program — and this is to increase the number of purpose-built rental housing. This particular program, I'm happy to say, just continues to gain speed as time goes on. When we first put this program in place, I really liked it. I thought this was great. The unfortunate part was that a lot of municipalities — except Whitehorse, I guess — didn't have the bylaws and policies in place to take advantage of this program. As time goes on, several communities have seen the advantage to such an initiative and they are now getting everything in place to utilize this program, so I really anticipate seeing quite an increase in uptake in this over the next year.

We also have \$800,000 for renovations and rehabilitation for existing staff housing and \$240,000 to continue with the prioritization of action items identified in the housing action plan.

If I could, I would just like to take a moment or two to thank the numerous people who helped in developing this housing action plan. First, the community advisory committee, the Association of Yukon Communities, the Council of Yukon First Nations, the City of Whitehorse, Options for Independence, the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, the Yukon Residential Landlord Association, the Yukon Real Estate Association and, of course, the Yukon Housing Corporation. As well, the working group committee members included Aboriginal Affairs, the Association of Yukon Communities, the Bank of Montreal, Blood Ties Four Directions, the CMHC, Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Challenge Disability Resource Group, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, City of Whitehorse, Council of Yukon First Nations, Grey Mountain Housing Society, Kobayashi and Zedda Architects, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Old Way of Seeing, Options for Independence, Royal Canadian Mounted Police "M" Division, Scotiabank, Yukon Agricultural Association, Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, Association for Community Living, Yukon Council on Aging, Yukon Council on Disability, Yukon Real Estate Association, Yukon Status of Women Council and, of course, the many Yukon government employees from various departments throughout government who were involved — and a special mention to

Mary Cameron from the Yukon Housing Corporation, who put numerous hours into this project.

I hope I didn't miss anyone in that. It's quite a lengthy list, I know, but I apologize in advance if I forgot anyone in that list.

The point of identifying all of those people is just to kind of show the commitment and the broad spectrum of people who helped to develop this housing action plan.

I made a commitment at the unveiling of the action plan to ensure that this document didn't just become another document on the shelf collecting dust somewhere, and I'm certainly happy to see that this is not happening at all.

A few other things in housing that I would like to talk about — the 48-unit, accessible seniors social-housing complex on Front Street — we had the grand opening a few weeks back. It's a wonderful building. I believe that it's probably just about to capacity now. The building was designed with 10 barrier-free and 38 fully accessible units to accommodate a range of needs for independent-living, low-income seniors.

It's interesting to note that in the past two years alone with that 48-unit complex — that brings up to 88 units built for seniors social housing in the Yukon in the last two years. That is quite impressive, I think.

On that note, I would just like to mention a few of the achievements since the conclusion of the 2015 fall legislative Sitting back in December. Yukon Housing Corporation has conducted a series of open houses in most communities in the Yukon and they met with residents, local governments — both municipal and First Nations — to get a better understanding of what the housing needs are in each community.

We have partnered with Health Canada and coordinated November as Radon Action Month for the promotion of having homes tested for radon and subsequent mitigation if required. The home ownership preparedness education program, or HOPE, was delivered for the second time and had 14 participants. As the course goes along, it continues to be refined as it is delivered, and plans are to provide it online so that maybe more rural Yukoners will be able to take advantage of that program.

I am going to skip to some stuff in Economic Development so that I don't accidentally run out of time. I can always go back if I have time.

Some highlights in the budget for the Department of Economic Development are: we have \$717,000 for a new investors relations unit, and that is to help promote Yukon investment opportunities; \$150,000 a year for the next three years for the Yukon Chamber of Mines; just over \$300,000 a year for three years to support the Yukon Mining Alliance's investment attraction strategy; \$150,000 for the north Yukon regional economic action development initiative — I like to say "READI", as it is a whole lot easier and shorter. I believe I have mentioned before that this project is a pilot project to provide support and advisory services to north Yukon. By north Yukon, I mean the First Nations of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the Vuntut Gwitchin and Na Cho Nyäk Dun, as well as the City of Dawson and the Village of Mayo.

As we talked briefly about in Question Period today, we continue to proceed with the northern fibre diversity project. That is in conjunction with the federal government as well as the Northwest Territories. As I mentioned in Question Period, this government understands the significance of this project, not only to the Yukon but to Northwest Territories and Nunavut as well. I am also happy to report that the portion of the fibre link from Stewart Crossing to Dawson is actually out for tender right now. Hopefully we will see some progress along there in the near future.

I just about have too many notes here, Mr. Speaker. As you know, the CDF, or the community development fund, falls under the guise of Economic Development. I do have to admit that it ranks right up there as one of the favourites in the department. Just a note — from April 1 of 2015 until March 1 of this year, we approved 82 projects at just over \$3.7 million. It's really quite significant to the communities that Yukon is funding this, because it's direct to the communities. It's things to keep programs going and create programs, so it really is an important initiative.

The CDF consists of three tiers, and just last week I had the pleasure of being one of the three partners going through the approval process for the latest tier 3 proposals. I'll just take a minute or two to officially announce those here in the Legislature today.

We have two playground proposals this time around — and not just small playgrounds, but actually quite significant playgrounds. One was put forward by the Teslin Tlingit Council for a playground at Fox Point. Those of you who don't know, that's a residential neighbourhood just a few miles out of town — a TTC neighbourhood, or subdivision. It has been there for well over 20 years, so it's great to see that we can finally move forward with putting something out there. There are quite a number of families with small children in that particular subdivision, so it'll be great to see a playground going in out there.

The other playground is in Carcross, and it's quite an interesting project, actually. The proposal is to be right in the middle of the Carcross Commons. I've had discussion with Jeff Barrett and a few others about the Carcross Commons. I said, you're trying to promote tourism in the Carcross Commons. If you're getting older travelling citizens off the boats or off the train, what the heck do you want a playground in the middle of this Carcross Commons for? When he showed me what they propose to do and talked about it, it really made sense. It's so much more beneficial for the tourists to be able to interact with locals when they come into a community. It just makes the experience of being in the community that much greater. It's the only time they felt they could give the locals more reason to be in the Carcross Commons and it brought that much more value to the experience of the visitor, so we're happy to see that one move forward as well.

There are: Kluane First Nation's project to build an exercise gym and change rooms with attached storage for the second phase of the Burwash skating rink; renovations and heating system upgrades for the Dawson City Arts Society —

I'm sure the Member for Kluane will be happy to hear this. There's \$186,000 to help replace and repair the aging heating and ventilation system at the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture.

As well, Mr. Speaker, the Town of Watson Lake will be receiving \$268,000 for upgrades to the Dennis Ball Memorial Pool. The Member for Watson Lake will be happy to hear that. Another one for Dawson City — and the Member for Klondike referenced the Dawson City Sled Dawgs yesterday, I believe, in his tribute to Volunteer Day, so I'm sure he will be happy and they will be happy as well to see \$254,512 toward the replacement of a snow cat groomer, so that they can continue to provide Dawson and surrounding area with trail development and maintenance, so I'm happy to see that move forward as well.

Another one for Dawson City — Dawson is pretty lucky on this intake, I think — the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in — and that was money to help them apply for nomination of the Klondike area as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Of course, it was two years ago that we had quite a lengthy debate about that here in the Legislature one fine Wednesday afternoon.

Finally, tiny houses, fencing and indigenous garden planning for the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre — just about \$81,000 for that — and I'm happy to provide funding to that great building down there on the riverbank.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker for your indulgence in listening to my CDF spiel. I see I'm running out of time, so I'll try to pick up the pace here.

I guess what I want to say is Economic Development certainly isn't the largest department in government by any stretch of the imagination, but just from pointing out those few departments and those few projects, we understand just how important Economic Development is in creating opportunities here in the Yukon and helping diversify the economy in this great territory.

Mr. Speaker, I'll get my notes in order before you cut me off.

In four and a half years in this job, I certainly have learned a few things and one of them is that you cannot please everyone all of the time. That being said, I have heard from members opposite about all of the things that they see wrong with this budget before us, but the reality is that we once again see a balanced budget — a record budget, I might add — no net debt and a surplus of over \$9 million. All of that, as I mentioned at the opening, with no raising taxes and no carbon tax —

Speaker: Order, please. The member's time has elapsed.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: It's a pleasure to rise here this afternoon and to speak in support of this year's budget and all the things that are contained within it. I would like to just first touch on a number of areas here.

I may run out of time — and I should note for other members that I'll save some of the remarks about specific departmental initiatives until debate in those departments.

I would like to begin, first of all, by thanking my constituents in Lake Laberge for the continued opportunity to serve them, to represent them and to work with them on their issues and concerns. That is something I very much appreciate, and I appreciate the fact that many people continue to contact me when they're looking for solutions to problems or simply have questions about government.

I would like to also thank all my colleagues, the Premier and all our Cabinet colleagues and caucus colleagues, for their support for a number of things, not only in departmental budgets, but also responding specifically to the needs of my constituents. I'm pleased to see a number of initiatives moving forward that benefit Yukoners across the territory, as well as in my riding of Lake Laberge.

A few of the highlights I'm pleased to see and pleased to have seen delivered recently include the work that's being done toward the expansion of basic 911 territory-wide. I would like to thank the Minister of Community Services and his department, as well as the Department of Justice and other partners, including the RCMP, for the work that has been done in advancing this project.

I was pleased to have the opportunity, on behalf of the government, to officially open the new 911 call centre in the Whitehorse Emergency Response Centre earlier this year, along with the RCMP. I should note that the centre is an important part of being able to expand basic 911 territory-wide. That also comes with the increase we announced previously within the Department of Justice budget for funding five new RCMP positions for operators at the 911 call centre. That, in addition to the new ambulance station that was built on the hospital campus, is as a result of the expansion of Whitehorse General Hospital, which the government is committed to and is proceeding with.

There was a need to move the existing ambulance station and I was pleased, on behalf of the Minister of Community Services, to have the opportunity to officially open the new ambulance station, which also includes a new EMS dispatch centre that is equipped with a modern dispatch system. They've replaced the old equipment with a modern integrated computer-assisted dispatch system that also is designed to work well with the 911 call centre.

Improving that communications equipment is something that — although the effect it has may not be immediately apparent, one thing I've heard consistently from Yukoners who work in those areas — including paramedics, police and firefighters — is the importance of a communications system that works well and works quickly, because minutes truly can make a difference in any type of emergency, whether it's a police matter or a fire, or probably most especially in the case of a call for an ambulance. Delay can have a major effect.

Both new facilities are replacing previous call centres that were not as well-equipped. There is new computer equipment and, in the case of EMS, a new dispatch system, which also has the capacity in the future to expand to accommodate other coordination needs within the territory. It coordinates not only the ambulances — and is set up to have the potential to

coordinate EMS service across the territory — it coordinates medevac and patient transfers in the territory.

With that second ambulance station, the Yukon went from having one ambulance station five years ago to building the new emergency response centre at the central location at the top of Two Mile Hill, as we committed to in our election platform. It provides a base for more rapid response to all areas around Whitehorse because of being more centralized than a facility at Whitehorse General Hospital. Through replacing that facility at Whitehorse General Hospital, we have not only provided a more modern equipped facility but continued to serve the needs of Riverdale and downtown Whitehorse and provide service out of that second area.

Those are investments that I am personally pleased to see, because those are ones that I firmly believe will at some point — and we will probably never know who is affected by it but it, probably will make the difference when somebody's facing an emergency and it will save someone's life at some point in the future by having those facilities well-equipped and well-located to serve the needs of Whitehorse and all areas around Whitehorse, including my constituents.

As I think you know, Mr. Speaker, there are investments contained in this year's budget, as there have been in the budgets over the last several years, to continue to upgrade and modernize our equipment within the ambulance fleet and within the fire halls that are managed by the Yukon government across the territory. That has seen the replacement of equipment that was quite old. In the case of fire trucks in my riding, there were two tanker trucks — I should just back up a bit for those who may not be familiar with how fire halls are equipped. With the rural fire halls within the area around Whitehorse, including the two in my riding — the Hootalinqua fire hall and the Ibex fire hall — they are equipped with a pumper and a tanker truck.

When I was first elected, one of the tankers that was at one of the fire halls in my riding was, I believe, a year younger than I was and it was simply a tank on wheels, very similar to a water-delivery truck. The other one — I can't recall the exact age of that. But both were decades-old trucks that had their issues from a maintenance perspective and were certainly antiquated in terms of their age and their ability.

Through increased investments, which we have made in increasing both the operation budget for the Fire Marshal's Office, which funds the fire halls and provides the equipment for them — through increases to that budget, we have seen the equipment for fire response improve significantly. Over the time that I have had the opportunity to serve as MLA for Lake Laberge, we have seen the fire trucks for both Hootalinqua and Ibex Valley fire halls completely replaced. Earlier on, first we saw newer, but still old, tanker trucks put into those fire halls and then, through investments in this mandate, we have seen the replacement of three of the four trucks at those two fire halls, which are part of the \$2.9 million in new emergency vehicles that the Yukon government has spent in the past several years across the territory. That includes \$1.83 million for fire trucks throughout the Yukon and over \$1 million for new ambulances. That has seen the situation where that

previously led to fire halls having their rolling stock being a pumper truck and a tanker that had no capacity other than to haul water — now the Hootalinqua fire hall, the Ibex Valley fire hall and others near Whitehorse have a pumper tanker truck, which replaces what was previously just a tanker. They also have pumper trucks, and we have seen those new, state-of-the-art pumper tanker trucks placed at fire halls throughout the territory, including, as I mentioned, Hootalinqua, Ibex, Golden Horn, Tagish and another one that I am forgetting at the moment. They are also being considered by municipal fire departments to replace their vehicles.

In the case of the Ibex Valley fire department — an area where fire response was one of the main things that I have heard as a priority from constituents in that area — we saw not only a new pumper tanker and a new pumper truck delivered, but the fire hall renovated to have the addition of water-storage capacity because of the poor production rate of the well at that hall. The previous capacity was, I believe, roughly 1,000 gallons in their tank. In the case of a fire, it was not an adequate station for reloading with any significant amount of water. Now, with the addition of two tanks and a new building on there, it has significantly increased the capacity of that facility to, I believe, 6,000 gallons in total. That is intended to avoid, when trucks are responding out in that area, them having to come back to the top of Two Mile Hill to use the City of Whitehorse's facility.

Also, the Deep Creek/Grizzly Valley well project was modified for a similar reason to include larger storage tanks of the community well and the capacity for fire trucks to hook up and reload. That significantly improves fire response, particularly in winter months, within those areas. There was a house fire several years ago that demonstrated the fact that, even for a fire that would have been half an hour outside of town, because of the poor refill capacity of the Hootalinqua fire hall — in that case — the trucks were having to come back into the facility at the top of Two Mile Hill to refill their tanks and go back out to put water on the fire.

Again, having that additional capacity is beneficial for my constituents, but it's also helpful for the City of Whitehorse, particularly the northern part, because the dependence on the city's Two Mile Hill filling station is one that, if there were a problem at that or an accident around it that prevented fire trucks accessing it, could pose an issue for a fire, either outside of Whitehorse or within Whitehorse, and would not have left fire trucks with a suitable alternative to refill.

So those are investments that I'm proud of and believe that they go a long way toward improving the safety of Yukoners' homes and to responding in an emergency, as well as toward supporting our fire halls in the territory.

Other investments — although I'll leave them largely to the Minister of Community Services to talk about — that we've made in fire response on the other side of Whitehorse include the new Carcross fire hall being put in and improvements that were made in Tagish to their community well to improve the fire response and ability to access water in the community of Tagish.

Through the investments that we've made just in the last several years, in addition to what's in this year's budget, we've already, in the past four years, replaced over a third of Yukon government's fleet of ambulances within Yukon Emergency Medical Services. Eight new state-of-the-art ambulances have been purchased to modernize the fleet of 23 ambulances in service across the territory. Anyone who has seen the ambulances will see the significant improvement in equipment in everything from scene lighting to the iPads that are in the front — and the list goes on.

This is because of listening to what we've heard from our paramedics and volunteer emergency responders across the territory about the importance of helping them to do their jobs. With this better equipment, it can have an absolutely vital role in responding to a situation when someone is facing a medical emergency.

In addition to the investments made in health care facilities across the territory and the investments at Whitehorse General Hospital, including the new MRI facility and emergency room expansion — these are all part of how the Yukon government is responding to what we've heard from Yukoners and from health professionals to improve not only our facilities, but also our response capacity and equipment and ensure that when Yukoners need it most, the people who are putting themselves out there in responding to those and putting themselves potentially in harm's way, potentially have the best equipment they can have and are able to do their jobs with the best equipment they can get.

Mr. Speaker, I would also note that other investments I am pleased to see in this year's budget include the domestic water well program. As my colleague for Pelly-Nisutlin noted, something he heard from constituents — inside municipalities in his riding as well as outside — was the importance of expanding that program into municipalities. As you will recall, Mr. Speaker, through changes that we made in the tabling of Bill No. 80, which I brought forward as then-Minister of Community Services in this Assembly, we, after consulting with Yukon municipalities on which option they preferred for extending this very successful and popular rural domestic water well program into municipalities, we went with the option municipalities had indicated they supported. We changed the legislation and then, through the work of the current Minister of Community Services and his department, we saw the agreements concluded with all Yukon municipalities to extend the rural domestic water well program into municipalities and so, as a result, last year was the first year that the program was made available inside municipal limits, including for my constituents in Hidden Valley and McPherson, after — as I mentioned — all Yukon municipalities signed on to the new municipal component of this popular program.

My understanding is that 31 new home water well projects inside Whitehorse were approved last year under the program. The program — as you probably recall, Mr. Speaker — allows homeowners to finance the cost of drilling a home water well over a period of up to 15 years at low interest rates. Loans are fully funded by the Yukon government, but

municipalities are required to agree to collect the loan from the property owner using a local improvement charge. Also, through that mechanism, it ensures repayment of those loans. The model is based on the successful rural electrification program, which had been in place for many years. It's all about helping Yukoners put in infrastructure for their homes, but doing so in a way that ultimately they pay the costs of this infrastructure. Government just helps them with the up-front costs and with amortizing it with a low interest rate over a longer period of time than bank financing will allow.

Under the domestic water well drilling program, over 250 water wells have been completed since it was implemented in 2004, for a total government investment of over \$5.7 million, with an additional \$1.2 million in this year's budget. Fifty-eight new well projects were approved for funding last year, bringing the total number of home water wells to date, supported by this program to over 300.

One thing I would just note to my constituents and others that are listening is that this program has been popular and the municipal portion was popular as well, and the program is structured to keep the portion for rural programs and municipal programs separate for the first part of the year, just to ensure that neither overwhelms the other.

Once they reach, I believe, the end of June — I could stand to be corrected on the date — if one portion of the program is fully expended and the other has additional applicants, they transfer the money to the other part of the program.

I would just encourage those interested in the program to check it on the Department of Community Services website and to contact staff for information about it and, if they are interested in putting in a well this year, ensure that they apply for that early rather than leaving it late in the season, as the program is limited within the \$1.2-million budget, even though, as you know, Mr. Speaker, the size of that budget represents a significant increase from the previous size of the budget for the rural well program, which used to be at roughly \$700,000 a year and now overall is \$1.2 million in total.

I will just try to regain my spot in my notes here.

A few other things that I am pleased to see particularly within this year's budget as well — I guess I will talk a little bit more about some of the ones specific to my constituents before moving on to other areas. I would just like to thank the Minister of Highways and Public Works as well as the Premier and our Cabinet and caucus colleagues for their support for the \$150,000 that is in this year's budget related to the Takhini River bridge. Seeing that funding in place to take the next steps in improving safety is something that is one of the things that I have consistently heard from many of my constituents — their concern about safety at that bridge, due to in part the narrowness of the bridge and in part simply the angle of approach. The \$150,000 contained in the Highways and Public Works budget for a walkway design and an options study is something that I'm very pleased to see.

I should also note that I have heard the question from constituents about the radar sign that was put in place last year, which is one of the short-term improvements that the

Minister of Highways and Public Works and his department assisted with. The radar sign is not there, but I have been advised by the Minister of Highways and Public Works that it will be back and was out, I believe, due to repairs at the time.

I would like to again thank the minister for the support for that next step in responding to safety issues there and thank him as well for the short-term actions that he and his department took in response to concerns that I had heard and that they heard from my constituents last year after an accident at the bridge

The addition of the centreline rumble strips, the cat's eyes, the painting of a centreline on the bridge that had not had one and the installation of a radar sign were all much-appreciated improvements to respond to safety concerns of my constituents.

I'm also pleased to see funding in this year's budget for design, permit and geotechnical work at the Fox Creek bridge, which I understand, for structural reasons, is nearing the point where it needs to be replaced.

I would like now to move to talk about a few things within the Department of Justice that I'm pleased to see in this year's budget, including the \$385,000 for adding new front-line officers for the Whitehorse detachment of the RCMP, along with civilian support services — that's four new front-line positions, as well as administrative support to enable those constables, as well as others, to spend more time out on the street or on the road, instead of dealing with paperwork at the office.

As well, the \$21,000 contained in this year's budget to support the re-establishment of Crime Stoppers is also something I'm very pleased to see and to be able to announce in this year's budget. The increase in RCMP resources and the re-establishment of Crime Stoppers flow from discussions with the RCMP, as well as with the business community, including the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce and the Yukon Chamber of Commerce and the Association of Yukon Communities. One of the things that I did last year, along with department staff, is sit down with the business community, including both chambers of commerce, and sit down with the Association of Yukon Communities, to talk to them about some of the ideas that had come up with the department and the RCMP to tackle the spike in property crime and doing more to target drug trafficking. After discussions with them, we came to the conclusion that there seemed to be support from everyone for increasing RCMP resources, as well as the re-establishment of Crime Stoppers. Through the good work of the chambers of commerce and members of the business community who have stepped forward to create that new volunteer board to form Crime Stoppers, we are pleased to see that this is in the process of being re-established.

As I believe you know, Mr. Speaker — but just to explain to members and others who may not be clear — the reason for having volunteers involved in Crime Stoppers is that it's the model that's used across the country because of the fact that they allow for somebody to receive a reward for tips. The structure right across the country is that government money and police money don't go to pay for those rewards, so it does

require volunteers. It also requires donations from volunteers or from businesses to help cover that. That program had become defunct here in the territory a number of years ago, and we're very pleased to see it in the process of being re-established quite soon.

The budget also contains funding for moving forward with the new RCMP detachment in Faro. I'm pleased to see that occurring.

I should also just recap for members the fact that the reason it wasn't actually already under construction was due, unfortunately, to the fact that last year we ran into a situation where we were informed by the RCMP nationally that the cost of the bids that had come in for the project were all over what they had financial approval for and they needed to seek Treasury Board approval. Unfortunately, we were advised by them that we could not issue that contract at that point. We are now proceeding with the RCMP to attempt to get that detachment built as early as possible.

I should also note a few other areas within the budget that I am pleased to see. In partnership with Women's Directorate, the Department of Justice has supported the continued operation of Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre's A Safe Place program with \$84,000. This program has only been in operation for a little while, but has demonstrated itself to be a useful program to date. It is an after-hours program for women and children that provides access to peer and professional supports, referrals to other community services and access to basic amenities. It fills that gap in services for women in Whitehorse by providing a place to connect with other resources evenings and weekends when other service providers are closed.

I am pleased to have the opportunity, along with the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate and Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, to make that announcement just a few weeks ago and to see funding in the budget for that this year. That, in addition to the announcement that the minister for the Women's Directorate and I jointly made last year regarding the creation, funding and ultimately issuing of a contribution agreement for the new women's legal advocate position run by the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre. These are parts of how we are attempting to enhance our existing services and build on the good work that has been done to date. The funding for the women's legal advocate is intended to help women better understand their rights and navigate the legal system.

Moving on to an area not directly related to the budget, I would just like to briefly note changes recently made to the National Building Code of Canada. I would like to thank the Minister of Community Services and the department for the work done to implement the modifications to the National Building Code that are related to energy efficiency. The new energy efficiency requirements in section 9.36 of the National Building Code were automatically adopted when the National Building Code was changed several years ago and came into place, I believe, in 2012. After hearing from a number of Yukon homebuilders and citizens in rural Yukon, including within Lake Laberge, who were very concerned about the

building code requirements, and especially about their effect on affordability particularly for log home construction, the government suspended this section of the building code for first one year and then a second year, while we did work in this area.

I would like to thank the invited experienced log home construction contractors and other stakeholders who sat on an advisory committee that reviewed each part of section 9.36 of the National Building Code and provided recommendations. We had asked them to provide advice on whether these energy-efficiency standards or any portion of them should be brought back into effect, and the committee recommended that section 9.36 of the National Building Code be adopted with modifications, including some intended to ensure log home construction continues to be an affordable choice for Yukoners. That modified regulation came into effect April 1, 2016 and is available under the Yukon government website under the *Building Standards Act*, entitled OIC 2016/49.

I would like to thank all of the Yukoners from across the territory who served on that advisory committee or who contributed comments. I would like to, as well, acknowledge the work of the Minister of Community Services and his staff on this and acknowledge the work of my colleagues on this, including the MLA for Pelly-Nisutlin, the MLA for Kluane, the MLA for Watson Lake and the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin, all of whom brought forward issues on behalf of their constituents about the effects of these changes and delivered the message loud and clear, which we heard and listened to, that log home builders were having trouble meeting these new energy-efficiency standards. They believe, and we believe, that the log home construction should remain an affordable option for Yukoners and is, in fact, a very responsible choice in building materials if those materials are sourced locally from renewable sources in a responsible manner. Building a log home has been a Yukon tradition and way of life for many for over 100 years and should always remain an option for Yukoners, particularly when compared to constructing with vinyl and other materials imported from the south — which, in comparison, log home construction certainly should not be looked down on. It is something that in fact Yukoners who build log homes, whether themselves or through the work of contracting a log home builder, can and should continue to be proud of their homes as being both environmentally responsible and, in many cases — in my personal opinion — log home buildings are one of the nicest forms of home construction and very much a Yukon tradition here for many people.

I would like to note also the other area that I'm pleased to see funded through this year's budget includes the financial support for continuing the work being done under the Minister of Health and Social Services with the Community Midwifery Association of Yukon and the doctors, nurses and other health professionals who are forming part of the working group looking at regulating midwifery here in the territory.

I am very much looking forward to the midwifery symposium on April 24 that we've financially supported and looking forward to hearing from doctors, nurses and midwives

across the country who will be there to share their experiences and help us better understand how to successfully integrate midwifery into the health care options available here. That's something that I've heard from many constituents who see the value of this health profession and are very interested in seeing it added to the range of health services here in the territory. I'm pleased to see the work continue in looking at how to responsibly regulate it and integrate it into Yukon's health care system.

I would also like to note — one thing I meant to mention earlier — I would like to thank the Minister of Education for funding continuing improvements at Hidden Valley School, which is in this year's budget. There are some improvements in capital maintenance there as well as new playground equipment, which was put in last year.

I would like to also thank him for the work that he did in seeing the afterschool program put into place there. I have heard positive comments from constituents about that and I have had people approach me after the previous program run by an NGO ceased to provide service there. I approached the minister — I was very pleased with the response that he and the department did in that situation. I have heard very positive reviews from constituents about how well that program is working.

Through that and the improvements that the current Minister of Education and the previous Minister of Education made to the bus routes in my constituency, I would note that these have certainly made things better for many parents and families. I would like to thank both of them, as well as the department, for their work in those areas.

Mr. Speaker, I believe you're signalling that I should be wrapping up my remarks here.

A few others I would just like to touch on that I am pleased to see in this year's budget include increased support for recycling efforts throughout the territory and continued supports for the licensed practical nursing program at Yukon College and, as well, investments in the completion of the Sarah Steele building and the increased alcohol and drugs services at those areas. That again is an area that was a platform commitment and I am pleased to see that occurring.

I would like to also acknowledge the Minister of Environment and the Department of Environment for the increased investment in the water strategy to expand our water monitoring network in total of \$1.5 million. That of course is an important part of having a better understanding of water throughout the territory, where in the past we have not had as

Speaker: Order. Order, please.

Ms. White: I just want to thank my family to start. A lot of people in the Chamber and outside of the Chamber will know different parts of my family, but maybe not all the pieces together.

We've heard this week about my mom being honoured in Ottawa for her volunteerism, and that's just a really small part of who she is. My mom has, probably for the last four, five or six years — I don't even know how many years — hosted a

family dinner at her house every Sunday. “Family” has different meanings for all of us. At my house, “family” is those who you were born with and those who choose you and those you choose. Family dinner at my mom and dad’s house is probably 16-plus people every Sunday. That dinner is the highlight of most of our weeks and it’s definitely what helps keep me centred. So thanks to my mom, my dad, and my sister and her husband, my older brother, my younger brother and all the nephews. They’re definitely what make this job easier. I want to thank my friends who are always a sounding board. They are definitely stability in sometimes unstable times.

I want to thank all the people in my riding. The seniors complex at 600 College Drive has continued to be easily one of the best things that have happened to me since 2011. My grandma lives in Edmonton, and I have access to an entire building of grandmas and grandpas. When we’re not in the Sitting and I have the time, I go up for Wednesday afternoon bingo, which is pretty exciting — but I can tell you, if you play bingo with seniors, don’t think that you’re going to be good at radio bingo, because they’re way more patient at Wednesday afternoon bingos than radio bingo. I was set up for failure, I think, by them, by feeling like I knew what I was doing for bingo.

The seniors — in the last four years of getting to know people of that age and stuff has been really spectacular. I’ve been incredibly lucky to know people at their best times and at the worst times, and have become quite the expert in some federal paperwork, which it has been really helpful to offer that to my friends up there. So the seniors complex — I thank them.

I had to drive up to my riding today to get some paperwork. I’m reminded always by how cool it is, because there were two gentlemen with small dogs on leashes and they were having a conversation by the mailbox. There was an older woman who was walking back to her house. I live in a part of the community that’s still very community-based. There is no time that you can be in my neighbourhood without seeing people out and about.

I live across the street from a community garden, a community park and a skating rink, and no matter what time of year, there are always people there. I really want to thank the people in my riding, because it’s with them that I come to work every day. It’s with them in mind. Since 2011, it has been really incredible to get to know people better. I feel really privileged that this job allows us to get to know that many people on that level, and for that I’m truly grateful.

I also want to thank the people in all the communities I have visited. Since 2012, I’ve had the privilege of driving everywhere, just about, that you can drive in the territory for community meetings. It is always really fantastic to be welcomed in and the conversations at the gas stations, hotels, motels, cafes or the community meetings themselves — and the fact that people are open to those conversations and are willing to share is really phenomenal. I want to thank them as well.

Mr. Speaker, it’s surreal to be standing here in response to this last budget to be tabled in the last Sitting of the 33rd Legislative Assembly. It’s surreal because I had totally forgotten that, in my early teens, I had been a page in this Assembly and hadn’t remembered until the day I was signing my papers on the floor after being elected. Surreal because I still remember feeling so separated from the political process in my 20s that I didn’t even consider exercising my right to vote because I felt like it had no worth. Understanding now that people in other countries are willing to risk their lives for the ability to vote, I shake my head at my younger self who did not understand the incredible power that being able to participate in the democratic process allows.

I am happy to say that times are changing. We have seen organizations like Apathy is Boring, which was started by Yukoner Ilone Dougherty, empower youth across the country to participate in the democratic process. In the last number of years, we have seen youth embracing the power they hold as voters and exercising it. It has been a truly beautiful thing.

In the last four and a bit years from right here in this Legislative Assembly, we have had a front-row seat to an awakening in the Yukon. We have seen by the numbers of people in the gallery, and heard the drums and chants from outside these walls, that a record number of Yukoners have been pushed too far by decisions that they are being told are being made on their behalf, and they are no longer sitting idly by. These Yukoners have shaken off any apathy that they may have had and are fully participating in civil society. We have seen it time and time again. It was during the first three and a bit years that we came to work that there were galleries full of people. They would come in to try to make their opinions known to those of us who have the privilege of being on both sides of the floor.

I want to thank them for strengthening, participating, engaging and making democracy a living, breathing, thriving entity. I want to especially thank those people who by their regularity in attendance have become fixtures in the gallery. It is almost as if we have been participating in a daily take-an-activist-to-work program. Now, it is their absence we notice. Your presence has been an honour and a privilege to behold. You are a reminder that each and every one of us in this Chamber works for citizens like you whether we see them here or not. It is with the faces and the stories of the people I have met that I enter this Chamber each and every day.

I think that because we, the elected, are in the bubble that is the Legislative Assembly, we have a hard time reining in our thoughts, criticisms and hopes for the Yukon and the Yukon government. I think that rings true for both sides of the Chamber. As the opposition, we often get told by government that we haven’t offered up ideas or solutions to the issues we have identified. That is always brought up during Question Period, and that is perfectly true. During Question Period, it is our duty as members of the opposition to question the government so that we ensure that Yukoners are benefiting from the programs and services proposed by them. It is up to them, the government, on how they choose to answer, and it

has been pointed out by a great number of visiting students that direct answers to questions are in short supply.

I think that maybe if the government side paid closer attention to our budget responses and to the questions we raise during budget debates or motion debates — like the one we had yesterday where they spoke of tax credits from the federal government and we spoke about increasing the amount that is accessible to families for the kids recreation fund — they would hear the solutions and ideas we are offering. Our responses and our questions about budget spending are based on our belief that things can be done differently. They reflect our values, they reflect our ideals and they reflect how we view legislation differently. This is no different from the legislation that the government brings forward, their motions and their programs. It highlights our differences, the difference in our belief systems, and like we have said in those conversations, that is okay, because if we didn't have that back-and-forth conversation, our democracy would be weaker for it.

I can assure the government side, however, not to worry — for when we are sitting on that side of the Legislature as government, we will have many ideas on how to better offer the services and programs presented by government.

Sometimes this whole dynamic of us-versus-them leaves us, on this side of the House, in a position, when we are working on our budget speech, of trying to figure out how to start, of what we should say and then just asking ourselves “Where do I even start?” We've chatted a lot about this in our office, and I want to thank Noah, a man far wiser than his years, for talking this out with me.

My answer to this budget speech is to try to ask a more high-level question that would help me get down to the bottom of what we really see as really wrong with government in the Yukon right now and what we, as the Yukon NDP, would do differently if we were in their position.

I think the million-dollar question is: What is the point of government and elected officials? We ask ourselves what kind of legacy the Yukon Party thinks they are leaving behind, and what they would point to as their achievements.

To me it would be two things, because this is what we've heard them repeat over and over: building capital projects, and managing the economy in tough times. To be fair, from the perspective of many — including those in financial circles — the Yukon Party hasn't been doing too well at managing the economy as we enter our third year of GDP contraction — which, by economic definition, is a recession.

I think that both of those achievements, however, are false winds, so to speak, because the design, management and selection of capital projects is conducted by the bureaucracy, not the politicians. At the end of the day, the Yukon's economy is really nearly entirely based on transfer payments from the federal government and a small portion from the extraction of minerals that are subject to the whims of international commodity prices.

The reason that these achievements are false is because the Yukon government — and I really mean the elected leaders in this case — have very little influence on the

outcome of these two issues. The result would likely have been the same because it is the public servants who are making the calls and doing the legwork on capital projects. We have heard this government take credit when the commodity prices were high, but now that they're at a low, we've heard them say it isn't their fault.

This is the truest statement yet, because how on Earth could this government possibly hope to influence world commodity prices? How could that even happen?

If not the economy and managing money, what is the role of elected officials? We on this side of the House believe it is to be leaders, to bring people together, to listen to the people you represent and come up with creative solutions to problems that you have identified.

I appreciate that in their final year of their mandate this government took to the road to speak to the people they represent. I appreciate this because, since 2012, we on this side of the House have been to nearly every single community in the territory each and every year. Personally, I have driven to Beaver Creek, Watson Lake, Teslin, Dawson City and all points in between no less than twice and in most cases three times. That's just me.

My colleagues have had different communities that they have travelled to and all for the benefit and the privilege of listening to community members speak to issues that affect them and issues that they think are important.

It was really great to hear some of those issues we've been championing on behalf of communities reflected in this year's budget responses from government members, because now that they've heard them first-hand themselves, it has become more real. Maybe these communities will get the results that they've been hoping for. I wonder, and I ask myself, if this government caucus had made those community tours more of a priority, like we have on this side, if many of the concerns raised by communities would still be the problem they are today.

Mr. Speaker, I came to this job with an open heart, with the belief that integrity, compassion and humanity all belong here in this Chamber. I stand here now, nearing the end of this 33rd legislative session, a couple of years older and a little worse for wear, but without any less conviction about the traits I wish to embrace as a politician.

Elected government has the ability to be bold, they have the ability to set a course for the territory — but I would argue that we have seen very little of that leadership in relationship building from this Yukon Party government. Issues like the Peel — we've had hundreds of people outside this Chamber. We've had a petition that was circulated that the government discredited and said it didn't matter what people from Düsseldorf thought.

We have issues like the future of land use planning. We are supposed to have eight land use plans in the territory and, so far successfully, one has been completed to date. Respecting First Nation final agreements — no Yukon government in the history of Yukon government so far has had so many court cases brought against them by First Nation governments as this one we have now. The amendments to

YESAA, setting and meeting waste diversion goals and negotiating things like the *Agreement on Internal Trade* — these are all areas where the Yukon government could not only have had an influence on the outcome, but has the duty to provide leadership and creative solutions that benefit all Yukoners.

From my perspective, these are all areas where the Yukon Party government has not only shown a lack of leadership, but also where they appear to have actively worked to undermine the progress and outcomes of these processes. When we criticize the government on issues, we often hear them repeat lines like, “it’s out of our control”, or “we’re a small jurisdiction”. In fact, that is almost exactly the line that they took for not lobbying harder for Yukon for provisions that favour us, as Yukoners, in the *Agreement on Internal Trade* — “because we’re just too small”. But that isn’t true, because they have lobbied for Yukon on much larger stages. As government, they have taken a firm stance on sticking up for Yukon, but maybe in ways they wish to forget. I think it has actually happened twice — first when they pushed and lobbied the federal government to advance their agenda to streamline the YESAA process by putting forward their two contentious amendments to S-6 — amendments that had First Nation governments ready to go to court, yet again, to defend the integrity of their constitutionally protected final agreements — I think that was one example — and most recently, when the Premier organized the other northern premiers to go to Vancouver and state emphatically that Yukon would not accept a carbon tax.

It’s interesting that the only two bold actions this Premier has taken in his tenure were to undermine the intent of our First Nation final agreements and then to opt out of doing our part to fight climate change; to even be part of that conversation on a national scale.

The real failure of this government has been to not actually create goals, listen, lead and propose solutions to issues that they actually had influence over. In 2011, like others I’m sure, I listened to parents speak about their worries around access to childcare — parents who are forced to make the tough decision of wanting to work, but needing to stay home because they couldn’t afford the early childhood education offered through daycare. We all lose in this situation. We lose the early intervention to lifelong learning, we lose all the economics of earning wages and paying taxes and spending what comes along with wages, and we lose the skills that aren’t being shared by the person who has to choose to stay home because they had to make that decision.

In 2015, I met a single mother who couldn’t afford childcare, pad rent and her mortgage. To be clear, she is fierce. She sacrifices everything for her child. When she lost her childcare subsidy, she got help from her mom, but that can’t last forever. She’s done everything in her power to better the life of her family. She was, and still is, suffering because the calculation of the childcare subsidy is rigid, because there is no flexibility. There absolutely needs to be an appeal process. She needs to be able to go and she needs to put all her cards on the table and then it needs to be recalculated. It needs

to be looked at, but that process doesn’t exist. So what did she do? She turned to social assistance because that was the last thing she had. Then she was denied at social assistance because she had an RRSP and she was told that unless she liquidated the only small savings that she had, they could not help her. So right now she is still in this quandary. Right now she is worried about what she’s going to do with her son this summer. So she has to worry about two and a half months of childcare. Her solution to full-time childcare this summer is to sell her home, and if her home doesn’t sell by June 1, her next step is to quit her job.

I ask you how, in 2016, is that even acceptable — that she’s gone to every department we have, she’s gone down every avenue she can, and right now she is faced with selling her home because she figures that is the only way that she’s going to be able to afford childcare for the summer?

Last week, Mr. Speaker, this issue hit even closer to home because my little sister and her husband have a beautiful family. They’re a little quirky and a little rough and tumble, but I think that’s probably to be expected because they have three sons. They both work full-time on what the government would say are good-paying jobs and they live within their means. There aren’t a lot of extras at their house, but there’s an awful lot of love. In 2011, Kemper — that’s the oldest nephew I have — he was four and a half years old and he was the only little guy that they had in daycare, and he turns nine this May. Aason and Lennox had yet to make their world debuts. Lennox turns two this summer and Aason turns four. Faced with a cut to their childcare subsidy that they can appeal and facing an upcoming increase to the cost of daycare — an increase that they don’t begrudge because of the level of care they receive — they have had to make hard decisions.

After talking to my parents, after talking to his parents and after putting all their financial cards on the table, they have had to come to this decision: My little sister is quitting her job. She will leave behind full-time employment that she likes, working with people who she likes, offering services to people in the community, because she and her family cannot afford the cost of childcare. What does that mean for them? It means that she will be home during the day and she will be looking for a part-time job in the evenings so she can still contribute to the household finances.

When we are asking about our solutions, here is the solution I have for this: affordable childcare for everybody. This isn’t a feminist issue and this isn’t just a family issue; this is humanist issue. We should have affordable childcare for everybody. Let’s make sure that families can make the best choices. Let’s make sure that a family, when they are making the decision — that it is not based on the finances, but is based on the will of what they want. If someone wants to stay home with their kids, I think that is fantastic, but if someone wants to go to work and that is what they want to do, I want to make sure that they can. I want to make sure that families have equal access to early childhood education. I want to make sure that no kid gets left behind because their family could not afford the cost of childcare.

In 2011, I was told more than once by people living in mobile homes that it did not matter if they voted or not. No one cared about what they thought anyway — and really, let's be honest, who could blame them? Even after the new *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* was finally enacted this past January, these homeowners have been treated only as renters under the law, given no more protection than someone who rents an apartment.

I asked about this question in Question Period, and I was told by one minister that if they did not like the situation, they could move out of town. I asked about it again during budget debate and I asked about it again during Question Period. Our solution from this side — well, I went door-to-door, first with a request for letters. I handed out a piece of paper with the then-minister's e-mail address and his contact information, and it had mine and I asked them to send letters. Tell them what your reality is; share what it means for you; share our experience. You know what happened? People sent letters. They really did.

Then I was told that I was the only person who was worried about the issue. It didn't matter that people came into the gallery. It didn't matter that there were people around. So I took it further. I took a petition to every single door in every mobile home park in Whitehorse, because it is that important to me. After spending hours in mobile home parks, I can tell you with confidence that the opinions and experiences of mobile homeowners really do matter; that their collective life experiences need to be at the forefront of legislation that oversees their futures.

I asked mobile homeowners for help. I asked them to write letters and to sign a petition; a petition that, when I tabled it, had nearly 400 signatures. But the real clincher about this, Mr. Speaker, is that this petition was signed by every single person in mobile homes that I spoke to. There was not one single person to whom I spoke who did not sign the petition. I asked them to believe that they mattered, and now we get to see a change.

I want to thank the current Minister of Community Services for his willingness to address this oversight and to begin the process of righting the wrong. I am pleased to say that after nearly four years of lobbying for change, the consultation has finally begun where mobile homeowners are being asked about two major issues that affect them — that of pad rent increases and evictions without cause.

Earlier today I had concerns, because currently you can't access an online survey but you could print a PDF. I talked to the minister responsible and I have been assured that the survey will be available online tomorrow. I want to thank him for that because he has just told people in mobile home parks that they matter and that's important. Thank you very much.

I can say with confidence that an NDP government would protect the rights of mobile homeowners. I can say with confidence that an NDP government would make sure that families weren't faced with that tough challenge of whether to work or not to work — childcare or no childcare.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on at length about the solutions we've offered from this side of the House since 2011, but I'm just going to share those two examples.

Yukon government can't magically make the economy rebound, but they can create conditions for success when it actually does. They can create land use plans so mines and industry can get moving more quickly and with certainty that they have the social licence to get to work once that commodity's price comes back.

They can engage with First Nations so businesses have certainty before investing in Yukon. They can meet with the stakeholders and the public to create creative solutions to climate change issues and renewable energy. This is where we should be leading the country, not in the number of court cases against us by First Nation governments.

I have been to conferences on the opportunities of biomass, the emerging advances of photovoltaic and the potential of pump storage to address our energy needs in the future. That's just what I can remember recently.

I have been to town halls and community meetings that are focused on finding solutions to tough social issues. This is where we should be going for ideas and solutions — to the people who are champions and experts in their field and they have their feet on the ground.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, it's true — we don't think the current government has been showing leadership in these areas. Yes, it's true that, under the watch of this government, Yukoners are facing tough economic times. We're in recession.

But it's also true that Yukon has so much potential. We have some of the best mineral potential in the world. We have the most well-educated population per capita and some of the most enabling modern land claims agreements in the world. This potential exists in the Yukon and it is really the key to our success. Unfortunately it has not been fostered or tapped into adequately by this Yukon Party government.

I can tell you that the Yukon NDP will continue to build these relationships and that we look forward to tapping into the unlimited potential of Yukoners because we believe that is what Yukon government is supposed to do. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Premier, your closing statement, as all members have spoken.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: It is indeed a pleasure and an honour to rise to end second reading debate on the budget for 2016-17 — the fifth budget presented by the Yukon Party caucus, the fifth surplus budget presented. We continue to be in a very strong fiscal position.

I would like to start by acknowledging all the constituents and all the residents of the riding of Mountainview. That includes the communities of Granger, McIntyre, Valleyview and Hillcrest. Through the last number of years, mostly with my wife Tammie, we have been up and down those streets many times, have spoken to probably most of the people who live in the riding of Mountainview. I will continue to say that it is always an honour to serve the constituents who have

bestowed their trust and responsibility on me to represent them in this House.

I would also like to thank my family, as well, for their support, their understanding, their patience and their willingness to do many things without me, because either the husband or their father is too busy doing the work of the people. To them I extend my gratitude for the understanding of the responsibilities that go with the position.

I'm very proud of the record that we have delivered to Yukoners. We have heard mention in this House of one of the information pamphlets that has gone out to Yukoners, because I think it is important for government to communicate with the citizens. We know the other parties continue to do the very same thing to ensure that their message is communicated to their constituents as well.

That document, for me, was very personally satisfying. As I have said in the past, when people approached me to look at throwing my name in the ring and moving forward to possibly become the Leader of the Yukon Party, one of the concerns I had — not about the Yukon Party, but about politics in general — was how much I was really upset at political leaders and political parties promising the world to people to get into power, but then finding all the excuses in the world, blaming the previous government or whatever the reasons were to not deliver on their platform. I'm very proud to say that we have either accomplished or we are currently doing everything that we put in our platform, and that is a feat that I will stand up to — against any political party of any government, wherever you want to look.

We've done that; we've moved forward and we've accomplished a tremendous amount, and we've done that without creating deficits. More importantly, we've not created any net debt, and truly that is an envy in this country and in probably most of the developed world — that we continue to do this, but we live within our means.

Families and businesses have to live within their means, and they expect their government to do the very same thing.

I'm very proud of the priorities that we are addressing for Yukoners in this current budget. Just to sort of highlight a few of the things that we're talking about — \$3.3 million for a new fire hall in Carcross and \$250,000 planning money for the replacement of the Old Crow Health Centre. The new building will become more than a health centre — a daycare facility that will access and provide many different services to the citizens of Old Crow on behalf of the Government of Yukon.

I am very proud that we have found new money — \$228,000 this year — to go toward implementing a colorectal screening program — one of the highest incidence of cancers that exists in this territory. More home care nurses — I believe that our investment in home care, since coming into power as a party in 2002, has gone up 350 percent, and we continue to invest more and more in home care to allow people to live in their homes for as long as possible.

\$15 million capital funding for the Whistle Bend subdivision — I'm very excited. It seems that every time I go down to Whistle Bend, it continues to change and to grow.

Almost all the lots in phase 1 are now gone. We're quickly already filling up phase 2. We've partnered with the Ta'an Kwäch'an and the Da Daghay Development Corporation on their affordable housing unit. We have the continuing care facility, and now we're working together to ensure we're making investments for not only phase 3, but I think recent discussions with the city were to talk about phases 4 and 5 and forward. We're very excited and proud of that.

We're very excited about the additional money for the IT sector, increasing by \$3 million additional dollars, up to \$9.5 million. We recognize that strategic investments in various sectors can have a very positive long-term effect on this economy, and we believe very firmly that this is an investment that will pay off with great dividends for this territory in the long term.

We're very proud to be: increasing the funding for the student financial assistant plan, or the Yukon grant, by \$376,000 this year; providing \$385,000 in funding to fund five new RCMP positions here in the city; start-up money to start up a new Crime Stoppers program in this community; \$3.9 million for assessment and remediation work at contaminated sites here in the territory.

I know that we'll be proud to be moving forward with a mental wellness strategy during this session, and we've already put forward a budget of \$1 million to be able to quickly move forward with the implementation of that strategy; \$1.1 million for land titles modernization — we worked very closely with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. Their First Nation is ecstatic with those changes. We worked with the Government of Canada and with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. They have to make some changes, as well, to their agreements, but soon we'll see the dream and the plan that always existed for Kwanlin Dün, and that was to be able to utilize their property, as the largest landowner in the City of Whitehorse, to be able to generate revenues from commercial or residential leases on their land, and more than \$1.5 million to expand Yukon's water monitoring and water strategy that this government put forward a couple of years ago.

We're very excited about the \$300,000 in core funding to support Special Olympics Yukon, Yukon Aboriginal Sports Circle and Recreation and Parks Association of the Yukon. These organizations provide incredible services to our community. I know a number of us on this side of the House were at the Special O fundraiser last weekend, as we are every year. It's tremendous to see that these investments that we have made in sport and recreation have resulted in real tangible differences in people's lives — not only the athletes, but also the coaches and the board and all the people around them. It is truly wonderful.

There is \$350,000 to develop new campsites and improve facilities in government campgrounds; more cottage lots — these are two things that we've heard from people — and we're very proud to be delivering expanded campgrounds. We'll be opening the new Conrad campground next month and we'll have more fee simple cottage lots coming out around Kluane Lake, and that's about listening to Yukoners and delivering for Yukoners.

For the second year in a row, we are increasing investment in Yukon museums and First Nation cultural centres, this year totalling in excess of \$1.8 million, Mr. Speaker. That is an increase of over 300 percent since the Yukon Party came into power — an increase since the last Liberal and NDP governments. Of course, how can we not mention the Yukon Now program — the largest marketing investment in this territory's history for tourism? We partnered with the federal government for two years. We've now committed just under \$1 million a year for three subsequent years and we're hoping that the federal government will live up to the commitment that they made previously, but we have stated multiple times that if they don't, we will ensure that this industry also receives the funding that they need to thrive.

I mentioned what we've done with Da Daghay Development Corporation and Ta'an Kwäch'än. I want to recognize the leadership of Chief Kristina Kane and Deputy Chief Michelle Telep and their development corporation board of directors in getting this very important project off the ground. The design looks great. It's an opportunity to create employment and build on that economy right now. It's an opportunity for training, apprenticeship opportunities and also for capacity building for them.

Of course, I think some of these projects are making a difference in people's lives. Our commitment to partner with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the creation of Canada's first MRI north of 60, which is now benefitting so many Yukoners in not having to displace them to go south for exams. Of course, tied to that as well is the current hospital expansion — another commitment that we've made.

Delivering of hospitals in Watson Lake and in Dawson City — sadly the record will show that the opposition was not supportive of these facilities, not just by voting against funding for them, but publicly not supporting them. I venture to ask those people to ask the people who live in those communities today — the Leader of the Liberal Party — how many people don't think that hospital is a great idea in his community?

McDonald Lodge — brand new beautiful facility expanded from 11 to 15 beds or units with the ability to expand further in the future if needed.

Of course, we look at the work that is being done at Sarah Steele. There were a number of things in the last election. Only one party identified this as part of their platform. The whole aspect of addictions was something that was prominent in the Yukon Party campaign, recognizing addictions as not a justice issue, but a health issue. We've made commitments to change detox — it's now a medical detox. We'll soon be opening new expanded programming with continuous input for both men and women and also new substantive alcohol and drug service programming for youth as well. I would acknowledge the previous and the current Health ministers for the work that they've done to get us to where we are on those. That will be a very exciting day when we deliver.

Every day, we drive down Fourth Avenue and we see the work that is going on at the new facility that we're partnering

with the Salvation Army on that is not only going to provide more beds and larger dining areas but, for the first time, transitional housing in this territory for people who are ready to take that next step.

I think of all the seniors residences that have been built, either by the previous governments or during this mandate: Haines Junction, Teslin, Watson Lake, Faro, Mayo and two recently in Whitehorse. In fact Mayo and the one on Front Street and the one on Alexander Street are 88 new units in just over two years that we have opened — new units providing housing for seniors who need it.

Of course, we're very proud of our long-term care facility. I will talk a little bit more about that later.

Of course, Jackson Lake was another area that we committed a million dollars to and, with investments from the federal government as well, we're seeing some incredible work. I would like to acknowledge the work of Jeanie Dendys and all of the people at Kwanlin Dün who are focusing on making a difference for people who would truly benefit from an after-care program that is land-based.

In the last decade, we've seen about a 20-percent increase in population and, with that of course, a corresponding increase in our labour force as well. I can remember very clearly as a business owner in this community the previous NDP and Liberal governments between 1997 and 2002, where we saw a mass exodus of people during that time — people who were in their prime working years who were leaving. I remember double-digit unemployment. I remember the Liberal government using their credit card to pay for wages in this territory.

In the last four and half years, I have listened to a lot of complaining. I believe there have been deliberate attempts to create fear, no regard for facts and, most importantly, no plan or no alternatives.

We have seen a significant drop in commodity prices, affecting not just this jurisdiction but all jurisdictions that rely heavily on a resource-based economy. While the Leader of the Liberal Party doesn't think that Yukoners understand that, sadly, I believe he will find that they do understand what that means. We continue to make significant investments now to help the economy, but not to be the economy. That is really what distinguishes Yukon Party from the Liberals and the NDP.

Through our budget tour conversations we heard what Yukoners wanted. They want us as a government to provide a helping hand when times are like this and to prepare us for the future. That is what we heard very clearly. As we have mentioned, these budget tours involved 60 meetings in every community; literally hundreds of Yukoners participated in these. Again, I would like to acknowledge that and I would like to thank them for their input because they helped us shape this budget.

Year after year, we continue to invest around \$300 million in capital. I know that the Liberal leader tries to imply that we have spiked it up for this year. In fact, it was interesting to read his post-budget comments. The comments were exactly the same for the last three years that he has done.

We have been pretty consistent, recognizing at a time of economic downturn, that this government needs to continue to provide as much investment as it can to put money into the economy and create jobs today, but building facilities that we will use for years to come. We are investing in infrastructure, roads, bridges and airports. We continue to work toward a creation of new hydro and, as I mentioned, the strategic investments in the knowledge economy through IT. We are creating jobs now. We are creating opportunities for training for our younger people, but we are building for the future.

We are streamlining our permitting and our regulatory regimes. With that, we are engaging the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board. We are engaging the Water Board. We are looking at mine licensing improvements, and we are working with First Nations and industry on that.

Education is not just a social policy; it is a very strong economic policy. I have said that many times. We have our new vision that has been led by the Minister of Education. We have our mobile trades training trailer. We have created the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining and, of course, in our last platform, we continue to move toward the creation of a Yukon university. We understand the significant economic benefits that this will derive for this territory as well. We continue to support and fund research at the Yukon Research Centre, such as the Cold Climate Innovation and climate change adaptation. You only have to talk to Stephen Mooney briefly to see the energy and the opportunities. I have met with a number of those companies that have utilized the resources and the expertise that exists in the Yukon Research Centre. I encourage all entrepreneurs and inventors who have an idea to certainly talk to them, because they have some great advice, and a lot of times some funding opportunities to go along with that.

I have mentioned Yukon Now in Tourism and Culture. I look at our investments in film and sound and the capacity we are building. I remember having conversations with some of the film and sound guys who said that as a result of the work doing those commercials for Yukon Now that they have built that capacity and experience so that they are now going out and competing for private sector work as well. That's exactly the type of strategic investment that this government is focusing on.

Of course, arts and culture — I think what we need to do — we've talked about a lot of different investments, but I think now, more than ever, we need to support our resource sector. That is critical. That's another area where we delineate ourselves, we separate ourselves from the Liberal Party and from the New Democratic Party. We will continue to work by setting the stage, by doing the things that I've just been talking about, to help us move toward that vision that this party has, which is to see this territory become a net contributor to our great country, to pay our own way, so we don't have the ability to have a federal government come up to us and say, we're just going to give you less money on our transfer payment. That's what separates this party from the other party.

I wanted to just talk a little bit about the feedback that we've received from the Yukon Chamber of Commerce about our budget. They did a number of categories and they gave us an overall grade of B+. Investments and infrastructure — they say that the improvements to roads, airfields and fibre optic and cellular infrastructure are excellent. Investments identified are all beneficial to the economy and the prudence of the government in both identifying and investigating capital expenditures should be commended.

Investments in communities, A — the Yukon chamber is pleased with the level of capital investment in Yukon community facilities, from water and sewer systems to subdivision planning and fire halls. Taxation, A — no tax increases for families or businesses. Let me say that again, Mr. Speaker: no tax increases for families and businesses. This is where we truly differentiate ourselves from the Liberals and the NDP. The Yukon currently has some of the lowest corporate rates in the country, which is positive for attracting and retaining businesses.

Procurement, C. Even though I heard some of the media reporting that as a failing grade, for the record, they listed C. They say that the government has recognized it has a problem here and is undertaking to do something about it. That's their comment. I'll talk on that briefly right away.

Training funds, B. Housing, B — where they say the chamber is encouraged by projects currently proposed and underway. Balanced budget, A- — the chamber is pleased with a budget that does not raise taxes, does not assume any debt, delivers a surplus and includes significant capital expenditures. Developing the private economy, B — the government explicitly stated the value they see in a vibrant, competitive and local economy. What a surprise, Mr. Speaker — they too think that striving to become a net contributor is a good idea. I am not surprised by that as well.

Let's talk a little bit about procurement, as I said. When I was talking to the chamber recently, I told them that we're taking steps to make the procurement system more fair for their businesses. We're taking steps so that the local companies have every opportunity to compete openly and fairly. In fact, we did, last year, through the leadership of the minister, create a procurement panel of local and national experts. We'll be looking forward to their recommendations very shortly.

As in business, there's a saying that says that time is money. What I told them — there are some changes that are already in the works that will benefit our local contracting community — for example, tightening up requirements on defining what a Yukon company is. I think that is very important to us. We believe that those standards became too lax on what it means to be local and our government will fix that.

We're going to build more benefits into tenders to being local. We're going to eliminate tender provisions that block locals from bidding and we're going to replace the bid challenge committee with something that actually works.

A lot of people who were in attendance — and I have to admit, it was a packed house; it was the most I have seen for

the chamber speech yet. I used to go to that speech as well; I used to go to those meetings when I was a chamber member and a businessman in this community.

For a lot of them, it's really the purchasing that the government does day in and day out that helps them keep money in their tills and their doors open, so that's why — I also told them about another initiative that I did, and that was sending a message to every single Yukon government employee that essentially says to buy local.

In fact, just for the record, I brought a copy of it, where it says, "I'm writing to you directly today to ensure you hear from your Premier about our role, and your role in keeping our economy strong."

"The Yukon is a wonderful place to call home, and we are all working to make it an even better place to live, work, play and raise a family. A big part of that is supporting local business. That's not just a benefit for business, that's a benefit for all of us. We all want to be assured that when we need to purchase high quality goods or services, they're available quickly, at a competitive price, right here at home, when and where we need it.

"The Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce has launched its 'Look Inside' campaign to encourage Yukoners to buy local. For this campaign to be a success, the Yukon government must be an active participant. As an employee in the public service, you can help us keep our local businesses strong.

"One chair, some school supplies, or one event may not seem like much, but it's our collective buying power in government, and the total of those purchases, that make a difference. All purchasing decisions, big and small, that our government makes day in and day out can help local businesses fill their tills and keep their doors open.

"My message to you is simple. If it can be bought locally at a competitive price and you're the one making the purchase for government, buy local.

"The Yukon government and the private sector are important partners in Yukon's economy. I thank you in advance for helping us support our local businesses.

"Thank you" — from me.

I think that what I have heard in knocking on doors in my riding is a lot of appreciation from government employees and from local businesses for that letter, for the initiatives that we're taking. In fact, I had some of the government employees telling me how that letter was posted in their staff room and highlighted to make sure that everybody was aware of that.

I wanted to touch for a brief moment also on First Nations and recent work on collaboration — in spite of the innuendos from the two opposition parties, which neglect to recognize the tremendous work that happens on a day-to-day basis. So I just started scratching a list. Yukon Forum: intergovernmental forum that we just held last week — it was a very positive meeting. It was a meeting that everybody found to be very productive and we will look forward to the next one.

Mineral development strategy, mine licensing, land titles, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the work that we are doing with the First Nations: I know that this House is aware that, very quickly

after the calls to action were issued, we asked the government departments to do an evaluation of some of the work that's being done. We recognize there's more work to do, but we shared that with First Nations. I asked the First Nations to lead us in this territory through the process of developing a plan to the calls to action. To that, Mr. Speaker, I was proud to join the First Nations in presenting a proposal to the federal government on a path forward.

As I've also mentioned many times, that path forward is not a responsibility solely of the public government or First Nation governments. This is a path, a journey, that all of us will take as individuals, as organizations, as service groups.

The murdered and missing indigenous women and girls — I do want to recognize the incredible work that has been done and the leadership that has been exhibited in this territory on the TRC and on murdered and missing indigenous women and girls: the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, the Deputy Premier, Chief Doris Bill, Doris Anderson, all the leaders of the Yukon aboriginal women's organizations; Chief Carl Sidney, RCMP — everybody who has been involved. We have had two regional roundtables, we've actively participated in two national roundtables, and we've had a family gathering. We all acknowledge the impacts this has had and the link to TRC, but we also have to acknowledge, especially when we go to the national stage, that really there has been some tremendous work accomplished here.

Intergovernmental accords — a number of them, Mr. Speaker — recently the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Carcross/Tagish First Nation — renewals with Vuntut Gwitchin and Kluane First Nation — of course, a Kaska framework for a reconciliation agreement. We continue to work with White River toward a reconciliation agreement. The support for the First Nation Chamber of Commerce — we just increased their funding by \$100,000 a year, from \$60,000 to \$160,000. Our support — no, I'm sorry. This is the First Nations Culture and Tourism Association — for the record, a \$100,000-increase to the First Nations Culture and Tourism Association annually, from \$60,000 to \$160,000, but we do also continue to support the First Nation Chamber of Commerce. I've mentioned the tremendous support, not only in the funding of the museums and cultural centres, but the creation of how many new museums and cultural centres that we have seen.

Vulnerable people — the work that's being done, that has been initiated, by Chief Doris Bill and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the City of Whitehorse. We have come in as a funding partner to do the work and move forward with a plan regarding vulnerable people.

The north Yukon regional economic action development initiative — that is a partnership between Yukon government, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Na Cho Nyäk Dun and the City of Dawson City; Kluane First Nation wind turbines; youth gatherings that we've seen in the last couple years — one at Brook's Brook, the last one at Jackson Lake facilities, a tremendous gathering for youth, a tremendous opportunity to

share and gather strength by being together and sharing stories among each other.

We're very proud to be partnering with that. There are other things, like the tiny buildings, big future projects that we've done with Kwanlin Dün and the Carcross/Tagish development corporations.

I just would mention that the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation is building a six-unit apartment with the affordable housing money. These are just some of the things we continue to do with First Nations.

How much time do I have, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Okay, let's talk about carbon tax. Ultimately the end user, the consumer, pays. Any time there's an increase in price, it just gets transferred to the end user. That's why the consumer will see everything cost more money in this territory. We have 95-percent renewables in our energy. I've said that Alberta's goal by 2030 is to get to 30 percent. Our climate plan is working by creating more efficient energy systems, by reducing emissions from government and providing energy incentives for Yukoners.

Our plan is to partner with the government where we could retrofit buildings — commercial buildings, residential buildings — that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the need for how much fuel we need to keep these buildings warm. The beauty of our plan is that it doesn't make everything cost more money and we create a tremendous number of jobs.

When we move forward with our new hydro, we can replace people who are using carbon-based fuels to heat their home with electric heat. One size doesn't fit all and we will continue to say that. We don't live in downtown Toronto. You can't take a subway to get to work.

I am proud of the work that, at the recent First Ministers meeting, we did get a carve-out for the north — ourselves, with the premiers of Nunavut and Northwest Territories — to recognize the unique circumstances that exist in Arctic and subarctic regions. I quoted the CEO of the Mining Association of Canada today, who validated and agreed with our position that, in the north, a carbon tax does not make any sense.

Let's talk about long-term care. I know now that the two opposition parties went scurrying out of the House today to say no, they wouldn't kill this project, but we both know that they've said it in the past. We've even seen some stuff on Facebook from candidates who have spoken about this as well. Regardless, the creation of multiple, small long-term care facilities in the communities is nothing more than making promises to try to get elected.

As I've said, there are only two options that can occur from this strategy. One is to bankrupt this territory; the other is to just break a promise. I've heard that those parties have maybe done that in the past.

Many times, the Liberal leader has chastised the public service — the increase in the public service. We've very proud — as we've seen our population in the last decade grow by 20 percent — that we continue to invest in more education assistants and in more nurses in this territory. I have to say

that the public servants are very eager to hear which positions will be eliminated in the Liberal renewal 2.0. They want to know where they will fit in that.

In closing, I just want to say that have opened the *Income Tax Act* approximately 15 times. Each time has been to lower taxes for individuals or for small businesses. We are very proud of that, but let's just compare our economic record to their plan. We have reduced taxes for small businesses and we have reduced taxes for families. I said at the chamber that the average family of four will now pay up to \$777 less in taxes than they would have just five years ago.

On the other hand, we know that the Liberals' and the NDP's economic plan will be simply to force a new tax, a carbon tax, on Yukon families. A carbon tax will increase the cost of gas, groceries, milk, diapers, home heating fuel and everything else. Not only that, it will drive away business from this territory. That is our record and that is their high-tax plan. We will continue to keep taxes low while investing in our economy.

Just an interesting comment or late development — I see the newest Liberal provincial government just tabled their budget — a \$1-billion deficit, increase in taxes and job cuts. That is what we just heard, and we just hear that the new Alberta budget says that they are tapping out their credit and they will have to, by next year, be paying significantly higher costs to borrow money. Of course we know that the Liberal Government of Ontario, with their latest budget, has a \$315-billion debt. Servicing that debt in this fiscal year with low interest rates will cost their taxpayers \$11.4 billion. They will only spend more money on health and education. It will be the number three expensed item in their budget. We are very proud of this budget. I am very proud of the individuals who we have in our Yukon Party caucus. We are looking forward to the next five budgets that we will table in this Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Disagree.

Ms. Stick: Disagree.

Ms. Moorcroft: Disagree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Mr. Tredger: Disagree.

Mr. Silver: Disagree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 11 yeas, six nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 23 agreed to

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 5:06 p.m.

Bill No. 22: *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 22, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Pasloski.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I move that Bill No. 22, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 22, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I am pleased to introduce Bill No. 22, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17*. This act requests spending authority that, in total, is not to exceed \$338,736,000. The purpose of this spending authority is to defray the various charges and expenses of the public services of Yukon for the two-month period from April 1, 2016 through May 31, 2016. Of this total amount, \$248,533,000 is provided for operation and maintenance and \$90,203,000 is provided for capital.

The full details of these expenditures are included in the main estimates and will be fully discussed and debated during general and departmental debate on the 2016-17 main estimates.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I move that Bill No. 22, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now read a second time.

Ms. Hanson: I have very little to say about Bill No. 22, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17*. I think it's important to note that the need to introduce an interim supply bill, which is a special warrant to provide legislative authority for the expenditure of Yukon taxpayers' resources, is a need that could have been entirely avoided if the government had been acting with due diligence and called the Legislative Assembly back to perform its duties in advance of the commencement of the fiscal year, rather than trotting about doing photo ops and not dealing with these matters where they are supposed to be dealt with, which is in the Legislative Assembly.

This is not the first time with this government, and luckily it will be the last.

Speaker: Does any other member wish to be heard?

Are you prepared for the question?

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 22 agreed to

Mr. Elias: I move that the House do now adjourn.

The following sessional paper was tabled April 14, 2016:

33-1-198

Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees Twenty-first Report (April 14, 2016) (Hassard)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 255

1st Session

33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, April 18, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER — Hon. David Laxton, MLA, Porter Creek Centre

DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Darrell Pasloski	Mountainview	Premier Minister responsible for Finance; Executive Council Office
Hon. Elaine Taylor	Whitehorse West	Deputy Premier Minister responsible for Tourism and Culture; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Justice; Yukon Development Corporation/ Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Doug Graham	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Education
Hon. Scott Kent	Riverdale North	Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources; Highways and Public Works
Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Community Services; Public Service Commission
Hon. Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Minister responsible for Environment
Hon. Mike Nixon	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin	Minister responsible for Economic Development; Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Party

Darius Elias	Government House Leader Vuntut Gwitchin
Hon. David Laxton	Porter Creek Centre
Patti McLeod	Watson Lake

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

New Democratic Party

Elizabeth Hanson	Leader of the Official Opposition Whitehorse Centre
Jan Stick	Official Opposition House Leader Riverdale South
Kevin Barr	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes
Lois Moorcroft	Copperbelt South
Jim Tredger	Mayo-Tatchun
Kate White	Takhini-Kopper King

Liberal Party

Sandy Silver	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Rudy Couture
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Doris McLean
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, April 18, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I rise today on behalf of all members to draw attention to National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week in Canada, which is April 18 to 25.

The fact is that Canada's rate of organ donation is lower than many other countries, including the US. Every year, too many people die while waiting for an organ donation. More than 1,600 Canadians are added to organ wait-lists yearly. According to Health Canada, 4,500 people are waiting for organ transplants today and, on average, 256 Canadians will die every year waiting for a transplant.

Ninety percent of Canadians support organ and tissue donation, but less than 25 percent have made plans to donate. While the vast majority of Canadians support organ donation, most of us do not formalize that support and, yet, it is so easy to do.

In Yukon, as of April 12, there were 3,827 registered donors out of 39,210 registered with Yukon health care. That is fewer than 10 percent of our population. I would encourage Yukoners who are interested to fill out an organ donor registration form. The form can be found in most doctors' offices and online at Health and Social Services' website. Your name will be placed in the Yukon organ donor registry and you will get a heart on your driver's licence to show the world that you are a donor. Most importantly, talk to your family about your wishes. They need to know how you feel because doctors will support the wishes of the family at time of death.

Let's face it, Mr. Speaker, after we die we no longer need our tissues and our organs. Why not let them save someone's life? One donor can benefit more than 75 people and save up to eight lives. Not only would this give our families comfort, it is a great legacy to leave behind.

In recognition of Law Day

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize Law Day, a national event celebrating the signing of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* on April 17, 1982.

Built on the foundation of the Canadian Bill of Rights brought forward in 1960 by Prime Minister Diefenbaker, who

sought a unified nation where citizens of many origins and religions would be regarded and treated equally, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* constitutionally entrenched many of the bill's underlying principles and fundamental freedoms. This is exemplified under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* as the freedoms of religion, expression, association and peaceful assembly, as well as the rights to liberty and equality under the law. These are freedoms that Canadians revere and that many other nations are still trying to achieve.

The Canadian Bar Association introduced Law Day in 1983 as a means to commemorate the signing of the Charter and to educate the public about the law, the legal profession and the legal institutions that form the cornerstone of Canadian democracy and our rights under it. The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, as I mentioned, was built on the foundation of the Canadian Bill of Rights brought forward in 1960. At the time, Prime Minister Diefenbaker stated the Bill of Rights was needed to take a forthright stance against discrimination based on colour, creed or racial origin.

The Canadian Bill of Rights protects numerous rights, including the right to life, liberty and security of person, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, equality rights, rights to fundamental justice and rights to counsel and those rights are all reflected in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which we are celebrating here today.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not note what, in my view, is a flaw in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which is the failure to include an important part of the Diefenbaker Bill of Rights — that being the right to own property, which, at the time of the establishment of the Canadian Constitution in 1982, also supported the inclusion of property rights in that document and was supported by a motion in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to note and acknowledge that the Bill of Rights and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* are not the origins or the foundations or the principles of legal rights within Canada's democracy. They themselves owe their existence and roots to other important and revolutionary documents, notably the Magna Carta, which celebrated its 800th birthday last year. The Magna Carta was signed in 1215 and it, and its companion document, the Charter of the Forest, set the groundwork for many of the concepts that continue to define democratic life today not only in Canada, but in many other countries. As symbols of justice, they also act as powerful reminders that those who govern do so only by the consent of the people. The Magna Carta is widely viewed as one of the most important legal documents in the history of democracy and there are many enduring principles of liberty within it that still resonate and inspire people today.

Some examples of the principles that never lose their relevance since they were included in the Magna Carta 800 years ago include: that nobody is above the law of the land; the rights of habeas corpus, being the freedom from unlawful detention without cause or evidence; and the right of trial by jury.

Early women's rights were acknowledged within the Magna Carta. Although they have been wisely expanded significantly since that time, the Magna Carta did provide some early protections for women's rights by, for the first time, protecting the fact that a woman could not be forced to marry and give up her property. The companion document to the Magna Carta, the Charter of the Forest, was originally issued in 1217 and held up the values of universal human rights, which set out protections of the common man and protection of the commons, which set clear limits to privatization and the importance of stewardship for shared resources.

This document holds a place in our hearts as the first in a series of instruments that are recognized as having special constitutional status and formed the early origins of the protections we enjoy here today. I should note that even democracies such as the United States use the Magna Carta as an important part and building block for the American Constitution. Last year, in celebration of the 800th anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta, it came to Canada and was available for viewing at several locations, including Ottawa-Gatineau, Winnipeg, Toronto and Edmonton, and many Canadians, including the Member for Watson Lake, took the opportunity to view the Magna Carta. I'm envious of the fact that she had that opportunity as I would have liked to have seen it myself.

Today as we celebrate Law Day on the signing of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, I believe it's also important to celebrate the origins of these rights and to continue to educate the public about the legal system, the legal professions and the legal institutions that form the cornerstones of Canada's democracy.

Law Day empowers the public at large through a variety of celebrations and activities to bring awareness to the importance of our evolving law, the history of our law and the administration of justice.

This year on April 19, Yukon Courts, Yukon Public Law Library, Yukon Family Law Information Centre, Yukon Public Libraries, Justice Canada and local lawyers are hosting a Law at the Library public information session called "Married vs. Common Law: Know Your Rights", which is aimed at providing information to Yukoners about the differences under our current legal instruments between married and common-law relationships and how matters like separation and division of assets and estates are viewed before the law. The free event is being held from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Whitehorse Public Library in the downstairs meeting room.

Also in celebration this year, on April 29 the Yukon chapter of the Canadian Bar Association will host the annual Law Day Charity Fun Run and Walk in Whitehorse. This event brings the community together to celebrate Law Day in support of worthy organization. Proceeds from this year's event will benefit the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre.

Since the 1970s, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre has offered a safe and respectful space where women can connect with one another, access support and services, and

work together to make positive change for women in the community. The minister responsible for the Women's Directorate and I, along with the Member for Copperbelt South, all attended the 40th anniversary of the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre just a few weeks ago.

Together, the team, staff and dedicated volunteers of Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre continue to work on a wide variety of issues facing women, including gender-based violence, systemic racism and discrimination, mental health, housing, poverty and food security.

Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre provides a variety of programs and services that help women facing precarious situations while supporting and empowering women to make positive decisions for themselves. It fills an important need in the Yukon. Each year there are an estimated 5,000 visits by women, girls and children, 15,000 community kitchen meals served, and over 130 families from the community who use the rural pregnant women's suite.

Yukon government is pleased to provide support to the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, including through the additional funding we recently announced to support their successful A Safe Place program. A Safe Place is providing women and their children year-round, drop-in, after-hours access to peer and professional supports, referrals to other community services and access to basic amenities. It provides options to vulnerable women at times when other options are otherwise limited.

In closing I would like to recognize Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre for their positive impact on our community and thank the organizers of the Law run for contributing to it this year, as well as encouraging Yukoners to run or walk in support of this organization in honour of Law Day.

I should note that the time of the run — it starts at noon of the visitor information centre, follows the Millennium Trail along the Yukon River. Registration is available at Sport Yukon until April 27 and, on race day, at the visitor information centre.

A sincere thanks to the Yukon chapter of the Canadian Bar Association for planning this annual event, and thank you to everyone who has played a role in developing the constitutional protections that we enjoy here in the Yukon and across Canada to this very day.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the NDP Official Opposition and the Third Party to acknowledge Law Day as a national event celebrating the signing of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The Charter was signed into law by Queen Elizabeth II of Canada on April 17, 1982, along with the rest of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. The Charter was preceded by the Canadian Bill of Rights which was enacted in 1960. However, the Bill of Rights is only a federal statute rather than a constitutional document. The Canadian Bar Association first held Law Day in Canada in 1983. Law Day is aimed at educating and informing the public about the justice system and the importance of the law. Law Day enhances the public's understanding of the law, the role of lawyers and judges and empowers the public at large.

When the Charter became law in 1982, the transformation in Canada's legal, political and democratic landscape was immediate and profound. If citizens could convince a court that the government had violated their rights, the court could take immediate and direct action to stop this abuse. On its face, the Charter represented an unprecedented shift in the power balance between the government and the people.

For women and other disadvantaged groups, however, the impact was less immediate. Section 15, the equality rights provision, did not become law until 1985. The minister has spoken about the hard work of the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, which is one of many advocacy groups seeking equality and continues to work today for women to achieve fully equality.

The Charter does have an effect in our daily lives. The new federal legislation on doctor-assisted death recently introduced in Parliament was a result of a Charter challenge. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the Canadian Journalists for Free Expression are asking that core provisions of the *Canadian Anti-terrorism Act* — better known as C-51 — be declared null and void. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the Canadian Journalists for Free Expression argue that the previous federal government's anti-terrorism law violates the independence and the impartiality of the courts and is thus a violation of the Charter.

I ask all members to remain vigilant to ensure that the rights we enjoy under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* are upheld. I was planning to attend the "Married vs. Common Law" event at the Law Library tomorrow. That same night, Equal Voice Yukon is holding another Charter-related event. They are holding an event to encourage women to engage in politics, so there will be many opportunities for us to consider how we remember the Charter and work to achieve its goals.

I would also like to wish all success to the Law Day organizing committee and the participants and the Law Day Charity Fun Run and Walk planned for later in the week.

In recognition of World Heritage Day

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to World Heritage Day. April 18 is a day for all jurisdictions across the globe, both large and small, to commemorate the importance of cultural heritage and its influence in our everyday life.

In 1982, it was suggested that a day be established to celebrate the diversity of heritage throughout the world. This project was in fact approved by the International Council on Monuments and Sites at their symposium in Tunisia. In 1983, the UNESCO General Conference passed a resolution declaring April 18 International Monuments and Sites Day, which we now know as World Heritage Day.

Mr. Speaker, the International Council on Monuments and Sites Canada is the Canadian National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites, and as such it is the focus of international exchange in Canada, sharing preservation information and expertise worldwide.

To coincide with the Olympic Games in Brazil later this year, the International Council on Monuments and Sites has made the theme of this year's celebrations "The Heritage of Sport". The recognition of our sports heritage and heroes very much helps to raise awareness of their achievements and to connect with us their cultural significance.

Sports have developed from the origin of many years onwards and left a diversity of buildings and facilities related to their practice. Many of these around the world hold great value in terms of their historical development of architecture, art and techniques. From Greek and Roman stadia to modern, high-tech installations, many of these buildings have become part of our global cultural heritage.

Here in Yukon, Mr. Speaker, you very well know that we have a very long history of sport and one of our most well-known historical sporting events did occur in January 1905 when the Dawson City Nuggets, the local hockey team, made it all the way to the Stanley Cup. After a journey to Ottawa by foot, dogsled, trains and steamship, they were famously and thoroughly beaten, I might add, by fellow finalists and reigning champions, the Ottawa Hockey Club.

Also in Dawson, the town's curling club is one of the earliest clubs in western Canada. At the turn of the century, the community also boasted a downhill ski club. From the same period, archival photographs show Yukoners enjoying games of tennis under the midnight sun. In later years, others have helped guide and foster Yukon's young athletes. Father Mouchet was one of those people. He started a program called the territorial experimental ski training, or TEST, to develop character in children through skiing. The program went on to send the first aboriginal Canadian skiers to the Olympics. Martha Benjamin, a Gwitchin resident of Old Crow, was one of those skiers and in the late 1950s and early 1960s, she went on to ski at the national level and competed in Canada, the United States and Europe. In 1963, when she was 25 — and the mother of five children, I might add — Martha was named the senior Canadian women's cross-country ski champion in Midland, Ontario. She won the event a minute-and-a-half faster than the next woman — fast enough to have also won the men's event. Martha and fellow skiers brought high credit and distinction to their community and to Yukon as a whole. Martha Benjamin was inducted to the Sport Yukon Hall of Fame in 1989 for her accomplishments as a cross-country skiing athlete.

Today, cross-country skiing continues to thrive in Old Crow, thanks to the legacy of Father Mouchet and the men and women who make up the community's ski history. We can all be very proud of this territory's past and current contributions to the sport — this and many others. To this day, our skiers remain some of the best in the world.

Mr. Speaker, generally when we think about heritage, it's not sport that necessarily first comes to mind. For many of us, our heritage is commemorated at our historic sites, from museums, First Nation cultural centres and our own family histories, oral traditions, visual and performing arts and the literary arts. Each Yukon community has its own distinct history and our historic places tell the stories of our territory.

Over the past decade, our government has recognized nine Yukon historic sites that are considered to have heritage significance at a territorial level. From built heritage, such as the Sign Post Forest in Watson Lake, to historically significant sites, such as the whalers' community within the Herschel Island Territorial Park, Fort Selkirk and the Dawson historical complex, Yukon is very much home to a diverse range of heritage sites that Yukoners can experience and enjoy each and every day.

Mr. Speaker, historic sites can be designated at the municipal, the territorial, federal and world levels. In Yukon, a world heritage nomination is also currently underway for the recognition of the Tr'ondëk Klondike as a world heritage site. The project is being led by a community-based advisory committee chaired by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and includes a diverse group of representatives from the area. Yukon government is very pleased to support the continued work of the committee and the important discussions that are very much thriving and underway throughout the community.

Globally, there are over 1,000 UNESCO world heritage sites, including 17 in Canada. One of these is the combined park sites of Kluane, Wrangell-St. Elias, Glacier Bay and Tatshenshini-Alsek. Our own majestic Kluane National Park, as we very much know, is home to some of the tallest peaks in North America and is managed in cooperation with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations.

I would like to take a moment to thank the many volunteers who make a tremendous contribution to Yukon's cultural heritage sectors by committing their expertise, knowledge and their passion in support of these very important areas. World Heritage Day is an opportunity to bring heritage to the forefront and to recognize the importance of our collective cultural heritage. We thank all those who have and continue to work hard on Yukon's behalf to keep the collective vision alive, so that cultural awareness and heritage appreciation continues today and well into the future.

Mr. Barr: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP Official Opposition to pay tribute to World Heritage Day, celebrated each year on April 18. Today we celebrate the world's cultural heritage and acknowledge the vulnerability of monuments and heritage sites, as well as the efforts required to protect and conserve them. World Heritage Day originated with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization — UNESCO — with a resolution at its 22nd session in November 1983, recommending that member states examine the possibility of declaring April 18 each year International Day for Monuments and Sites.

Canada has currently 17 world heritage sites. These include — but not all: L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site, Viking settlements in western Newfoundland; Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump in Alberta — one of the oldest and best preserved communal hunting grounds in Canada; SGang Gwaay — hopefully I've pronounced that; I mean no disrespect — in British Columbia, which includes the remains of Haida civilization, illustrating past culture and way of life; and Rideau Canal in Ontario, the best preserved North

American slack-water canal. Mr. Speaker, these sites tell amazing human stories of the relationship to the land and environment, of great feats of determination and engineering and of the human propensity for good and for evil.

Dawson City and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation have been working hard to get Tr'ondëk Klondike a world heritage designation. The designation awarded by UNESCO would mean Tr'ondëk Klondike sites would be eligible for millions of dollars in annual grant money for preservation. Tr'ondëk Klondike is one of the legendary places on earth. For thousands of years, this remote land has been home to the hunter-gatherer people of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. At the end of the 19th century, it was the site of the Klondike Gold Rush, an international event that changed the land and peoples of the north forever. This is an extraordinary story of survival and adaptation in a challenging environment, of dramatic change and of accommodations between cultures that continue to this day. This region, including the Tr'ochëk fishing camp, the Chilkoot Trail, the Klondike goldfields, and the historic district of Dawson illustrates life before, during and after the Klondike Gold Rush of 1896 to 1898.

World heritage means more than preserving historic sites. The world's languages are our heritage and many indigenous languages are at risk of being lost forever and with that, the loss of a people's voice and way of being. Tr'ondëk Klondike is a significant site in Yukon's history, Canada's history and world history, and is the traditional territory of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. For this reason we must preserve it.

Mr. Silver: I also rise today on behalf of the Liberal caucus to pay tribute to the International Day for Monuments and Sites, also known as World Heritage Day. This year, April 18 is dedicated the heritage of sports. Sports and physical expression are at the root of many cultures, demonstrating values, emotion and intent. The preservation of heritage provides an eye into the development of cultures, including architecture and art.

Sport and activity can be quite distinct around cultures. Each has its own character, from team or individual sport to dance and game. They create a sense of identity, promoting community involvement and physical and mental well-being. Here at home, we are lucky to be surrounded by cultural expression through art, dance and sport. The Arctic Winter Games, which recently took place in Greenland, brings many northern cultures together and incorporates aboriginal sport through the Dene games. In Yukon, there are a variety of First Nation dance and music groups — the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in singers in Dawson, the Kaska drummers from Ross River and the Dakhká Khwáan Dancers, just to name a few.

Without preservation of culture, identities are lost. As the representative for Klondike, I would like to thank the Dawson City Museum, the Dänojà Zho Cultural Centre and the Parks Canada workers for their outstanding efforts to preserve culture and heritage in Dawson City and in the surrounding areas.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I rise today to invite all members of the Legislative Assembly join me in welcoming a couple of people. One is Michael Lauer, a long-time friend of mine, and with him, Kara Johnson, who is visiting here from Ontario. I invite everybody to join me in welcoming them today.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board to conduct the comprehensive review of the *Workers' Compensation Act* contemplated in section 129 of the act, including, but not limited to:

(1) reviewing WCB's approach to post-traumatic stress disorder;

(2) modernizing the intent of the relationship between WCB claimants and the WCB;

(3) reviewing legislation from jurisdictions across Canada to identify best practices and incorporate them into Yukon's act; and

(4) reviewing the effect of retirement on entitlement.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to fulfill commitments made on April 12, 2012 by the former minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation to amend the *Liquor Act* by removing "Indian Band", "band community" and similarly outdated terms of the *Liquor Act*.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to amend the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* to allow victims of domestic violence to:

(1) terminate a lease early and without penalty; and

(2) remove an abuser's name from a lease.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support the continuing development of Yukon's private sector economy.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House do order the return of a copy of the MOU signed April 8, 2016 by the Government of Yukon regarding Bill S-6.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?
This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Budget spending

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, this weekend, the C.D. Howe Institute released a study that shows that both the Yukon Liberal and Yukon Party governments overspent the territory's budget by an astounding \$675 million between 2000 and 2014. In doing so, Yukon has received a 53-percent ranking on the Institute's Pinocchio Index, the second-worst in Canada after Nunavut. Yukoners are not impressed by the rate at which economic forecasts continue to show the Yukon Party's fiscal ineptitude.

Will the Premier finally admit that, with three years of recession and yet another dressing-down by a national organization, he has failed to responsibly manage Yukoners' money?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, of course the greatest indicator of financial management is the Public Accounts, fully audited by the Auditor General of Canada, which shows that this government continues, in good times and in bad, to not budget deficits. We have also not raised taxes. In fact, this government has done nothing but lower taxes for all Yukon taxpayers and Yukon small businesses and has no net debt. Money in the bank and no tax increases are the best indicators of financial management in this territory.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, this report only looks at the past, but there is no indication that this will be any different in the future under the Yukon Party. This is a government that consistently fails to do its due diligence when it comes to budgeting for everything from major capital projects to the everyday O&M costs of government. As we heard just last week, this government is going ahead with phase 1 of a 300-bed facility without having secured a source of funding. It is this kind of planning that leads to out-of-control spending. The truth is that the Yukon is not in the enviable position that the Premier keeps talking about.

Can the Premier give Yukoners an assurance that his government's overspending will end, or is it the Yukon Party business as usual?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Once again, the opposition is absolutely wrong. We have budgeted over \$66 million in this year's budget toward the first year's construction of the Whistle Bend long-term care facility. This is a budget that has come in with a surplus, as we have every year. I only have to look at a couple of recent budgets — the NDP budget in Alberta, a \$10.5-billion deficit. We know that their revenues are down, but what has the NDP government done? It has continued to increase spending. Of course, we can look at the newest Liberal government in Newfoundland: a \$2-billion deficit, increases in taxes across the board — personal taxes corporate taxes, gas taxes, and even an increase in HST, which they promised not to do — Liberal government breaking promises.

Ms. Hanson: I would remind you, Mr. Speaker, that it is under this Minister of Finance that he has written the surplus down from \$80 million to \$1.25 million.

We on this side of the House have been talking about the path to prosperity for years. It runs right through and includes a diversified economy that doesn't depend solely on the boom and bust of a resource extraction industry.

But the Premier seems to think that people like the C.D. Howe Institute, the Auditor General and all Yukoners who are having a hard time finding work are wrong. Mr. Speaker, the Premier is wrong and we're all paying the price.

When will the Premier listen to the economists, to the Yukon New Democratic Party and to Yukon citizens and admit that it's time for a new direction of our economy?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: The NDP and Liberal government records are very clear with their last governments — mass exodus of the population, especially in the prime employment years, double digits on employment, and borrowing money to pay wages. That is the reality of past NDP and Liberal governments.

This Yukon Party government during this mandate has done nothing but deliver surpluses. We continue to have money in the bank — now the only jurisdiction in this country. We continue to invest a significant portion of our budget into infrastructure, creating jobs for Yukoners and building infrastructure for the future.

I am extremely optimistic for the future of this territory under a renewed Yukon Party government.

Question re: Dawson City waste-water facility

Mr. Barr: Two months ago the Government of Yukon announced that it would be taking responsibility for the Dawson City waste-water treatment plant. The plant was built in response to a court order that stated the city needed to deal with the waste it was dumping into the Yukon River by 2011. The facility was opened in 2012.

The original plan was that Dawson would take over responsibility of the facility after it met certain water quality tests. However, the facility consistently failed to pass these tests.

Is the facility meeting all of its water quality testing requirements, and what was the final capital cost of the facility?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I don't have the final capital costs with me at hand today, but that's certainly something that we've provided in the past and I have no problem getting back to the member opposite with the ultimate cost.

Obviously, as we've discussed at length previously, there has been a lot of discussion about this particular project. It was announced a few months ago, as the member opposite indicated, that we had agreed to assume responsibility for operation and maintenance of the waste-water treatment plant, including the facility's water licence. We are currently working on a service agreement with the City of Dawson regarding the long-term operation and maintenance of that plant.

We have retained the company Corix, which specializes in building and operating waste-water treatment plants, to operate and maintain the plant for the remainder of the warranty period. Community Services is continuing to address remaining deficiencies, warranty issues and training needs. Community Services is working with the operations contractor and consultants to develop a plan to improve treatment performance in the summer of 2016 — this coming summer.

I have acknowledged previously that the plant is not working as we had hoped, and it's our intent and desire to see the plant's operations improved, bringing down, hopefully, the costs of operating the plant for the Yukon government.

Mr. Barr: Mr. Speaker, this year, the operation and maintenance costs for the Dawson City waste-water treatment plant will be \$2.4 million. In March 2014, when the Yukon government still held out hope that the City of Dawson would take responsibility for the facility, a Yukon government official estimated the yearly costs at \$340,000. Just two years later, this government is estimating an operation and maintenance budget over seven times higher. It is no surprise that the City of Dawson refused to take responsibility for the facility.

Mr. Speaker, how did the operation and maintenance costs of this facility skyrocket to \$2.4 million, and what will be the yearly operational costs going forward?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, what I and a number of others have acknowledged numerous times is that the cost of operating the plant is significantly higher than we had hoped. That's obviously the case.

Mr. Speaker, we hope that we can get the plant running better than it is now, obviously. Our intent is to bring that operating cost down from where it is today. That will obviously come down to a certain degree once the warranty period runs out. At the end of the warranty period, if the plant continues to not function as it was originally intended to, then we would have to look at our alternatives for dispute resolution with the contractor.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the costs of the plant, I don't know what the end operating costs will be, but obviously we want to see that number come down. We want to see the plant running better, meeting the requirements of the water licence and providing the service that was originally intended when the plant was constructed.

Mr. Barr: Mr. Speaker, Yukoners obviously want to see these costs come down also. The former Minister of Highways and Public Works stated that the Yukon government had — and I quote: "... invested significant additional capital in the development of the facility in order to minimize the longer O&M costs."

The current \$2.4 million O&M costs would suggest that this investment didn't have the intended impact. The design of this facility was unproven in the north and there was significant opposition from experts and Dawson residents, but the Yukon government went ahead with it anyway. Now the Yukon government is responsible for an unreliable and

expensive building to add to the growing list of mismanaged Yukon government capital projects.

Mr. Speaker, what is this government doing to rein in out-of-control O&M costs at the Dawson waste-water treatment plant?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, we're working with the contractor on-site to try to bring operation and maintenance costs down for the plant. As I've indicated previously, the costs are exceedingly high; we acknowledge that. The City of Dawson has acknowledged that and that's why they were very pleased to see us agree to take on the plant. We felt that our fiscal resources were much stronger and we are in a better position to work with the contractor to bring those costs down. But, as I've said before, if it's determined at the end of the warranty period that the plant is not functioning as it should be, then we'll have to consider our other options with regard to dispute resolution.

With regard to the details of what the people are doing on-site to bring the operating costs down, I can't give a technical response, Mr. Speaker, but I am assured by engineers in our department that they're doing their best to try to bring those operating costs down by improving the operations of the plant.

Question re: F.H. Collins Secondary School reconstruction

Mr. Silver: I have a question for the Premier. One of the defining features of this Yukon Party government has been its inability to bring in projects on time and on budget. The new LNG facility was \$6 million overbudget. The two rural hospitals were both millions of dollars more than originally advertised as well.

Buried in the back of the Premier's budget documents was a financial update on the cost of the F.H. Collins school project. Can the Premier confirm that the cost of this construction job has now reached \$55.3 million?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, what I can confirm for the member opposite is that the actual construction cost of the new F.H. Collins school came in, in fact, under the \$34-million anticipated budget. That is the construction cost alone, Mr. Speaker. There have been several other projects associated with the F.H. Collins school but those are budgeted separately from the actual construction of the building itself.

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, the high number should come as no surprise to anybody who has watched the Yukon Party's involvement in this project since 2010, involving a scrapped design of \$6 million.

The Premier's budget speech referenced the F.H. Collins project but neglected to mention that, between last year's and this year's budget, an additional \$4.3 million has been added. Therefore, the grand total does sit at \$55.3 million. On top of that, the contract to build the school was awarded to a company from Alberta. The government has been doing damage control on procurement with local contractors since then. After insisting that the project was on budget, Yukoners now know that this is not the case. Mr. Speaker, why hasn't

the Premier been up front with Yukoners about the ever-rising costs of this project?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, what the member opposite fails to reference with respect to the F.H. Collins contract is that the project averaged 75-percent local labour participation over the course of construction. I've mentioned a number of times on the floor of this Legislature all of the local subtrades that were active on that project as well. The project was delivered on time. We have a great school that opened up in January of this year and it will service the needs, not only of the students who are there now, but students going forward.

Again, as I mentioned — I believe in the fall when I was on my feet on the floor of this Legislature — it's interesting to note that the Member for Klondike put out two contradictory press releases with respect to the F.H. Collins project. The first one was when that initial bid came in at \$48 million. He was outraged at that price and asked us to consider redesigning it, moving it, and perhaps retendering it. Of course, we did retender it and it came in approximately \$14-million to \$16-million less than that \$48 million. Now he is mad because we redesigned it, retendered it, and moved the school.

It's very difficult to nail the member opposite down. It's often like trying to nail Jell-O to the wall.

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, two ministers, and I didn't get an answer yet to my questions — talk about nailing people down.

We know that Yukon contractors are not happy with this government. We hear it every time that we meet with local business owners, including the two I met with just last week. They described as "window dressing" the government's belated attempt to ensure that local companies get a fair chance to win government contracts.

F.H. Collins is millions of dollars overbudget and the tech wing addition is well behind schedule. The Yukon Party repeatedly assured Yukoners that this project was going to be on budget and then quietly added \$4.3 million to the price tag and didn't even mention it in the budget speech. This is not an open and accountable use of taxpayers' dollars.

Is this the final school project's costs, or can Yukoners expect more bills to be slipped under the door by this government?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the final costs of the F.H. Collins project, there is still one important aspect that needs to be done. That's the demolition and remediation of the old school. There are some hazardous materials in there. Once that work is complete, then we will have a better idea of what the final cost of the project will be and we will be in a better position to compare it to the design that we had moved away from — again, something that the member opposite in his first iteration, in his first press release, asked us to do.

Let me talk a little bit about local contracting for a second. Obviously there has been quite a lot accomplished on the procurement side of things. The previous Minister of Highways and Public Works set up the Procurement Support Centre. We've hosted two very well-attended and successful

procurement industry conferences. I know the Member for Klondike was at the most recent one that we had here in February. There is a procurement advisory panel that has been set up. The Premier, the Minister of Economic Development and I have hosted two roundtables with local contractors and suppliers to talk about what they would like to see as far as procurement goes.

Just a reminder that 14 of the last 15 major capital projects awarded between 2010-11 and 2014-15 went to Yukon-based companies. Yukon-based companies are doing a good job of competing for these projects and winning those opportunities for their staff.

Question re: Off-road vehicle use

Mr. Tredger: As another spring is upon us, I rise to ask the same question that the NDP has been asking for years now. Where is the government's action to balance responsible off-road vehicle use with protection of sensitive environment?

It has been many years since the government formed an all-party committee to study the way we use ORVs in the Yukon. The committee released a report, and then the Yukon Party government called for a consultation followed by a discussion paper, then made minor legislative changes followed by more discussion. One could be forgiven for wondering what the government has been doing all these years. Yukoners want to know.

Why has the Yukon Party government been spinning its wheels on meaningful and promised ORV regulations for its entire mandate?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Our government, of course, is proud of the changes that we made to the *Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act*.

Energy, Mines and Resources remains committed to implementing recommendation 14 of the Select Committee on the Safe Operation and Use of Off-road Vehicles. That recommendation focuses on protecting the environment from damage caused by off-road vehicle use.

There has been a significant amount of work undertaken by Energy, Mines and Resources officials over the past couple of years since that legislation was introduced. There has been a "what we heard" report produced and the regulation drafting process has been initiated and, of course, we'll be taking into consideration feedback received from the consultation that took place last year.

Again, I would like to thank the First Nations, the stakeholders and the public that have participated, not only in the initial select committee work but also the subsequent work on developing the legislation and the regulations.

Mr. Tredger: Meanwhile each year the spider web of trails expands.

After years of environmental destruction and years of studies, legislation was changed in 2013 to allow the minister to identify and protect sensitive spaces requiring protection from ORV use, but neither he nor his colleagues have actually exercised that responsibility.

Trails Only Yukon Association has been doing good, tireless work to promote responsible ORV use. They have

identified several endangered, sensitive areas. They're playing a leadership role because this government has refused to ask irresponsible ORV drivers to clean up their act.

Mr. Speaker, why has the minister refused to protect any sensitive Yukon wildlands? Does he feel that there aren't any parts of the Yukon that are in need of immediate protection?

Hon. Mr. Kent: We've received a request from the Laberge Renewable Resources Council, as well as TOYA, to investigate some areas that they would like the temporary closure to be enacted upon. Again, department officials are considering those requests right now. Obviously the spring is a little bit earlier this year than what we've experienced in the past, so I've asked the department officials to expedite that work. There are other Yukoners, though, Mr. Speaker, who would be affected by these temporary closures, particularly those who enjoy hunting in the backcountry but perhaps have mobility issues — or some of the elders in the community — so we want to take into account their needs and their wishes as well, especially since many of these areas are key hunting grounds and it's important to hear from those individuals as well.

Again, I have asked the department to expedite the work on whether or not we can proceed with these temporary closures, just given the timing and the earliness of the spring in the Yukon this year.

Mr. Tredger: There remain particularly environmentally sensitive areas that are in need of immediate protection. You know, Mr. Speaker, we have been asking for action on irresponsible ORV use for years. A few bad apples are tarnishing the image of the ORV community. In 2013, I echoed concerns about the increasing footprint of both ATVs and snow machines due to factors like longer seasons, wider use, improved technology and the resulting increased ecological footprint that permanently degrades the environment. With each passing year of Yukon government inaction, we are allowing more damage to be done to Yukon's wildlands. This is not something we will fix overnight, Mr. Speaker.

Why has the government failed, over the entire course of its mandate, to take any meaningful action to prevent misuse of off-road vehicles?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I think that our government, and indeed legislators in here, should be proud of the work that we've undertaken — not only during this mandate, but the previous mandate — and the work of the Select Committee on the Safe Operation and Use of Off-road Vehicles. Again, Energy, Mines and Resources focused on recommendation 14. We made changes to the *Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act*, we've consulted on the regulations and work is underway — the drafting process has been initiated for those regulations after we've heard from stakeholders, First Nations and the public. Of course in that legislation we did put in the ability for temporary closure by the minister. As I've mentioned, we have heard from the Laberge Renewable Resources Council as well as the Trails Only Yukon Association with respect to certain areas where they would like to see that temporary closure initiated. I've asked department officials to expedite

that work so that we can deal with it with the early coming of spring this year and the softening up of the ground to prevent any further damage.

Mr. Speaker, I think all members of this House should be proud of the work that we've accomplished on this file as a group, as well as the select committee that went out during the previous mandate to listen to Yukoners about their concerns about off-road vehicle use here in the territory.

Question re: Shakwak reconstruction project

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, under the Shakwak agreement, the United States agreed to pay part of the cost to maintain the Alaska Highway to a specific standard. In this year's budget, the government plans to spend \$12 million on the Alaska Highway improvement program. Since its signing in 1977, Yukon has benefitted hugely from the Shakwak funding, but the agreement has since expired and the funding has disappeared from the US budget. This is disappointing. The Yukon Party government has employed a lobbyist to press its case to the US government for continued Shakwak funding without success, as far as we know.

Has the Yukon government developed any new approach to secure funding from the US government for Shakwak?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, as I have said before here in the House, under the Shakwak agreement, funding for capital reconstruction is the responsibility of the United States, while the Yukon government is responsible for managing the reconstruction and maintaining the highway for year-round access. In 2012, the US government removed funding for the Shakwak project under their federal transportation bill, which is known as MAP-21. This means the US funding needed to complete the requirements of the agreement is no longer available, although the agreement does remain in effect.

The member opposite is correct. We have benefitted tremendously from the money that we have received from the United States to improve this highway. A very high percentage of the traffic that travels between Haines, Alaska, and the US border near Beaver Creek is American-based, whether it's residents from southeast Alaska or personnel who are transferred back and forth between Alaska and the Lower 48 or, of course, the many visitors who use the Alaska Highway.

The Yukon government and the Canadian government continue to step up with improvements to the Alaska Highway between Haines Junction, east through the Yukon and then south through British Columbia, with capital and O&M expenditures there. We will continue to work with the Canadian government. I did bring this up with the Minister of Transport, Marc Garneau, in Ottawa recently, and we want to see that funding restored, just as other members of this House do.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, the loss of Shakwak funding is a serious blow to Yukon's highway improvements. Under the agreement, Canada agreed to manage the reconstruction, provide land and granular resources and maintain the highway after reconstruction. However, without

secured funding in place, Shakwak corridor reconstruction and maintenance efforts are in jeopardy. We have not heard about a new approach; only that the minister is working with the federal government.

Again, does this government have a plan to maintain the highway to current standards or can Yukoners expect the highway conditions to deteriorate once the Shakwak funds have depleted?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, in this current budget, we expect to spend close to \$12 million completing Shakwak program highway improvements. This falls well short of what is necessary to finish the work in the Shakwak area.

It is interesting to note that our highway maintenance costs are over six times higher in permafrost areas that we witness on the northern part of the Shakwak than in non-permafrost areas. As mentioned at the transportation ministers meeting that was held in Ottawa in early February, I brought this up with colleagues around the table. This is important to British Columbia and Alberta as well, as this is a major trade route. It is our major trade route through the Yukon to Alaska and connecting to southern jurisdictions.

I did speak to the minister for British Columbia as well as the federal minister of Transport Canada. This is an important project, not only for us in the Yukon, but this is an important part of our national highway system. We feel that the agreement that was in place was a fair one and one that we would like to see continued. Again, Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to work through the federal government with our Alaskan counterparts, with business associations — both here in the Yukon and Alaska — as well as First Nation governments to ensure that we do our best to try to restore the funding to this important piece of infrastructure for Yukoners, for Canadians and for Americans.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, with climate change adversely affecting northern regions, permafrost melt is significant in the planning, construction and maintenance of Yukon highways. Today, a departmental press release mentions the completed research at the Beaver Creek permafrost testing site, but it is short on details on key findings of the research.

Mr. Speaker, here is what the travelling public wants to know: Is this government prepared financially, without US-shared funding, to deal with the issues that melting permafrost has on the highway?

Hon. Mr. Kent: In my previous response, I mentioned that the highway maintenance costs are over six times higher in permafrost areas than in non-permafrost areas. As well, thawing permafrost causes severe distortions of the road surface as well as significant cracking along the shoulders, creating significant safety issues for highway users and increased costs of all transported goods.

Mr. Speaker, of course safety remains a top priority for us in the Department of Highways and Public Works. We want to ensure that our roads are in the best shape possible so that our residents, visitors and commercial traffic that use the roads can do so in a safe manner. That's why we're investing heavily again this year in transportation infrastructure. I

believe close to \$60 million will be invested in our roads and our airports throughout the territory. We'll continue to work on the US government restoring funding to the Shakwak project. Of course, there are other opportunities and funding vehicles available to us as well — other partnerships — but again, when it comes to the Shakwak, we feel that high percentages — between 80 and 90 percent — of the traffic on that portion of the Alaska Highway are United States' residents. So we feel that this is a great partnership that has existed for many years; we want to see it continue and we'll do our best to make sure that that happens.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 22, *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17*. Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

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

Bill No. 22: *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 22, *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17*

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I am pleased to be able to provide Committee of the Whole with some introductory comments on Bill No. 22, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

This appropriation act will allow the public service to continue to make certain expenditures while the main estimates for 2016-17 are being considered by the Legislative Assembly during this Sitting.

The interim funding requested for this period is for the period of two months ending May 31, 2016. The total amount

for which approval is sought is \$338,736,000 and is made up of capital expenditure appropriations totalling \$90,203,000 and operation and maintenance appropriations totalling \$248,533,000.

The amounts required have been derived by canvassing Yukon government departments to determine their expenditure requirements during this time. The amounts are significant, largely owing to the fact that a large portion of commitments and expenditures are made during this period.

I look forward to debating this interim supply appropriation bill in this Legislature and for its quick passage so that the operations of Yukon government can continue.

Ms. Hanson: As I had said when we were speaking last week to this, I have very little to say about Bill No. 22. It is in fact a fait accompli.

The fact that we're having to come forward with this *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17* to really provide the authorization for a special warrant to provide legislative authority for the expenditure of Yukon taxpayers' resources is a further example of the defiance of parliamentary procedure, which would see that, in fact, it's the Legislative Assembly that gives the approval for expenditures, which would be achieved by the governing party actually introducing its budget in advance of the beginning of the fiscal year.

As I said, this could have been avoided entirely if the government had been acting with due diligence and called the Legislative Assembly back to perform its duties in advance of the commencement of the fiscal year.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Madam Chair, of course, the amounts subscribed within the special warrant are included within this interim supply bill.

Mr. Silver: Madam Chair, I just want to reiterate my colleague's comments. This is the second year in a row that this government has made a conscious choice to begin the spring session after the fiscal year has already begun. Of course, the normal course of events would be to start the session in late March to allow time to pass the interim supply bill before the fiscal year actually begins. Again, speaking to the democratic process, we're debating money that has already been spent or is being spent as we speak.

I guess the question would be: Are we sensing a trend here? Is this something that the Yukon Party, if elected in the next election and forms government, would intend to continue — to have these late sessions? We heard in previous years that the reason for the late session was based on March break and wanting to give people an opportunity to go on March break. Then, the year before that, it was earlier, but it seems that we're going later and later. We're wondering if this is a trend. Is this something that the Yukon Party wants to continue or is there a special circumstance for this year, seeing as it's an election year?

We do know that there was an awful lot of movement in the deputy minister positions around the Yukon in the territory. It must be hard to get a budget going when you have severance packages that you have to add to these numbers, and these types of things. Or is this a trend? Is the late session a result of election-year preparedness or is this something that

we would see continue if the Yukon Party were to be re-elected?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: One of the comments that we made earlier was that we were indeed looking for the federal budget to see the contents of that budget — with the ability to have enough time to review it before tabling our own budget. This was an interesting year in terms of the budgeting process with the federal government. We began to be engaged with the federal government very quickly after the October election. In fact, I was in Ottawa in November. I spoke to a number of Cabinet ministers at that time. Many of our Yukon government Cabinet ministers were in Ottawa at the end of January. There have been ongoing discussions, building those new relationships with the new government. It certainly was prudent for us to watch and see what in fact was being committed by the federal government.

What I will commit to the Legislature and to Yukoners is that we'll continue to focus on the priorities that Yukoners have told us are their priorities. We have been to 60 community meetings in all of the communities and we've heard from hundreds of Yukoners.

We'll continue to focus on the economy and doing what we can and focus on jobs. While we're doing that, we will continue to do the great work we are doing in education, in health care and in diversifying the economy, but all while ensuring that we continue to do it in a fiscally, financially responsible manner. We're very proud of having — during this mandate — no deficits at a time where deficits and debt have become the fashion. In fact, I did say during my budget speech that the accumulated debt between provinces and territories at the subnational level is approximately \$600 billion and that we're very proud to be the jurisdiction without that net debt.

Madam Chair, we can put all of our dollars and all of our revenue into program services and investment in capital infrastructure, and Yukoners know that whether it is in good economic times or bad, this will be a government that will continue to focus on their priorities and ensure that we do it in a manner that's responsible, so that our children and grandchildren are not paying for programs or delivery or emergency room visits that occur today.

Mr. Silver: I will get back to the special warrant.

We do have ministers that are responsible for Crown corporations. Crown corporations' debts are being paid off on the interest, not the principal. We will have debt for our future generations. That is a whole other topic, but I would ask the Premier if he would answer the question about whether this will be a trend. Special warrants are only used in exceptional circumstances; for instance, if a new government has just been re-elected and needs for time for budgeting or if there are unanticipated emergencies. Having a government that would routinely reconvene the Legislature so late that a special warrant is being issued, we are wondering if this is the trend of the Yukon Party government moving forward, or was this, like I said, more of a one-off for the final year in a mandate? Let's say that.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: As I said, I will continue to pledge that a Yukon Party government, within a renewed mandate, will continue to focus on the priorities of Yukoners. We're very proud of the fact that since the party came in — earned the right to serve in late 2002 — we've seen an increase of approximately 20 percent in population, primarily levered around the resource sector. As a result of the growth we've seen in that resource sector, we know that those mining jobs result in — well, the number is somewhere probably between five and eight jobs in the economy for every mining job that occurs. We will continue to stand up for the resource industry as a government and, as we do and as we see the growth in our population, it creates those greater opportunities to diversify this economy. This is what we've heard from Yukoners and that will be our priority going forward.

Chair: Does any other member wish to speak in general debate?

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Schedule A

Schedule A agreed to

On Schedule B

Schedule B agreed to

On Schedule C

Schedule C agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Mr. Elias: Madam Chair, I move that Bill No. 22, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be reported without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Elias that Bill No. 22, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be reported without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Mr. Elias: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Elias that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 22, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 22: *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 22, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Pasloski.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 22, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 22, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to seek the authority of this Legislature to approve interim spending for the government in an amount not to exceed \$338,736,000 for the two months ending May 31, 2016. This bill will permit government departments to make expenditures in order to provide public services to Yukoners until the main estimates are approved.

Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 22, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: Does any other member wish to be heard?
Motion for third reading of Bill No. 22 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 22 has passed this House.

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Committee of the Whole will recess for five minutes while we await officials.

Recess

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

Bill No. 23: *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I am pleased to rise in Committee of the Whole today to present the introductory remarks for Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, more commonly referred to as the 2016-17 main estimates.

Allow me to start today with my concluding comments from last year's Committee speech for 2015-16 budget. These words resonate. The words have meaning and the words reflect our fundamental principles that have allowed us to table important balanced budgets on behalf of Yukoners.

Our government's commitment to sound financial management remains strong. As a result, we have positive net financial resources. In other words, we're not relying on future revenues to fund past and current expenditures. We have an accumulated surplus. This highlights our economic resources, both financial and physical, available for the provision of future programs and services, and we have an annual surplus. This means that our revenues exceed our expenditures, allowing us to build the bank and to save. As it has in recent years, our savings account will allow us the flexibility to be responsible on behalf of Yukoners when it is needed the most.

Madam Chair, I'm extremely proud of these efforts of our government to provide for a wide range of programs, services and capital investments on behalf of all Yukoners, while maintaining a very healthy long-term fiscal position.

Our government represents all Yukoners and we have delivered on the mandate bestowed by Yukoners. Each of our budgets has been designed to maximize benefits to Yukoners through strategic spending. This budget continues on that theme. It's our obligation, and also our pleasure, to balance strategic spending with fiscal discipline — a combination that serves Yukoners today while also providing for our citizens tomorrow.

This approach has afforded our government the opportunity, through multiple mandates, to make significant investments for the benefit of all Yukoners. Our government is proud of our record. We have a strong fiscal position and continue to invest wisely and strategically on behalf of Yukoners. This budget continues to build on our past successes, as we anticipate our next mandate.

Looking to our multi-year forecast tabled with this budget, future years remain positive with revenues projected to exceed expenses for each of the next four years. This forward-looking healthy fiscal framework is what Yukoners can take great comfort in. Indeed, Yukon remains financially well-positioned for the future. Our government has, once again, delivered a notable and sound budget.

The 2016-17 budgets build on the work of our previous years and allow our government to provide significant investments now and into the future for Yukoners. Madam Chair, we will speak of the expenditure/revenue details in some depth during general debate; however, to quantify my

introductory remarks, allow me to make the following observations at this time.

This budget provides total expenditures of \$1.391 billion; operation and maintenance expenditures of \$1.085 billion; capital expenditures of \$306.6 million; annual surplus of approximately \$9.5 million; net financial assets of almost \$57 million; accumulated surplus of \$1.36 billion; and this budget continues to provide for sustainable and affordable fiscal management.

This is now the fifth year that the Yukon government has included consolidated financial information with the budget documents. I'm confident that members opposite will appreciate and recall my previous comments indicating that this consolidated disclosure contributes to the transparency and accountability in government reporting. I will not elaborate again here today.

Madam Chair, allow me to focus the members opposite on the unconsolidated entity, the amounts to be appropriated and the resulting financial results that are supported by Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Members will find the non-consolidated summary starting on page S-5 of the 2016-17 estimates document. Focusing on the unconsolidated side, the members opposite will observe that total expenditures or appropriations identified in the 2016-17 main estimates are \$1,391,649,000, of which \$1.085 billion is allocated to operation and maintenance and \$306.6 million represents our government's investment in capital. Once again, Madam Chair, our government has provided a strong budget for all Yukoners. Our fiscal position continues to be sound, with an annual surplus of \$9.483 million and projected net financial assets of \$56.991 million.

Shortly I will speak of some of the expenditure highlights contained in this budget. Suffice it to say our government continues to deliver on our "Moving Forward Together" commitments and to make significant expenditures on behalf of all Yukoners in the delivery of programs, services and capital investments. Madam Chair, we have done this without breaking the bank. With all the decisions to date considered, our 2016-17 budget forecasts an annual surplus of \$9.483 million. This means revenues for the Government of Yukon are projected to exceed expenses for the 2016-17 fiscal year.

Of course, surplus is not the only indicator of our financial well-being that should be considered. As I have stated previously in this Legislature, and I am sure to repeat a few more times, the pre-eminent measure of the government's finances is net financial assets. We have a net financial resource position of \$56.991 million forecast for the year ended March 31, 2017. Yukon government continues to maintain a healthy financial position and avoid net debt.

Madam Chair, most other Canadian jurisdictions are reporting net debt. This fact alone is significant, but let me phrase this in a different way. Net debt provides an indication of future revenue requirements for government. That is, net debt provides a measure of the future revenues required to pay for the past. The significance of this should be a comfort to

Yukoners, as probably now the only jurisdiction in Canada not in a net debt position, it will not be necessary to allocate future revenues to offset or pay for past expenditures. Our government can say we are paying as we go and, yes, we do have positive net financial resources to invest in future programs and services. As I have said, our strong net financial resource position is the most important indicator of our government's fiscal health. This indicator speaks to the future. As I have observed previously, the 2016-17 main estimates forecast our net financial resource position to be a very healthy \$56.991 million.

One final comment on our financial health — our government continues to manage Yukon's finances over a multi-year horizon. Our government saves when it is prudent to do so; our government makes expenditure investments when it is necessary. Madam Chair, we see many needs and we are taking the opportunity to address those needs. We do this on behalf of and for the benefit of Yukoners. As legislators, we need to look beyond the short term and consider the long term. We continue to plan and spend accordingly for our plan. We have done this without mortgaging the future.

As I have stated previously, our financial health is extremely strong. Our history of significant investments continues with our government's 2016-17 budget as our strong financial framework provides us the flexibility to be responsive to emerging priorities and opportunities as they are presented to Yukon.

Before I move on to a few observations about our expenditure investments, allow me to repeat: our fiscal position continues to be sound with an annual surplus of \$9.483 million and projected net financial assets of \$56.991 million.

I noted in my earlier comments that this 2016-17 budgets reflects total expenditures of approximately \$1.391 billion, of which just under \$307 million is directed toward significant capital investments for the benefit of Yukoners. Approximately \$1.085 billion is allocated for operation and maintenance. As I have emphasized previously, our commitment to fiscal responsibility remains strong, while we continue to invest strategically in the Yukon and for the benefits for all Yukoners.

It would be easy to go through a laundry list of what the 2016-17 budget provides in terms of specific expenditure items. Today, I prefer to speak about how our 2016-17 budget supports our multi-year vision — where and how the Yukon Party is making a long-term investment, and therefore a difference in the well-being of Yukoners. Of course, my comments will be primarily focused on a number of strategic initiatives. Individual ministers will, however, be happy to provide full details for their respective portfolios once we get into line-by-line debate.

An important theme of our 2016-17 budget is putting Yukoners to work. It is therefore understandable that my comments will focus on many of the capital elements of our 2016-17 budget. Our government has a string of significant capital budgets — nine successive years where capital

investments have exceeded \$200 million. This year of 2016-17 is no exception. Our 2016-17 capital budget calls for a 10th year of significant investments in Yukoners and Yukon infrastructure with a budget of over \$300 million.

A recurring theme throughout my comments is our government's commitment to invest, not only in Yukoners today, but also to invest in Yukoners for tomorrow through a balanced approach in managing Yukon's finances. Managing with tomorrow in mind is key. According to our Bureau of Statistics, in 2003, Yukon's population was just under 30,000, at 29,976. In 2015, Yukon's population exceeded 37,000, at 37,343. For 2022, Yukon's population is projected to be approximately 42,000. I have spoken at great length over the last few sessions about Yukon's increasing population and the infrastructure required to support it. Individual ministers will be pleased to speak in more detail during line-by-line debate; however, allow me this opportunity to comment on the high-level investments identified in this budget.

As I have noted throughout, our 2016-17 budget includes \$306.6 million for capital expenditures, covering a number of important investments across a number of sectors, including: \$55.8 million in support of the territory's transportation infrastructure; \$28.6 million to support a variety of investments in municipal and community infrastructure; and \$127.3 million for the planning, construction and maintenance of a number of facilities.

The ministers of Energy, Mines and Resources and Highways and Public Works have spoken at some length about our government's commitment to the IT sector with core investments of \$9.5 million, up three million from prior years. In addition, it seems apropos to also mention here that we have additional investments of almost \$4.8 million for the e-health initiative and \$1.85 million related to school-based information technology requirements. These are some impressive levels of investment in targeted sectors. I am confident that these investments will indeed put Yukoners to work.

I spoke earlier about how the 2016-17 budget continues to plan for long-term and strategic investments for the benefit of all Yukoners. Allow me this opportunity to bring just a few to your attention. Yukon continues to work with Canada to finalize the details on the new Building Canada fund arrangements. Through this new infrastructure program, approximately \$342 million will be invested right here in Yukon over the next 10 years. With \$21.9 million allocated, our 2016-17 budget continues the work related to the emergency room and hospital expansion. This is an important multi-year project with an additional \$17.8 million identified for the 2017-18 fiscal year.

Finally, I have just described some basic statistics that our government and the members opposite are fully aware of, of the anticipated growth in Yukon's population. We are all aware that more and more Yukoners are choosing to stay in Yukon throughout their retirement years. I spoke of this in my Budget Address, Madam Chair. It is anticipated that by 2031, Yukon residents over the age of 65 will make up almost 20 percent of the Yukon population. This is a reality we are

facing, and our government continues to plan to provide care for our seniors.

This budget includes \$66.9 million to advance the new care facility in Whitehorse. In consideration of potential growing demands, this facility will be built with the idea of future expansion. These initiatives that I have mentioned here today are just a few of the investments that we are making on behalf of all Yukoners. We are able to make these types of investments based on our successful record of planned and disciplined management of our finances. We continue to manage Yukon's fiscal framework over the long term. Our government continues its work to be ahead of the curve by identifying, planning and implementing long-term and multiple-year expenditure plans now. My colleagues and I look forward to discussing our 2016-17 budget in more detail during general debate.

In closing, Madam Chair, I conclude as I began. Our government's commitment to sound financial management remains strong. As a result we have positive net financial resources. In other words, we are not relying on future revenues to fund past or current expenditures. We have an accumulated surplus. This highlights our economic resources — both financial and physical — available for the provision of future programs and services. We have an annual surplus. This means that our revenues exceed expenses, allowing us to build the bank and save. As it has in recent years, our savings accounts will allow us the flexibility to be responsive on behalf of Yukoners when it is needed the most.

I'm extremely proud of the efforts of our government to provide for a wide range of programs, services and capital investments on behalf of all Yukoners while maintaining a very healthy, long-term fiscal position.

Looking to our multi-year forecast tabled with this budget, future years remain extremely positive, with revenues projected to exceed expenses for each of the next four years. Our forward-looking, healthy fiscal framework is what Yukoners can take great comfort in.

The 2016-17 budget leverages our previous efforts of sound, disciplined and rigorous management to provide for today and to provide for tomorrow. To reiterate, this budget reinforces the principles of fiscal discipline and balanced management that allows us to be representative to the future needs and priorities of Yukoners. Indeed, Madam Chair, the Yukon remains financially well-positioned for the future.

I will now be prepared to entertain any discussion on this budget that is general in nature.

Ms. Hanson: It was an interesting turn of fiction over fact, with the fact that the Minister of Finance has defied the evidence over the last five years and has presented a very interesting narrative that really does not jive with any of the objective assessments that have been provided to him as Minister of Finance, as Premier, to the citizens of the Yukon by entities as diverse as the C.D. Howe Institute, the Conference Board of Canada and many others — including the Fraser Institute, for goodness' sake — that don't quite share that glowing assessment of this government's performance over the last five years.

By any measure that the Premier has spoken about, the reality is that the Yukon Party has confused the notion of spending huge and significant amounts of money transferred from the federal government with effective governance. What we've seen is a government that talks the talk about decreasing dependency on the federal government while, at the same time, ramping up that dependency.

When the Yukon Party took power, this territory generated about 21 percent of its own-source revenue. We're now down to about 13 percent under this Yukon Party. That doesn't speak to a fiscally conservative or an entrepreneurial spirit, which is what we, in the NDP, had hoped — and would be putting forward — and had promoted.

Madam Chair, when the minister opposite talks about the numbers of jobs that are created currently — currently, Madam Chair — in the mining sector, I would remind him what the current reality is. Under this government's watch, it has been one piece of bad news after another — not only that, but they compound it with their unwillingness to do both the due diligence that's required of good governance.

They've fallen back into the old patterns of the federal government, which was both the promoter and the regulator, and focused on the promoter aspect instead of taking the due diligence and recognizing the liability that accrues to Yukon in the future — to future generations — and we see how they mishandled the operations at Yukon Zinc. We currently only have, under this government's watch, one partially operating mine. There have been, in this forecast, virtually no employment gains in this sector over the next couple of years.

Madam Chair, if that's the basis for the sound projections of this government, that's a frightening kind of reality. This government rode to power on high commodity prices and, while those prices remained high, they were really blind and have continued to be blind to the need to build, not just a resilient mining sector, but also a more diversified and resilient economy. I spoke at length in the response to the Budget Address. I wasn't anticipating that we'd be getting another Budget Address from the Minister of Finance. I thought we would actually get into the nuts and bolts of the Department of Finance, but that's fine if that's his objective this afternoon — to go on for a long time. That's perfectly fine by us.

The question I would have for the Finance minister — and I've asked this before, but I've never received an answer — is: if mineral prices were to rebound tomorrow — which as we all know, given world commodity prices and what we've seen on the markets around the world, not just in Canada — what would the Yukon Party government do differently to ensure Yukon's economy will survive another mining downturn? I posed that question in quite a bit of depth during the Budget Address debate because there are — and we have proposed, as the Yukon Official Opposition, the New Democratic Party, a number of concrete measures that we could be doing to build a resilient and durable local economy. I have heard nothing of that from this Yukon Party government.

So, what we've seen, under this Premier's watch, is the notion — the reality — of a real GDP shrinking. We've seen this government and this Premier, this Finance minister, preside over a recession with the lowest growth rate in Canada. We've heard today from the C.D. Howe report — and I quote from *Controlling the Public Purse: The Fiscal Accountability of Canada's Senior Governments, 2016*, wherein they state that we can assess how successfully Canada's senior governments have hit their target budgets over the past 15 years, and Yukon, with an average overshoot of 6.3 percentage points, had one of the worst records of all. Their public projections were among the worst guides to results among all jurisdictions.

The question is: How does the Minister of Finance deal with this reality of government mismanagement of finance under his direction? He sets the tone. He sets the direction. Under him, there appears to be a failure to conduct life-cycle costing to ensure O&M budgets are not pressured with unforeseen costs. I commented last week that we were pleased to see, after 15 years, the Yukon Party finally understanding that results-based management is a basic tenet of public administration. What we will be looking forward to in the next five months is that they can actually begin to implement it because it clearly doesn't understand that basic function.

We have seen under this watch by this Finance minister the real return to the territorial government, and he talks about this vibrant economy that he and the Yukon Party have created. The reality is that, in his estimates, the corporate tax returns to the territory in terms of us building a buoyant and boisterous economy that we would take away the dependency on the federal government — that we should be seeing a more active private sector. The reality is that our estimates for a corporate tax have gone from \$26 million in 2015-16 to \$14 million, approximately, this year. That speaks to me of a significant decline in the private sector under this Finance minister's watch.

There is a difference in the reality and the fantasy that is being portrayed by the Minister of Finance. We have heard the Minister of Finance talk about his projected \$9-million surplus going forward for this fiscal year. The fact of the matter is that this Finance minister went from an \$80-million annual surplus ending last fiscal with \$1.25 million. So somehow he is going to generate some money this year, but he is going to be cutting somewhere, I would suggest, because he only has a \$1-million surplus this year.

I have heard a lot from the minister opposite about his projections around the various capital projects, and one that just caught my ear at the last of it there — he's going on about the need and the investment in the ER expansion. You know, if one starts deconstructing what happened there, it goes right back to a Yukon Party minister who said, "Do you know what? Despite what the experts said when we built the new hospital, I don't think we need it to be quite as big as it was forecasted to be necessary to replace the old federal hospital," said this wise Yukon Party minister, "and I don't think we need the ER to be as large as you say it should be." So they cut it back, Madam Chair.

Now, almost 20 years later, we're saying that we need to build it, and then we heard, "Guess what. We're going to ask citizens to fundraise for an MRI." They said to the citizens, "It will cost you \$2 million for the MRI." Then they said, "Oh no, guess what. That has to be matched by the territorial government to make it \$4 million." Then — guess what. It cost \$72 million to expand the hospital to place that MRI and to expand the ER. That's Yukon Party planning. That's what causes Yukoners to say, "Why? Why would we put any confidence in this government going forward?"

There are many, many questions — and we don't need to give the Premier the platform to do his pre-election speeches yet again. This is almost the third time we've heard it in the very short few days since the beginning of the Spring Sitting.

There are many serious issues that we need to follow through on and we intend to do that as we track the decline in the GDP — the real GDP for this territory — and the realities of building a diversified economy: the fact that the Yukon Party has no vision for renewable energy and a green economy; and the fact that this government has forced a decline in the economy by its antagonistic rejection of the main tenets of the new agreements among Yukon First Nations and the territorial government — and, as a result of that, it is making this not a place where people want to invest.

We will want to talk with the Minister of Finance, when we get into the Department of Finance, about the personal debt load and its implications for the economy in this territory, real job forecasts, real costs and real assessments about diversifying the economy. We have noted — and we are not the only ones, as I have said before. The Conference Board of Canada has said it has been a difficult few years for the Yukon economy. We stood alone in many ways in terms of our enviable position in terms of potential. It is like Charlie Brown, in a way — this government across the way. They seem to be trying to achieve that. There is nothing worse than a great potential for them because they do not know how to realize it.

The issues that need to be addressed are beyond the rhetoric of this government. When the minister opposite says that he is proud and it is based on that pride that he goes forward, I would just caution that hubris can be a dangerous thing and that pride often goes before the fall.

I would encourage us to actually get into the substantive matters of the budget and see if we can actually get some fact-based answers, some evidence-based answers, as opposed to broad conjectures about what the Premier is going to be selling on the campaign trail over the next couple of months.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Madam Chair, before I get into that diatribe, I am going to take the opportunity to introduce to the Legislative Assembly my Deputy Minister of Finance, Katherine White. I am pleased to have her here, and I would like to acknowledge the incredible work of her and her team in putting together this 2016-17 budget. Certainly, this was an effort that all need to be commended for.

I just listened to 20 minutes of the Leader of the New Democratic Party, and it is difficult for me to decide where to start. Of course, the Liberal leader has to paint this incredible

picture of doom and gloom. I, conversely, have a very optimistic and exciting view of the future of this territory that can be attained with the re-election of a new mandate for the Yukon Party government. She can go off all she wants; the proof is in the pudding, Madam Chair.

We can do the comparison, in terms of looking at the financial statements of this government, of this jurisdiction, compared to other jurisdictions, and we don't have to go any further than looking at the financial situation in Manitoba and in Alberta right now.

As I said earlier today in Question Period, the Alberta New Democratic Party has just tabled a budget that includes \$10.4 billion in deficit. Madam Chair, this is the province that has been the economic engine in this country for decades now, and they are now resorting to borrowing money to pay daily wages.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: We will have this, as I listened quietly to the rhetoric from the NDP leader — she will try to talk off-mic while I'm speaking. I know the Yukoners listening appreciate that.

Madam Chair, the Alberta NDP government — \$10.4 billion — we know their revenues are down. They rely on resources, as does this jurisdiction. The opposition doesn't connect those dots. The difference is that, in the face of dramatically reduced revenues, what has the NDP done? Increased spending, because that's responsible, and as a result, they are now paying wages and have tabled a \$10.4-billion deficit.

Let's talk about what has happened in Ontario. They have just tabled a budget — the Liberal government of Ontario. They have acknowledged that their net debt is \$315 billion. They have budgeted this year \$11.4 billion to service their debt. They'll only spend more money on health care and education. It is the number three expense item in the Ontario Liberal government's budget for this year. That's \$11.4 billion that they are not spending on programs or services, or on innovation or on investing in the future, because of that debt.

I turn to Newfoundland. Their new Liberal government just tabled their budget — a \$2-billion deficit, tax increases across the board. They've increased personal tax, they've increased corporate tax, they've increased tax on fuel and they've increased the HST and, to compound all that, they've also announced significant job cuts.

What's interesting on that is that the former government was moving forward with an increase on the HST, because they said upfront that this was necessary to help with the situation they were in. They were ridiculed by the Liberals and committed to not raising the HST. So they won the election and they eliminated the two-percent increase in HST — to only a couple of months later, in their new budget, increase the HST by two percent.

Madam Chair, we could go on and on about previous or existing Liberal tax-and-spend governments. We will stand very proudly, in spite of what the opposition wants to talk about, with the fact that we have, for the fifth consecutive year in this mandate, tabled a budget with a surplus, and we will

deliver a surplus, as we have in each year. We have money in the bank and now, sadly, are really the only jurisdiction left in this country that has net financial resources. We are not borrowing for services today and asking our children or our grandchildren — or, in the case of Ontario, maybe six or seven generations later — to pay for it.

I find interesting the comments from both leaders around federal transfer payments. Of course, the actual territorial formula financing agreement was actually fought for and achieved by Yukon's former Member of Parliament, Erik Nielsen, who was our Member of Parliament for approximately 30 years and Deputy Prime Minister as well. It was his persistence and his vision that came forward with this formula. What it does is ensure that the territories can have comparable programs and services at comparable levels of taxation.

We know that we have seen Liberal governments alter that in the past. In fact, back in the 1990s, the former Prime Minister Chrétien and his Finance minister, Mr. Paul Martin, balanced their books by making dramatic cuts in transfer payments to provinces and to the territories. We saw a recent cut by the new federal Liberal government through a methodological change. As I have said in the past, we are in year two of a five-year agreement, and if there are to be changes, we think it's appropriate to discuss those changes and have them part of a new agreement. Our goal, in the long term —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Now we have the Liberal leader talking off-mic as well.

Our goal will be to ensure that this territory, in the long term, can pay its own way — that it isn't held ransom to the whims of whichever political party is in office in Ottawa.

I guess the question for the NDP and the Liberals is: If they are so opposed to these federal transfers, then what exactly would they be cutting? Which programs and services? What is it that they would refuse? Obviously, they would refuse the money because they seem to be so opposed to it. We will be interested to see what their response would be to that.

I continue to listen to comments made by both parties about the economy, about the mining sector, trying to tell Yukoners that this is the only resource-based jurisdiction that is struggling right now. I know that Yukoners are smarter than that. They can look to the other jurisdictions that have a resource-based economy to see their economies struggling. The difference is that they are running deficits and have a massive amount of debt and this government does not.

What we know is that there have been mine closures, not just here but in many other jurisdictions as well. This really speaks to our commitment to the resource sector and why this government and this party now more than ever will stand up for the resource sector in this territory, because those mining jobs create a tremendous amount of jobs in this territory. I know that the Chamber of Mines has said that number is between six and eight jobs.

For every mining job, there are six or eight other jobs in the economy. Closure of mines because of lower commodity prices has an extreme ripple effect through this economy, and this is exactly what we are dealing with today — but, as we have said many times, we're not sitting on our laurels, waiting and hoping for commodity prices to come back. We are doing what we can. We continue to make record investments in infrastructure. We continue to work on our regulatory and permitting regimes to streamline them. We continue to work with First Nations and industry on mine licensing. Through these processes, we are engaging the YESAB and the Water Board.

We continue to focus on areas such as training, converting Yukon College into a Yukon university, the creation of the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining, the mobile trades training trailer, the investments we have in the Yukon Research Centre, and then the investments we're making strategically in other sectors, such as the knowledge economy, increasing a \$6.5-million IT envelope by an additional \$3 million this year, which will create a number of good-paying jobs here in Yukon for Yukoners.

While we believe that the mining and the resource sector is key to the long-term success and prosperity of this territory, we know that we use these opportunities, like the 20-percent increase in population in the past decade as a result of that industry, to continue to diversify, so we can reduce the downturn in our economy when we see the downturn in the mining sector.

We're proud of the investments and the partnership we're doing with the Yukon Mining Alliance — I think it's a million dollars in the next three years on the promotion of mining — not just across this country, but across the world, in Asia, in North America and in Europe. Combined with the money the Yukon Mining Alliance is putting in, we will continue to advocate for the responsible mining that occurs in this territory and for investment to occur here.

I know the NDP talks about mining but, as I've said publicly many times, the NDP very much supports mining, so long as it's done somewhere else. They enjoy using the metals and minerals on a day-to-day basis; they would just rather see that they should be mined in some other jurisdiction, which really doesn't speak to their role as a global citizen.

We believe that we can perform the mining, or have a strong mining industry, and do it responsibly so it creates good-paying jobs here for Yukoners. I have said I would love to know that the copper in my phone came from Capstone, because I know that the mine is working responsibly. They have a tough regulatory process; there are inspections; there's money we're holding for reclamation and for mine closure. I know they look after workers.

Conversely, by putting their heads in the sand and not worrying about where those products come from, when they refuse to support those industries, these parties really — just look at the context of some of these other places, where mining exists, where there is essentially zero or very little environmental protection or protection for workers. This party will continue to support an industry that creates tremendous

wealth — and not just tremendous wealth, but also giving back.

We listen to the NDP leader sort of chastising people giving money toward an MRI. You know what? I will say people were very proud to help work toward a cause to provide something for this territory that will make health care better and, really, shame on her for that comment. We'll let Yukoners make the decision on that, but not only were there Yukoners, but there were tremendous amounts of local companies that put in a lot of money.

Yukon Hospital Foundation collected \$2 million in two years. Their goal was three years. They did it in two years. A lot of that money — the big money — where did it come from? It came from companies, either mining companies or those industries that were directly related to the mining industry. They are very proud supporters of arts and culture and health care in this territory and we're very proud to stand with them as well.

I just will probably let it rest there soon. I have already talked about how we're investing in diversifying the economy; how we're investing in providing the programs and services that are necessary with the huge increase in population that we've seen and the fact that we are planning for more increases, because we remain very confident that, with a Yukon Party government, we will see some mines open in the next mandate here. We believe there could be two to four mines that could be open and those will be a game changer again for this territory. The differences are very clear between the Yukon Party, the NDP and the Liberals. Where they are focused on ideology, we are focused on real solutions.

I will just talk again about carbon tax for all those people who are listening, because we know that both the NDP and the Liberals are supporters of a tax on carbon — a new tax for Yukoners. Any time you add a cost into any process, that cost just keeps getting passed down the line until you get to the last user, and that user is the business owner or the consumer. In our jurisdiction where there are very limited options, this is going to mean that everything will cost more money — everything from your fuel to your food, milk, diapers, clothing and home heating oil. Everything will cost more. If these parties were really interested in doing their part — and that's exactly what we say; we all have a part to play and to do our part. But if they weren't so focused on ideology and focused on real results, they would acknowledge that our plan is working. Our climate plan is working — more effective energy systems, seeing that government reduces their greenhouse gas emissions as we will see considerably just with the retrofit of this building that we're in today; and investing in energy incentives for Yukoners.

Our plan is quite simple. We can reduce our greenhouse gases — actually show a reduction in greenhouse gases — but we can also create jobs and we can do that without raising the cost of everything.

That certainly will be a question for all Yukoners to ask themselves as to whether they support parties that are really bent on ideology and ensuring that everything costs more

money, or the Yukon Party who will look for real solutions that will work for all of us.

Ms. Hanson: I just wanted to make the observation that, unlike the Premier, both previous NDP premiers were involved in mining, worked for mines, understood well what mining was about and, to this day, a former NDP Premier is actively involved with significant mining interests in this territory. So this is not theory, Madam Chair. The New Democratic Party has always supported mining and has three basic ideas around that. We simply ask that mining, as with any other resource sector, follows the rules, employs Yukoners and benefits Yukon business and cleans up when they leave. That's pretty straightforward. Yukoners agree with that.

It's interesting that the Premier has lost himself in his rhetoric, because he speaks to the notion that it's an ideological thing that people will begin to look at how we make the transition to a low-carbon economy, when in fact the Mining Association of Canada made it clear last week that there should be no notion of an exemption for the north. They made it clear that they do support a price on carbon across all sectors in Canada's economy. As the NDP has said on this side, how we approach this gives us an opportunity to look at how we can support low-carbon technology. We think there needs to be a public debate. The Premier has shut that down, as he shuts down many other democratic debates in this territory.

So I'm not going to get into a big long thing, but I do have a question for the Minister of Finance with respect to his responsibilities as the minister responsible for the financial dealings of this government. It has to do with a report on the CBC last week and then subsequent publications from the G20 summits that are occurring and the plans from G20 finance ministers and a Central Bank Governors meeting that occurred on April 15, 2016. The large focus of the conversations of the finance ministers, including the Finance minister of Canada, have to do with the volatility of the financial — the global recovery that all governments globally are attempting to work toward. One of the big concerns that has been expressed is the whole issue of ensuring — and we saw this most recently with the release of what are called the Panama Papers and the commitment made at the federal level by both the Prime Minister and the federal Minister of Finance to ensure that where there is tax avoidance, that circle is wound in and tightened, so that taxes due and transparency necessary to ensure good corporate governance is carried out.

On April 12 on CBC there was an interview with the director of Canadians for Tax Fairness. He noted that Yukon has been singled out as a place where companies can avoid paying tax. The statement was made that the Yukon government needs to crack down on tax evasion.

Apparently, as part of the review that has been going on internationally through the G20 — and is on the agenda for discussions that are occurring now and into the spring looking at international standards for transparent tax reporting — there are a number of principles that guide that. The Panama firm that was exposed actually advised their clients that Canada

and the Yukon is a good place to set up a shell company and hide their assets. My question for the Minister of Finance is: What conversations has he had with the federal Minister of Finance and the federal Minister of National Revenue, responsible for Revenue Canada, with respect to the proposed new strategy to stop tax evasion and tax avoidance? My understanding is that the organization that I referenced, Canadians for Tax Fairness, actually met with advisors from the Department of Finance last week, and Finance Minister Morneau's advisors, and the Finance minister's advisors also mentioned Yukon as a jurisdiction with very lax corporate rules. It's on their radar — the federal Finance's radar as well.

Does the Minister of Finance see this as an issue and, if he does, what action is the territorial government taking to rectify it?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I'll just go in the order in which we heard it from the NDP leader. Again, I guess I will just reiterate — she spoke of previous years and previous Liberal and NDP governments. I will again remind Yukoners that, through 1997 to 2002, we saw a mass exodus of population from this territory because there were no jobs. These were people who were 25 to 45 years of age, in the prime of their employment years, who fled this territory because they couldn't find work.

I know that. I ran two businesses in this town during that time and know how difficult it was during those administrations — double-digit unemployment, and they were borrowing money to pay wages, something we hear is now going on in other NDP and Liberal governments across this country.

We've heard the NDP leader again. The reality is, when she speaks, truth is not relevant to what she has to say — I think she has coined the term “fiction-peddling” — and this really goes to the fact that, yes, the Mining Association of Canada did make a statement, as has the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers.

When the president and CEO of the Mining Association of Canada, Pierre Gratton, was on the radio here on CBC's *A New Day* with Sandi Coleman, his quote was: “Actually, I just listened to what your Premier said and I'll be honest, I have trouble disagreeing with him and what you just quoted him saying and our principles I think speak to a lot of the issues that he was making in your Legislature. We do talk about in our principles the importance of recognizing the sort of geographic circumstances and the premiers and the Prime Minister, when they met in Vancouver made the same recognition.”

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Chair: Mr. Pasloski has the floor.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Chair: Order, please. Mr. Pasloski has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: The president and CEO was very clear and, in fact, when I spoke to the Prime Minister and to the other premiers of this country — not only was I, but the Premier of the Northwest Territories and the Premier of Nunavut collectively were very clear about what a tax on carbon will do in the north. It will not only increase the cost of

everything to northern people, but will make businesses less competitive. As I said, this party has a plan where it is not about ideology but actually reducing greenhouse gases and creating jobs for Yukoners. That will be our priority. Managing this economy, preparing ourselves for what we believe is a very bright future.

I wasn't sure when the NDP was going to bring up this idea of the taxes. I guess I need to thank the NDP for soliciting some news releases from their friends while they were down at the NDP convention in Edmonton. I will speak to amendments to the *Securities Act* and amendments to the business law act as well. I will remind the NDP and the Liberals that those amendments passed — one of these amendments was during the previous mandate, but two of these amendments occurred to these acts during this mandate. On both of those occasions, those amendments were passed unanimously by everyone in this House. We will be very excited to speak to Yukoners about that. We continue to hear some rhetoric on one side and then the other. I know it mostly comes from the Liberal leader, but here is an example of supporting amendments on the record, unanimously, and then turning around and making accusations. We do support the federal government in their initiatives to make changes to ensure that people who are avoiding taxes, which is a different issue altogether, can ensure that all Canadians pay the due tax that they deserve to pay — that they owe, to pay to this country. Everybody in this Legislative Assembly should also know that we have a tax collection agreement with the federal government.

They do collect our taxes on our behalf and, of course, this government fully supports the actions or the initiatives that the federal government will make to ensure that we eliminate those loopholes or tax havens where people are getting away with not paying the taxes that they deserve. It is important that it happens.

I will remind listeners and the opposition that, since the Yukon Party came into power in late 2002, we've opened the *Income Tax Act* — I believe it's about 15 times now. Each and every time it has been to reduce taxes. We have not increased taxes since we have come into power as a party. We have lowered taxes. For 2015 all Yukon taxpayers were paying less tax. I know people are doing their taxes right now and realizing that they're getting more money back than they anticipated, and that's because we made that commitment to lower taxes for Yukon taxpayers.

We lowered taxes for Yukon small business in 2014 by 25 percent — no tax increases, lower taxes, no deficits and money in the bank.

Ms. Hanson: Let the record show that the minister did not answer my question.

Has he been in contact with the minister responsible for the Canada Revenue Agency and the minister responsible for Finance — Finance Canada — with respect to the concerns raised? The identification by the Minister of Finance of the potential for unintended, perhaps, consequences of territorial legislation — but have there been conversations? If so, can the

Minister of Finance inform this House about what actions, if any, are contemplated with respect to the concerns raised?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: The department and officials are in contact frequently with the federal counterparts. Let me just say categorically for the House that chasing down tax cheats is a priority for this Finance minister.

Chair: Does any other person wish to speak in general debate?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Again, I would like to actually recognize the incredible work that was done by this Yukon Party caucus this year to put this budget together.

We know that these are difficult times, and Yukoners know that these difficult times don't exist just here in this territory but we have to just look to the east or to the west and south to those provinces that rely on the resource industry to generate revenues to help them pay for the programs and services that they deliver.

We understand, and Yukoners understand, how important those mining jobs are to this territory and truly how easy it is to connect the dots between what happens — so goes mining, so goes Yukon. I have said that many times, Madam Chair.

When we see commodity prices down and mines close in this territory — as they have in other jurisdictions because of the low commodity prices — we have unfortunately seen a reduction of other jobs within our economy as well because of the fact, as I have said, that each mining job can potentially create anywhere from five to eight additional jobs in the territory.

I know it's difficult for some people to connect the dots between the person who works at the grocery store or where they can buy their TV or their vehicle or the local airline or any other job in this economy in this territory, but that's the reality and that's why we are absolutely focused and will stand up for the resource industry in this territory. We'll continue to partner — we're very proud to see the incredible results from our investments in tourism. We've committed almost a million dollars a year for three more years to the Yukon Now marketing campaign — the largest tourism marketing campaign in the territory's history. We're asking the federal government to continue to the same level of support as they did in the previous two years, but we've also assured the tourism industry that if that, in fact, does not happen, we will be there for them. Why can we be there for them? Because we have the resources to do it. We don't have to borrow money to provide services today because we have been responsible with the money, and truly that is the envy of the rest of this country. We will continue to focus on real solutions that make a difference for Yukoners, and that will be the focus of this government. It has been the focus through this mandate and we proudly say that it will be the focus of a renewed Yukon Party mandate. We will look for the opportunity and earn the opportunity to continue to serve Yukoners.

Chair: Does any other person wish to speak in general debate?

We're going to move on then to general debate on Vote 12, Department of Finance. Would members like to take a recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

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

Department of Finance

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 12, Department of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I'm pleased to stand up to discuss the Department of Finance, Vote 12, located at 11-3 in your binder. I'm pleased to have with me again Kate White, our deputy minister of Finance. We are looking at a department that has a very small appropriation as a percentage of a budget of approximately \$1.39 billion, and looking forward to answering questions that are related to the Department of Finance.

Ms. Hanson: I have a question with respect to the revenue section of the Department of Finance, page 11-5. We see that in 2015-16, the estimate was \$122,548,000, and that for 2016-17, that estimate is revised now to \$107,204,000. Could the minister please provide an explanation or rationale for that drop?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I will describe two things. First, the 2015-16 *Supplementary Estimates No. 2* indicates the following decline in tax revenue: (1) personal income tax revenue declining \$5.8 million to \$58.5 million — this is \$10.5 million less than the main estimates — \$3.1 million of this reduction is from prior tax year adjustments; and (2) the corporate income tax revenue declining \$8.4 million to \$7.3 million. This is \$19.2 million less than the main estimates. \$10.5 million of this reduction is from prior tax year adjustments. For the record, I'm going to give you that now, because that will come forward.

For 2016-17, the main estimates indicate the following tax revenue changes: personal income tax revenues increasing compared to 2015-16 *Supplementary Estimates No. 2* by \$9.3 million to \$67.8 million. This is \$1.2 million less than the main estimates of the previous year, mainly due to changes in the northern residence deductions. Corporate income tax revenue increase and compared to 2015 *Supplementary No. 2* by \$9.1 million to \$14.5 million. This is \$12 million less than the main estimates of the previous year.

Ms. Hanson: The latter part there — by my reckoning, the corporate tax estimate in 2015-16 was \$26,537,000 and the estimate for this year is \$14,517,000. Could the minister clarify that please?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I think that's what I just said — that the corporate income tax revenue increased, compared to the 2015-16 *Supplementary No. 2*, by \$9.1 million to

\$14.5 million. This is \$12 million less than the main estimates of the previous year.

I would like to just comment that there is a substantial time lag between when tax revenue is recognized by the government and when the books are closed on a tax year by Canada. For example, tax revenue in the budget 2016-17 will not be finalized until March 2019. In the interim, Canada makes payments to Yukon based on a series of evolving estimates, using inputs from Finance Canada as well as from Yukon. When a tax year is finalized by Canada, an adjustment is calculated to reconcile the estimates to the actual income tax for that year, Madam Chair.

Ms. Hanson: Let's move on then to third-party recoveries. I note from the budget briefing that one of the objectives with respect to the innovative budgeting process that's being driven is to identify additional sources of third-party recoveries that are owed to the territorial government. I note that there was a significant drop — \$40 million. Could the minister explain why that drop happened and what is the basis to believe that it will rebound by that \$40 million?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I have a couple of comments that I wanted to make first. I have just a general comment about tax revenues because it is not a secret — and we have certainly said it many times publicly as well — that it is the result of a jurisdiction that relies significantly on a resource industry at a time when commodity prices are lower and we have seen a reduction in the corporate revenues and in personal tax revenues. It is certainly easy to understand that. I think that plays very much into the importance of the resource industry to this economy and to the revenues of this territory — our own-source revenues from both personal and corporate income taxes. As I said earlier in general debate, the closure of a mine and the loss of those direct mining jobs have a significant ripple effect across the entire territory in that each of those jobs actually generates a significant number of additional jobs in the economy. With the closure of a mine, as a consequence of that, you do see a reduction in revenues.

In spite of that reduction in revenues and in spite of the fact that we did not receive all that money through the federal transfer that we had assumed that we were going to get, we have still been able to table a budget proudly in this Legislative Assembly that shows a modest surplus and that we continue to have net financial resources.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

I'm sorry — I lost my train of thought because the NDP leader continues to talk off-mic. I'll ask her then to just reiterate her question.

Ms. Hanson: To be clear, what I said off-mic was, "Answer the question."

The question was with respect to third-party recoveries. Somehow the minister got off on a tangent. I asked the minister to please explain what basis he has to believe that he will find another \$40 million in third-party recoveries.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Madam Chair, the biggest difference in the third-party recoveries is in the credit card incentive. Depending on how much you use the credit card is

how much of an incentive you get. To make it in the simplest terms I can: we did not use that credit card for travel and associated things enough to get the same amount of incentive. We will work toward maximizing our incentives to the greatest extent we can in the future.

Ms. Hanson: That is most interesting. We are going to create more revenue by government people spending more money on credit card expenditures. Why, Madam Chair? Are there other sources of third-party recoveries that the government will be pursuing? That is almost like a Monty Python skit — what the minister just explained there. Perhaps he could explain if there are other sources of third-party recoveries that, as part of the innovative budgeting, the government will be seeking over and above those credit card expenditures that he just identified.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I guess just to her comment, let's have some perspective on this. When we are talking about a credit card incentive, we are talking about \$40,000. That is the amount of money that we are talking about. There are thresholds for the amount of incentive or rebate that is available. I don't know whether the member opposite has a Real Canadian Superstore MasterCard. She would get points for every time she bought food there or maybe she has an Aeroplan card where she gets points toward travel as well. We are talking about it in the context of a \$1.39-billion budget. The question to me there is about \$40,000. We did not use the credit card enough to warrant reaching the threshold to get the additional incentive.

When it comes to the innovative budgeting, I have said in this House already that this is a public service initiative. This is about innovation without reducing programs, services or employees. It is \$2 million within the context of a budget of just under \$1.4 billion and is not that significant, but it is in the context of what it means. We were very proud of the non-partisan professional public service and proud of the leadership of the Deputy Minister of Finance on this initiative that she will be working on in combination with all the deputy ministers across the government. I am confident that they will not only meet the goal within the innovative budgeting, but will probably surpass that goal as well.

Ms. Hanson: Madam Chair, I have a question for the Finance minister with respect to the Supreme Court of Canada decision on Daniels, which dealt with the issue of Métis and non-status Indian people.

The question is: Has the Minister of Finance commenced discussions within government regarding the implications of that decision for the territorial government in terms of financial implications? What discussions does he anticipate having at the federal, provincial, territorial levels with other ministers of Finance as well — just in terms of getting a sense of the scope of the financial implications of the Supreme Court decision regarding Métis and non-status Indian people as it may pertain to the territorial budget under his purview as Minister of Finance?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: It certainly was a landmark Supreme Court decision that recognizes Métis and non-status

Indians, as persons, of being Indians under section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act, 1867*.

Certainly this will take some time to digest — not just the federal government, but in fact all governments across this country.

What I would like to say is that it is great to see Canada recognizing generations of individuals of First Nation descent. I think that it was a significant day and we look forward to the discussions that will occur. This will be a process that will take some time but we will take the time immediately to review the decision and begin those conversations with the Government of Canada.

Mr. Silver: Thank you to the deputy minister for her time here today.

Most of our questions are definitely for the individual departments that are going to be spending the money, but I do have some specific questions for the minister responsible for Finance.

I want to just go back to the innovative budgeting that we heard of in the budget speech. I want to draw down a little bit more information if the minister will be willing to give us some more.

Madam Chair, just to reiterate, this year's budget includes an innovative budgeting line item that is supposed to save us \$2 million in one year alone. I'll just start by asking: How does this type of budgeting save us money?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: This initiative that we're describing is innovative budgeting. I invite the member opposite to Google it and see what he finds out there, but it will build on the principle of really making every dollar count. I think that's really what it is. This initiative will focus on one simple question and that is: Can we get more for our money?

The goal of the initiative is not about cutting services, but rather finding innovative ways to increase efficiencies and to reduce waste. The target, as the member opposite articulated, is \$2 million for this fiscal year.

Our public service employees in all departments will be key participants in identifying strategies for improvement and successful implementation. The efficiency and effectiveness of current service delivery models will be evaluated, which could result in summary organization or proposed shared service models.

Again, I will reiterate that this is an initiative that is being driven by the public service. It will be led by the Department of Finance, focused to begin on day-to-day support services of government, budget planning and monitoring financial operations, information technology and other support systems.

As I mentioned, I think this is a modest goal, and I feel very confident, with the leadership of the Deputy Minister of Finance and engagement of employees across this great organization, that they will be able to meet and to exceed the goal of about \$2 million.

Mr. Silver: I guess what I'm looking for is a little bit more than that. I did go online. I took a look at the MIT course. The minister speaks of shared service models and also mentions a few different department subsets that he is going to apply this to, but again, we are looking for something more

specific than that. What triggered the addition of this type of budgeting into our process? How about that question? Again, back to the original question — if he could let us know specifically how this budgeting is going to help us save money, how it's going to be implemented and how it works specifically for Yukon, compared to the course that we saw from MIT. Thanks to the departmental officials for putting us in that direction.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I guess to use an example perhaps would be to continue to look at how we can access third-party funds. I think of the relationship that we've had with the federal government on the program that's had many different acronyms — THSSI, THIF — it's additional health care dollars that have been used by the three northern territories to look at innovation. A lot of that money was spent, I think, in the other two jurisdictions, on medical travel, but there was a lot of collaborative, pan-territorial work, but also individual focuses within the three jurisdictions. An example of innovative budgeting would be the ability to look at access to third-party funds.

Mr. Silver: Okay, I'll move on. As with every year, changes have been made to the federal taxes. I'm wondering how these changes affect the Yukon government and Yukoners. Also, will this government adapt some of the new changes? Will the adjustment, for example, to the northern living allowance affect our budget and if so, what is that impact?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: As I mentioned just not long ago, we do subscribe and have a tax-collecting agreement with the federal government. We will be supporting their initiative in terms of the increase in the northern residents deduction. That initiative does have an impact on this territory. I believe it's a \$2-million reduction in revenues. The implementation of the increase in the northern residents allowance or deduction will result in lower taxable incomes for Yukoners, which will mean that it will reduce our revenues by \$2 million.

Where we are deviating from the federal government is that they will reduce the child fitness tax credit and the art tax credit by 50 percent this year and eliminate it next year. As the member opposite knows, we have tabled amendments to the *Income Tax Act* to ensure that those tax credits will remain in place for the Yukon portion of those tax credits, as we have heard very clearly and loudly from Yukoners that they very much support and subscribe to those tax credits. We believe that it's an important tax credit to maintain for Yukoners, so we have proudly tabled amendments to our *Income Tax Act* to reflect that.

Mr. Silver: Yes, we have debated on this floor the changes to the tax amendments in regard to the arts tax credit and child fitness.

I guess what the plan is — this would have been a combined tax before \$75, and \$75 for the Yukon and the federal sports tax credit was on income up to \$1,000 and resulted in about a \$150 saving. That would mean that in the next year, the territorial government will be paying that \$75, and then I guess they'll move on to the \$150 after that. I'm not sure if that's how it's actually going to roll out.

It's good; it's great to have these credits. I believe that will take into consideration the \$6,400 that the federal Liberals are going to be giving to the income — to single mothers — and on the average of \$2,300 given to the parents for their children. That additional \$75 to \$150 will definitely be important — but there are more questions about how many of Yukon's children will be affected by that increase.

Madam Chair, the children's fitness and arts tax credits were claimed by over 2,000 households last year. This is a significant portion of Yukon's children, but it's still not beneficial to all Yukoners, to all Yukon households with children. Many children are living close to the poverty line, if not below it. Because this benefit is given in the form of a tax credit, it immediately only benefits those households that have a greater income, basically.

This is something that needs to be considered by our government. Let's ask this: Have other options more inclusive to all Yukon children been considered for these taxable deductions?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: This government applauds the initiatives. Part of the debate last week was about the fitness tax credit. What we weren't debating were the consequences, or what everybody thought about the Canada child benefit that the new federal government is doing. Any time that families with children get more money — and their program will be not tax deductible — I think that's good. I know that, on the other side, there are people who are disappointed in the lack of ability to do income-splitting. There are a number of single-income families who have the ability and choose to make the sacrifice to keep one parent at home to raise their kids and who benefited from income-splitting.

I will remind the member opposite that the children's fitness tax credit is a refundable tax credit, so even if you're not paying taxes, you still will get a refund. Quite simply, what we are doing is continuing on the Yukon portion of these tax credits from what there was. The federal government is going to eliminate them. Our amendment is that we will continue to offer the Yukon portion. It is also good to note for those people who are listening that he was correct on the \$1,000, but he would also have been correct if he had said that it doubles for children with disabilities.

I also agree that it is not everything, and it is certainly not everything that this government does. Last year, we made a significant increase in the Yukon child benefit — an approximate increase of 30 percent. It was effective on July 1 — \$820 annually for each dependent child, less 2.5 percent of family net income in excess of \$35,000. Not only did we raise the amount of the benefit, but we also raised the threshold so more people would be eligible to get the Yukon child benefit.

The other thing that we did was — and I know all Yukoners who are submitting their 2015 taxes right now know — that we lowered the Yukon tax rate for all Yukon taxpayers in 2015. We have left more money in taxpayers' pockets, we have increased the Yukon child benefit by approximately 30 percent, and we will also retain the Yukon portion of the child fitness tax credit and the arts tax credit.

Mr. Silver: There are also other financial support systems in place for low-income families to afford putting their children into extracurricular activities. Another example would be the Sport Yukon recreation fund. How many kids in the Yukon qualify for the Sport Yukon kids recreation fund and how many apply?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I know that the Minister of Community Services cannot wait to answer that question as to specifically how many children are in there. I thank the member opposite for recognizing the tremendous support that this government in the last 14 years has had funding competitive sport and recreation, active living, wellness programs, after-school programs — especially in the communities. Maybe that would be a nice graph to illustrate to Yukoners — some of these great increases in investments that this government has done, all the while maintaining no deficits and money in the bank.

Mr. Silver: It would be nice if the Minister of Finance knew the uptake number and how many applied. I guess the question begs — whether this fund better serves low-income families than the children who are on the tax credit, for example. We would hope that the Minister of Finance would be having that conversation with his Minister of Community Services.

I will move on and look forward to asking that question of the Minister of Community Services and see if he has an answer.

I am going to move on to numbered companies. How does this government track taxation, including the payment of income tax by numbered company vendors?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I guess, for the record, I'll say that we have a tax-collecting agreement with the federal government, which is responsible to collect taxes on behalf of the Yukon government. The only comment I would have regarding corporations is that it's based on where the corporate activity is and not where you register. That is the interpretation I think is one of the reasons also for the volatility that we see in corporate tax revenues from one year to the next year as well.

Mr. Silver: I'm not sure if I got my question answered as far as how this government tracks that taxation between the numbers of companies — yes, including the payment of income tax, absolutely — but not just limited to the income tax of these company vendors. I'll move on though.

I just have a couple more questions here in general debate for the Department of Finance. A number of years ago, the Government of Yukon made a 30-day investment in asset-backed commercial paper — some \$36 million. That money has been frozen for many years, but should be close to thawing, I guess.

Can the minister update this House on the status of this investment from the Yukon in asset-backed commercial paper? How much interest have we received over the life of this investment and are we going to be getting our \$36 million investment back and when?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I welcome this question, because those of us who didn't sit in this House during the

32nd Session of the Legislative Assembly heard the former Liberal leader stand up — I think almost on a daily basis — to talk about asset-backed paper. So there has been a lot of restraint on this leader to wait until the fifth year to bring this up. Actually, I think there was one other time that he did bring it up earlier.

I would like to inform this House and all those people listening of course is that there will be full repayment of the notes expected in early 2017. Over \$3 million in interest payments have been received to date.

Mr. Silver: I do appreciate the answer from the Minister of Finance.

I am going to move on to — I guess, we still weren't answered about if we're getting the full investment back. We'll move on to the final question here and again I would like to thank the representative of the department for her time today.

While the Yukon has no net debt, we still owe millions of dollars — mostly our Crown corporations the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Public Accounts last fall pegged the debt at approximately \$189 million. That was back a couple of months ago — sorry, last fall. I guess the question is: What is the total amount today that we owe on these debt dollars through our Crown corporations and what is the amount per year that is being paid to service that debt, including costs to the Crown corporations?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Just for the record, the comment at the end about the asset-backed paper, just for clarification — we will receive all of our money back, plus interest — just in case there was some uncertainty around that.

When it comes to the statement of net financial assets, I know that we've heard some disbelief from the Liberal leader and from the NDP leader, and there is another individual who has labelled himself as an authority on a lot of different topics. All I have to say about that — and I've said it before — is that our books every year are audited completely by the Auditor General of Canada. The Auditor General of Canada has stated that this government is in a position of net financial resources, Madam Chair. We have very strong financial strength.

As I've stated, this year we will be the only jurisdiction left in this country that has net financial assets. Sadly, everybody else is using a portion of their revenues to pay to service debt, to pay interest on debt. That is money that they cannot invest in programs and services — whether it's for nurses, doctors or teachers, or building roads or improving airports, or investing in innovation or building fibre optic lines or anything else. This territory spends all of its money on programs, services and capital investments. We don't have to pay interest on debt. I use the example of Ontario. The Liberal government there has \$315 billion of net debt and has budgeted \$11.4 billion — almost a billion dollars a month — to service their debt.

One other thing that I think would be of interest to Yukoners, from the debate we just had earlier with the Leader of the New Democratic Party. Here are a couple of snapshots — some numbers from the year 2000 and the year 2014. In

the year 2000, the population in the Yukon was 30,776; in 2014, it was 36,667. That's a change of 5,891, or 19-percent increase in population. In 2000, the unemployment rate in Yukon was 11.5 percent; in 2014, it was 4.3 percent. The average weekly earnings in Yukon in 2000, was \$743.13; in 2014, it was \$1,036.48. That's a change of \$293, and that is a percentage increase of 39 percent.

This government and former Yukon Party governments have focused on creating an opportunity for prosperity for Yukoners. That was done through continuing to support the resource industry and using the growth as a result of that to help us grow other sectors of our economy, like the iconic tourism industry that we have, and all the confidence that we have in the strategic investments in the knowledge economy that we will see that part of our economy continue to grow and prosper. The result of that investment will create significant prosperity for Yukon in the future.

Mr. Silver: I would like to thank the Minister of Finance for that speech, but it surely didn't answer the question. It is worth noting that the Minister of Finance just mentioned that other jurisdictions using their revenue to pay down a portion of their debt, or to service their debt, is exactly what this government did just a short year ago, with transfers of \$27 million, I believe, to a Crown corporation to pay down the debt. So that did happen.

Again, let's go back to the actual question. If the Minister of Finance could actually answer the question please — last fall, we had the Crown corporations' debts totalling \$189 million. The question is: What is the total amount that we owe today and what is the amount per year that is being paid to service that debt, including the cost to the Crown corporations?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I have a couple of comments. One is that the interest earned on investments exceeds the interest paid on loans. The net result is actually an increase in revenue for the government.

Where the Member for Klondike is confused is around the debt surrounding YEC/YDC. That corporation is mandated, through legislation, to carry 60-percent debt and 40-percent equity. That is the law. They must carry 60-percent debt. Actually, I believe that for BC Hydro it's 80 percent. I might have to be corrected on it, but I believe at one point — or it was one of their latest large projects they were doing where they would have 80-percent debt.

The reason for that is obvious to many. If you use your own money and if you have the capital, the utility board will still, on behalf of the ratepayer, have an expectation that there will be a return on that money. Very frequently the reality is that debt is cheaper than equity, and that is why utilities and YEC/YDC are actually legislated to carry 60-percent debt.

Mr. Silver: There is no confusion over here, and I thank you very much for that information again, but we would like to get an answer to the question please. Public Accounts last fall pegged the debt at \$189 million. What is the total amount we are owing today, and what is amount per year that is being paid to service that debt, including cost to the Crown corporations?

If this a question that the minister cannot answer, then I will wait until we see the Crown corporations appear as witnesses and ask them.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Madam Chair, I can have the deputy provide or I will provide you with the answers. I have with us some of the numbers on the debt side. What we do not have with us are the revenue numbers. I will state for the members opposite that our Public Accounts are fully audited every year by the Auditor General of Canada. The Auditor General of Canada each year has stated that we are in a net financial asset position. We are proud of that. I will mention again that we will be, this year, the only jurisdiction left that will be in that position — truly the envy of the rest of the country.

We will endeavour to provide those numbers because we do not have them with us, but, as I said, Madam Chair, when it comes to assertions made by the leaders of the other two parties or other individuals in the community, I will listen to the Auditor General of Canada who has provided us each year with a fully unqualified position and we are very proud of that.

Chair: Does any other person wish to speak in general debate on Vote 12?

We are going to move on to page 11-6 in Finance, which is Treasury. We are going into line-by-line debate.

On Treasury

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

On Administration

Administration in the amount of \$1,018,000 agreed to

On Financial Operations and Revenue Services

Financial Operations and Revenue Services in the amount of \$3,875,000 agreed to

On Fiscal Relations

Fiscal Relations in the amount of \$277,000 agreed to

On Management Board Secretariat

Management Board Secretariat in the amount of \$1,865,000 agreed to

On Banking Services

Banking Services in the amount of \$1,015,000 agreed to

On Public Utilities Income Tax Transfer

Public Utilities Income Tax Transfer in the amount of \$213,000 agreed to

Treasury Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$8,263,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

On Information Technology Equipment and Systems

Information Technology Equipment and Systems in the amount of \$12,000 agreed to

On Prior Years' Projects

Prior Years' Projects in the amount of nil cleared

Treasury Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$12,000 agreed to

Treasury Total Expenditures in the amount of \$8,275,000 agreed to

Chair: Moving on to page 11-8, Workers' Compensation Supplementary Benefits.

On Workers' Compensation Supplementary Benefits

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

On Supplementary Pensions

Supplementary Pensions in the amount of \$426,000 agreed to

Workers' Compensation Supplementary Benefits Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$426,000 agreed to

Workers' Compensation Supplementary Benefits Total Expenditures in the amount of \$426,000 agreed to

On Revenues

Ms. Hanson: I would appreciate it if the Minister of Finance could just explain what the anticipated indices are for the grant from Canada. So in Public Accounts in the last three or four years we have seen it variously been noted in the Public Accounts — in one period there was a projected five-percent increase and then it has sort of been going down three percent. What's the forecast going forward? What's been negotiated with respect to the overall — not the complex little components of it, but the overall factor for indexing the grant?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Two of the totals — the Canada Health Transfer and the Canada Social Transfer — are fixed as a percentage based on population. There is some discussion that we look forward to with the federal government regarding health and the new health accord that was prominent in the Liberal government's platform. We are looking forward to those conversations that will occur. Certainly if it's not substantive by the time that the premiers meet this summer, I know that it will be a topic of interest by the premiers at that time.

I spoke earlier about the TFF and there were in fact changes that were notified to us in December that affected our TFF for the current year that we are now in of 2016-17. The federal government has served notice that they would be making some legislative changes. I believe those changes will come into effect with the completion of the five-year agreement that we're in right now.

I believe those changes will come into effect with the completion of the five-year agreement that we're in right now and I guess that is the best answer that I can provide at this time.

Ms. Hanson: Even with the minor adjustment to the \$6.5 million, there was still an overall increase. What I'm asking for is that in Public Accounts, when we go back, and I didn't bring the Public Accounts with me from last year — but each year there are remarks made by the Auditor General about how this is the year-over-year increase. I'm asking the Premier: What are the forecast indices for an increase in the TFFA?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I think that's a difficult question, again, to answer until we actually get to Public Accounts. At that time, there is an accurate explanation as to what it is. We are forecasting approximately two and a half percent, although, again, I can't confirm that that's in fact what it will be. I know that the member opposite, who chairs the Public Accounts Committee, knows that there is an explanation provided by the Auditor General when they go through Public Accounts.

Chair: Are there any further questions regarding revenues?

Revenues cleared

On Government Transfers

Government Transfers cleared

On Changes in Tangible Capital Assets and Amortization

Changes in Tangible Capital Assets and Amortization cleared

Department of Finance agreed to

Chair: We're going to move on to Vote 7, Department of Economic Development.

Would members like a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development.

Department of Economic Development

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Madam Chair, if I could begin by thanking Deputy Minister Justin Ferbey as well as Assistant Deputy Minister Stephen Rose, who is formerly known in this Assembly as just "Steve". I would also like to put on the record that a few short years back, Steve Rose was a page, not in this Assembly but in the Northwest Territories.

In the 2016-17 fiscal year, the Department of Economic Development will be concentrating on three main objectives. We will remain focused on assisting our partners in building a prosperous Yukon by creating and fostering economic opportunities, opportunities to create investment, to create an environment to allow for development, retention and expansion in the small business sector. We will continue to pursue economic initiatives with a shared vision of prosperity, partnership and innovation, and we will continue to forge, maintain and expand partnerships with First Nations in the economic development of Yukon. Over the course of the past year, we have worked hard to lay the foundation Yukon needs to succeed and we are well on our way to achieving these objectives.

I would like to begin today by revisiting the context in which the department operates and how it contributes to the continued development of a prosperous economy for the benefit of all Yukoners. It is through the Department of Economic Development that the Yukon government implements the vision outlined in *Pathways to Prosperity: an Economic Growth Perspective, 2005-2025*. This vision is further articulated in the department's strategic plan and guides its day-to-day activities.

Our 2012-17 strategic plan explains our strategic goals and what we are doing to achieve them. It outlines our vision, mission and values and provides a description of the context in which we work. The department's investment attraction

strategy is used to guide its work in our cornerstone industry, mining. This industry is rooted in partnership, making collaboration the foundation of success for this initiative.

Yukon is an area of opportunity for many reasons: our long history of mining in the territory, our advancing infrastructure, and our attitude toward long-term partnership development. Building on traditional pillars of mining and tourism, the Yukon government will continue to support the growth of small and medium enterprises. Assistance and support of our local businesses and industry will be a major focus of this department. We will continue to seek out new and innovative ideas to make this happen.

Madam Chair, the department will continue to increase the diversification and sustainability of Yukon's economy by identifying and exploring significant economic development opportunities. This requires the capture of external wealth from a number of diverse sources. This includes working with our partners, both Yukon-wide and abroad, locally, nationally and internationally, to achieve the best outcomes for Yukon now and into the future.

In order for Yukon businesses to sell their products and services to the world, Yukon will need to invest in economic infrastructure, including transportation, energy and telecommunications, improvements to infrastructure, including roads, energy, ports and fibre optic connectivity, to make the Yukon more competitive.

This, along with our support of small and medium enterprises, development of external markets and broad investment attraction initiatives will result in progressive development, increasing the quality of life for all Yukoners.

Our role at Economic Development is to foster responsible development opportunities that contribute to a sustainable and diversified economy. We are here to increase the benefits that Yukoners, businesses, First Nations and communities receive from economic projects and activities. The department works with a wide range of partners from the private sector, First Nation government and development corporations, industry associations, NGOs, other Yukon government departments and other governments.

Our activities expand beyond our borders to represent Yukon's interest in multijurisdictional concerns such as pan-northern infrastructure and national and international trade issues. To carry out these activities in 2016-17, we are introducing an operation and maintenance budget of \$15.9 million and a capital budget of \$1.2 million.

With those figures in mind, I would like to provide an overview of Economic Development's planned programs and initiatives related to business development, investment attraction, technology and communications, our film and sound industry, regional economic development and trade.

The department supports the diversification of Yukon's economy by identifying and exploring significant economic development opportunities and strategic industries. It is through the Business and Industry Development branch that Economic Development helps to identify and assist the development of industries and strategic projects with the potential for broad-based economic benefits.

This branch supports the growth, development, expansion and creation of Yukon businesses and industry sectors through a range of programs and financial supports. Personnel at the Business and Industry Development branch work closely with companies and industry organizations to undertake strategic projects that will enhance key industry sectors and contribute to Yukon's overall economic prosperity.

In 2016-17, the department will continue to support industry development with a transfer payment budget of over \$1.9 million. The strategic industries development fund provides funds to projects focused on natural resources, tourism and culture, research, innovation and commercialization. From April 1, 2015 to January 28, 2016, the fund supported 22 projects from across a variety of strategic sectors. For the 2016-17 fiscal year, \$800,000 has been allotted to the strategic industries fund for the development of Yukon strategic industries in this regard. The funding is intended to assist the private sector address barriers to development and to improve the competitiveness of their businesses. This is available for projects that act as enablers or catalysts for the growth of Yukon's strategic industries and would generate secondary benefits and business opportunities within the territory.

Projects made possible through the strategic industries fund will help deliver increased economic activities, successful business arrangements that provide positive community economic impacts, positive long-term impacts on employment and wealth creation, increased private sector employment and a more diversified economy.

The government's industry support and relationship-building efforts have led to significant investments by foreign investors in Yukon-based projects. By investing in these types of activities, we strengthen Yukon as a whole, working toward sustaining and enhancing the prosperity of our region for the benefit of all who live here. Strengthening Yukon means we're investing in our future and our future includes attracting investment. We believe partnerships are important to attracting investment — partnerships to develop energy, infrastructure and telecommunications that will promote long-term prosperity.

To help achieve this, the Government of Yukon will be committing \$717,000 toward investment attraction and marketing. The goal of investment attraction is to enable the development of the private sector economy. The Government of Yukon's investment attraction activities focus on the territory's investment-ready sectors, natural resources, technology and tourism. As part of the Yukon's investment attraction strategy, our focus has been to promote investment in several key markets around the globe. For a number of years now, the Government of Yukon and our strong industry partners — the Yukon Mining Alliance, Yukon First Nations, the local business community and industry — have led a global effort by showcasing Yukon nationally and internationally, raising the profile of Yukon mineral potential and mining projects.

Over the past year, the Premier and a number of Cabinet ministers have showcased Yukon on the global stage by

making presentations to investors at Cambridge House, PDAC and the Precious Metals Summit Colorado and, of course, the Yukon Mining Alliance investors tour. These events provide opportunities for Yukon mining companies to introduce their projects to investors and raise the profile of Yukon's mineral potential and mining projects. The government continues to build a strong relationship with European, Asian and North American markets through these targeted events.

The Government of Yukon recently highlighted the territory's investment readiness at the Invest Yukon pavilion during the Vancouver Resource Investment Conference — the world's largest investment conference dedicated to resource exploration. It provided the territory's leading exploration, development and mining companies with an ideal venue to present projects to mining investment interest and helped investors understand that Yukon is a well-connected, modern and business-ready jurisdiction.

We work closely with several different partners on this event and were once again pleased to showcase Yukon's mineral resources and investment opportunities. This event also highlighted the strong industry and government partnership established over the past number of years and supported by the Yukon Mining Alliance.

In 2013, the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Mining Alliance launched strategically planned investment attraction initiatives in a manner that is led by industry and supported by Yukon government. Building on the success of that collaborative partnership we have committed to its continuation by providing almost \$1 million toward mining attraction initiatives to be undertaken over the next three years. Of that, over \$301,000 has been allocated for this upcoming year. This cooperative effort has provided for strong collaboration and valuable global investment attraction promotion projects to attract capital investment from North America, European and Asian financial markets and is a significant component of the Yukon mining investment attraction strategy.

This funding allows the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Mining Alliance to continue to shape the investment landscape in Yukon for the benefit of all Yukoners and position the territory for the rebound of mineral commodities.

In addition, we're collaborating with First Nations in ways that demonstrate our commitment to encouraging participation in Yukon economic growth and prosperity. We're working closely with the Yukon First Nations Chamber of Commerce to enhance the role of First Nation development corporations and investment attractions and we are pleased to be collaborating with the Yukon First Nations Chamber of Commerce in this regard, as it brings forward First Nation business interests in the mining and exploration sector.

In order to continue to shape the investment landscape in Yukon for the benefit of all Yukoners and to position the territory for a rebound of mineral commodities, we will use this budget to continue supporting investment attraction events. This will allow us to share the unique and compelling Yukon mining story with the world and that Yukon will be ready for the next big turn in global commodity markets.

Undertaking strategic and targeted opportunities that distinguish Yukon's potential as a leading jurisdiction in Canada and internationally serves to create long-term sustainability for the mineral sector, along with a prosperous Yukon.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Mr. Elias: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Elias that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Mr. Elias: I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 256

1st Session

33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, April 19, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER — Hon. David Laxton, MLA, Porter Creek Centre

DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Darrell Pasloski	Mountainview	Premier Minister responsible for Finance; Executive Council Office
Hon. Elaine Taylor	Whitehorse West	Deputy Premier Minister responsible for Tourism and Culture; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Justice; Yukon Development Corporation/ Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Doug Graham	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Education
Hon. Scott Kent	Riverdale North	Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources; Highways and Public Works
Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Community Services; Public Service Commission
Hon. Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Minister responsible for Environment
Hon. Mike Nixon	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin	Minister responsible for Economic Development; Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Party

Darius Elias	Government House Leader Vuntut Gwitchin
Hon. David Laxton	Porter Creek Centre
Patti McLeod	Watson Lake

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

New Democratic Party

Elizabeth Hanson	Leader of the Official Opposition Whitehorse Centre
Jan Stick	Official Opposition House Leader Riverdale South
Kevin Barr	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes
Lois Moorcroft	Copperbelt South
Jim Tredger	Mayo-Tatchun
Kate White	Takhini-Kopper King

Liberal Party

Sandy Silver	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Rudy Couture
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Doris McLean
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, April 19, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Are there any tributes?
Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming a constituent, Laura Lang.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 107: *Act to Amend the Elections Act with Respect to Political Contributions* — Introduction and First Reading

Ms. Hanson: I move that a bill, entitled *Act to Amend the Elections Act with Respect to Political Contributions*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition that a bill, entitled *Act to Amend the Elections Act with Respect to Political Contributions*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading Bill No. 107 agreed to

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Leader of the NDP to explain why the NDP chose not to work collaboratively in proposing changes to the *Elections Act* regarding political contribution rules and why the NDP's recent proposal to amend the *Elections Act* was not made at any of the following opportunities over the past several years:

(1) when the Chief Electoral Officer requested input from all political parties following the 2011 general election regarding changes they would like to have made to the *Elections Act*;

(2) when the Chief Electoral Officer requested input from all political parties two years ago regarding changes they would like to have made to the *Elections Act*;

(3) when the all-party Members' Services Board discussed the *Recommendations for Amendments to the Elections Act* report submitted by the Chief Electoral Officer in December 2014;

(4) when the all-party Members' Services Board agreed on a list of changes to the *Elections Act* in summer 2015;

(5) when the all-party Members Services Board reviewed the draft legislation to amend the *Elections Act* at meetings held in the fall of 2015 and unanimously agreed to the content of the *Act to Amend the Elections Act and the Electoral District Boundaries Act*; and

(6) when the Legislative Assembly debated and unanimously passed Bill No. 91, entitled *Act to Amend the Elections Act and the Electoral District Boundaries Act*, during the fall 2015 Sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to index the new Canada child benefit to the annual rate of inflation in order to protect the real value of the benefit over time.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Whistle Bend continuing care facility

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon government's request to the federal government for infrastructure money was recently released. Included was \$109 million toward the projected \$146 million to build phase 1 of the proposed 300-bed continuing care facility. Just last week, the Minister of Community Services acknowledged that, despite the fact that Yukon had not received confirmation of funding, they are proceeding with construction. It is pretty basic to expect that the government would both know the total projected costs for a major capital project and have secured the source of financing in advance of building. In an economy where money is tight, \$109 million won't be easy to find.

When is confirmation of federal funding expected and, if it does not come through, how does this government plan to pay for the initial 150-bed continuing care facility?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, the opposition has had a few days to review the budget. I think that if they did review the budget, they would see that we have, in fact, in this fiscal year, in this budget, put forward \$69.9 million, I believe, toward the Whistle Bend long-term care facility.

We intend to pay for this. If the federal government is interested in partnering because it fits the criteria that they have for one of their new infrastructure funds, then we will welcome that money. But the good news is that this Yukon Party government continues to make investments in health

care in all areas of this economy, and we do it while we continue to run a surplus and have money in the bank.

Ms. Hanson: It is basic due diligence to have a plan B in place, especially when federal funding makes up the vast majority of the estimated \$146-million project. Yukon has a \$400-million borrowing limit. If the federal funding request falls through, will this government be looking to add more millions of dollars to the \$187 million of existing debt currently buried in Yukon corporations?

This is debt that Yukon citizens, through their government, are ultimately responsible for. It is not the fiscal legacy we should be leaving for future generations.

Can the minister tell Yukoners what plan B is if the request for federal money fails?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I guess the Leader of the NDP didn't listen to the answer to my question.

We have fully funded the capital expense this year to the tune of \$69.9 million. If she looks in the outbound years, she will see that we have in fact allocated and budgeted for the remaining money that will be required to build this facility.

We're very proud to build this facility. This is a facility that we know — both of these parties have said that they would cancel this facility. We're very proud. We know how important it is. It's the right thing to do.

When it comes to their discussions — or the lack of understanding by both the Liberals and the NDP when it comes to debt — I will just go back to the fact that, when it comes to this, I will take the word of the Auditor General of Canada, who, in Public Accounts, has stated that this jurisdiction has no net debt.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, if the minister is so confident, why is he asking Canada for \$109 million? For a government that claims to be fiscally responsible, they sure leave a lot of questions up in the air about how they intend to actually pay for phase 1 of this 300-bed facility.

What is at issue is, just as they decided to build this large facility and then sought evidence to justify it, they are now issuing contracts before having secured financing. This government has put nothing on the public record to indicate that they have a full cost accounting of the operation and maintenance costs of the facility, nor have they demonstrated that they have done any contingency planning should the money they requested from Ottawa fall through.

Will this government publicly release a full costing for this facility, including the projected operation and maintenance costs, which include financing options and costs should the federal money fall through?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, this is just another attempt of fiction peddling by the New Democratic Party leader. Clearly, if the federal government is willing to put some money in, then we can actually use our money to continue to build and invest in other areas. We will welcome that with open arms. We look forward to that opportunity, but what we have said is that, if this does not fit their criteria, we are more than willing and capable of building this facility — build this facility and continue to have a surplus budget and continue to have money in the bank.

Question re: Addictions treatment

Mr. Barr: Mr. Speaker, alcohol abuse and drug abuse are persistent and serious issues in Yukon. According to Statistics Canada, 32 percent of Yukoners self-identify as heavy drinkers — well above the national average of 19 percent. The result is a high level of need in our territory for drug and alcohol treatment services. Many choose to enter a residential treatment program. For others, regular counselling sessions as an outpatient client are a more appropriate treatment option. Some Yukoners wait up to eight months to receive urgently needed outpatient drug and alcohol counselling services. This is not helpful for people who are ready for change.

What is the current wait time and what is this government doing to reduce wait times for outpatient drug and alcohol services counselling?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I certainly welcome the question from the member opposite. This is something that is of great importance to this government and, in fact, something that we have invested heavily in over the last number of years. The member opposite will be well aware that the construction of the new Sarah Steele facility is well underway, and we certainly look forward to the opening of that facility later this year. We know that there will be expanded programming, specifically with a focus on youth in the territory, with new programs for youth and younger people who require those services.

Again, I thank the member opposite for this question and giving me the chance to highlight some of the good work that is being done today — but certainly some of the good work that we plan on doing and that this government has been planning for in organizing for the upcoming year.

Mr. Barr: Mr. Speaker, not everyone requires or is ready for residential treatment programs. This question is about outpatient services. Alcohol and Drug Services estimates that in 2016-17, they will provide an average of 227 clients per month with outpatient services for alcohol and drug dependency. This is an increase of only eight patients per month since 2014-15 and does not reflect the territory's increasing need for services. Meanwhile, many Yukoners continue to struggle with alcohol and drug dependency.

Mr. Speaker, how many new spaces per month will the new Sarah Steele facility offer for outpatient counselling services?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Again I thank the member opposite for his question. As I indicated in my first response, the area around alcohol and drug services is something that is a priority for this government. It is something that we have planned for and developed with regard to, not only the services, but with regard to infrastructure. Certainly I would like to at this time extend my thanks to the Minister of Highways and Public Works and his department for the collaborative approach that we've taken between the two departments in addressing this issue and enabling us to build a facility that will be used by those Yukoners who certainly require the service.

With regard to the member opposite's question, as I indicated in my first response, there will be a host of new programming that's available at the facility, including programming for youth and outreach programming for those following treatment at Sarah Steele. We look forward to opening the doors of the new Sarah Steele facility later this year. I certainly thank the member opposite for asking the question. This government is proud of the investments we've made pertaining to those types of services in alcohol and drugs for Yukoners when they certainly need it.

Mr. Barr: Mr. Speaker, clients need services before and now that they've been waiting on. Yukon has the highest rate of alcohol consumption in the country. Currently in this territory, Yukoners are being told to wait months on end to receive counselling services for drug and alcohol addiction. When Yukoners seek addiction counselling, they should receive immediate help. A wait of several months could be too late. We are in desperate need of drug and alcohol treatment professionals to provide outpatient counselling services to Yukoners.

What immediate steps is the government taking to address wait times here and now?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Again, I thank the member opposite for this question. It just provides me an opportunity to highlight some of the partnerships we've had with many individuals and organizations in the territory. One that comes to mind is our strong partnership with First Nations in the development of the Jackson Lake treatment facility. Those are things that we have been working on over the last number of years. We've been working on services at the current Sarah Steele and working on some outreach for those who are living in the communities, and we'll continue on with that work.

Certainly, we look forward to opening the doors to the new facility in the fall — just in a few months, as a matter of fact. I thank the Premier for accompanying me on a tour of that facility just a number of weeks ago. We are certainly very proud of the investment that we've made for those Yukoners at a point of time in their life when they need those services — this Yukon Party government will ensure that those services are there for them.

Question re: Energy projects

Mr. Silver: In the summer of 2013, the Premier announced the government was moving forward on building a new hydroelectric dam. After the Yukon Party government and the previous Energy, Mines and Resources minister spent several years trying to sell our hydro system to Alberta, this was a welcome change. The government told Yukoners that there would be a business case completed by 2015 to proceed with the planning of one or two future hydroelectric power projects. That deadline has come and gone, Mr. Speaker.

Recently, the minister admitted that in fact no project or site had been selected. After spending \$2 million and two deputy ministers being let go, we still don't have a potential project.

Why has the government not lived up to the commitment that it made for itself back in 2013?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: First of all I have to take issue with the characterization the Liberal Party leader made to deputy ministers who have served Yukon citizens ably and with distinction. He should really apologize to them and retract that remark.

I would note as well that doing this long-term planning is something that is necessary, just as this government has benefited from the planning done by Yukoners in previous decades for hydro facilities. Hydro facility planning or any energy planning is expensive. That is a significant portion of the costs, but we believe it is important to plan for the future energy needs of the Yukon. In fact, as I have acknowledged, while the timelines for the next generation hydro planning are taking longer than originally anticipated, our focus is on working with Yukon First Nations and the Yukon public and our focus is on selecting the right energy path that will benefit future generations of Yukoners 20 to 50 years from now and beyond that time period.

Mr. Silver: The minister can try to twist out of this as much as he wants, but the reality is that the government hasn't stuck to the schedule that it set for itself or the budget. We have seen this time and time again. This is just the latest example, Mr. Speaker. While the Premier likes to talk about meeting commitments, this is another one that has fallen by the wayside like so many other politically driven projects that this government tackles.

A business case that was supposed to be delivered by the end of last year was not ready. The minister himself admitted that the term of this government will end and no project or projects will be selected. The big hydro project was announced with great fanfare and has been followed up with some major delays.

Why hasn't this government been able to complete the job under the deadlines that it set for itself?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: It's truly unfortunate — as we saw yesterday, as time has gone on in this Legislative Assembly the Liberal leader is sounding more and more like his predecessor as Liberal leader with the same old tired, twisted messaging.

I would again note, Mr. Speaker, that the planning for next generation hydro has taken longer than originally anticipated, but that is because we listened to what we heard from the Yukon public and Yukon First Nations. I would note that doing this planning work takes time.

None of the energy options that the Yukon government and Yukon society have to choose from are perfect. They all have their drawbacks, they all have their costs. Our focus is on doing that detailed technical planning, on sharing it with First Nations and with the general public, and on hearing their input and working with them to select the energy option that best meets the needs of Yukoners for 20 to 50 years from now, just as we have benefited from what has been done by previous generations here in this territory. We are doing that long-term planning that is necessary to pick the path that is best for Yukon's energy future for future generations.

Mr. Silver: While this one-off and politically motivated project is going on, the Yukon Energy Corporation itself is

also reviewing its own 20-year resource plan. Talk about no coordination between plans. The minister and his predecessor repeatedly told this House the plan would be ready by the end of 2015 and the project would be selected, and that has not happened. It simply has not happened.

The delay in the new dam project means that the big decisions are going to be left to the next government. I believe that this was always the plan for this public relations exercise. The government wanted to look busy on this issue, but doesn't have the support it needs to go ahead, nor does it have the money in place to build it either.

Can the minister tell Yukoners how much money has been spent so far on this public relations exercise?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Yukoners appreciate the work and the energy that is going forward to do the due diligence to plan this project to ensure the long-term prosperity for Yukoners. As we have seen with the previous vision, when the dams that we have in place today were built and the increased capacity that this government has done through Mayo B and through a third wheel at Aishihik — this is quite different from the Liberal plan for energy, Mr. Speaker, and that is to raise taxes, create new taxes and do what they did in the past, which was to kill the economy and drive thousands of people out of this territory. Then we won't need extra power because we'll have fewer people here. Yukoners appreciate a vision that is full of optimism and a path to prosperity, and that's why Yukoners support this Yukon Party government.

Question re: Human-wildlife conflict

Ms. White: One of the realities of life in the north is our ongoing relationship with bears. While there will always be challenges managing the danger bears and humans pose to each other, there are ways to minimize these interactions. WildWise Yukon has published a report, entitled *Whitehorse Bear Hazard Assessment*. It recommends a number of ways the Yukon government, the City of Whitehorse and local First Nation governments can become more bear safe, including a number of waste management improvements.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister accept the *Whitehorse Bear Hazard Assessment* report's recommendations and how does the government plan to work with other levels of government to implement these important changes?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: That is a timely question with the bears coming out this spring. The Department of Environment is using a wide range of strategies, Mr. Speaker, to help prevent human-wildlife conflicts. Some of the stuff that we're doing is working with the City of Whitehorse and WildWise Yukon; we're working on developing a hazard assessment for Whitehorse to form the foundation for the city's bear smart strategy; and we're working with the Department of Community Services and the private contractor to reduce wildlife access opportunities at the Yukon landfills. There are lots of things that this government is doing, Mr. Speaker.

I just printed this yesterday off the CO page on Facebook and it's about taking simple steps to keep bears wild and alive. There is a lot out there and we will continue to do good work.

Ms. White: The WildWise assessment calls for better waste management practices to keep bears out of our garbage, but it also addresses private storage systems. When you go camping in Kluane National Park, Parks Canada loans you a bear-proof resistant canister, because they are expensive and everyone is better off when bears can't access food. The Whitehorse bear assessment report recommends a similar program — a bin-loaner program for recycling and livestock feed. This might seem ambitious, but it is a practical way to improve bear safety in Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, would the minister consider implementing the report-suggested bin-loaner program for recycling and livestock feed?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Another thing the department has done here is completed a three-year pilot program focused on reducing human-wildlife conflict in the Whitehorse-Southern Lakes area through education, community partnerships and intervention. The program was given \$75,000 per year for three years and employed a seasonal human-wildlife conflict prevention officer. The department is currently in the process, Mr. Speaker, of maintaining and upgrading all the bear culvert traps across the Yukon to improve both bear and public safety in advance of bears exiting their dens and our department officials have worked diligently when it comes to bear-related issues. I'm confident the work that the department is doing — I would like to thank them for their hard work — sometimes it does get busy and sometimes it's late at night — and I think they do a wonderful job.

Question re: Shakwak reconstruction project

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I brought to the attention of this House the fact that the Government of Yukon had contracted the services of a professional to help the government in lobbying the US government to restore Shakwak funding. The minister's response was — and I quote: "We'll continue to work on the US government restoring funding to the Shakwak project."

This government is paying a lobbyist to press its case to the US government for continued Shakwak funding. How much has the government paid to date for this lobbyist's contract? How much has the government budgeted in 2016-17 for lobbying?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I believe that contract was through the Executive Council Office for that particular individual and firm to work on our behalf in Washington DC. I don't have the numbers with me as to what was spent and I don't believe there is anything budgeted for this year.

As I mentioned yesterday, the Shakwak project is an important project for the north. We should also take the opportunity to thank the late Senator Ted Stevens from Alaska for his work on this file in the 1970s and through to the 1980s and 1990s, when the funding was in place. It certainly was a boon for us not only in ensuring that our road network has been safe and easy to travel, but also for all the jobs and opportunities that have been provided to Yukoners as a result of those capital investments.

As I mentioned, this is an important section of road. The vast majority of the travellers on that road are United States citizens. It is part of the national transportation system. We will continue to lobby the US government to restore funding and continue to look for other options.

As I mentioned, the maintenance in that section that has permafrost — the section north of Burwash Landing — is six times higher than in non-permafrost areas. The maintenance camps are doing a good job of maintaining that section of road. Again, we'll continue to try to identify funds to make capital improvements there.

Ms. Moorcroft: It has been four years since the US government removed the funding for the project from their transportation bill. Perhaps the government can get back to us with the numbers on how much money has been spent on lobbying since that time.

The minister has also said that a high percentage — 80 to 90 percent — of the traffic on that portion of the Alaska Highway is US residents, whether from southeast Alaska, tourists or personnel who are transferred back and forth between Alaska and the Lower 48. What value has this government received for the funds it has spent employing the lobbyist? For instance, has the lobbyist reported if the United States government accepts this government's numbers that 80-plus percent of the Shakwak traffic is American?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, of course this is an important corridor for United States residents. As I mentioned yesterday, it's a vital link between southeast Alaska and central Alaska, where some of the larger cities — Anchorage, of course, and Fairbanks — are. Many of the state representatives and state senators use that corridor to travel back and forth from their districts to the capital city of Juneau using the Alaska marine system as well.

As I've mentioned, the department has let me know that the numbers in that area are 80 to 90 percent with respect to the traffic — 80 to 90 percent US residents. That's why we feel that the deal we had in place — where the US government would fund the capital improvements to that section of road and we would continue to do the maintenance — was a good deal. Obviously there have been significant employment benefits for Yukoners through the contracts issued to do the capital improvements to that section of highway. There are many contractors mobilizing and going in there this year as well with the \$12 million that we've budgeted for work. I think all of the major bridges have been replaced in that corridor. For the most part, most of the highway has been rebuilt.

Obviously permafrost areas are still an issue for us, and we'll continue to lobby the US government to restore that funding. We have the support of the Alaskan government, the Alaskan business community and the Yukon business community to do so. We'll continue to work to that end.

I would be interested in the NDP position on —

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Moorcroft: The minister has said that his department provided the numbers — that it was over

80-percent American traffic. I would like him to let us know if the United States has accepted that number.

The minister has also spoken about the permafrost, and the Beaver Creek permafrost testing has now been completed. We're waiting for details on the key findings of that research to be released. In yesterday's Question Period, the minister acknowledged some of the issues related to permafrost and maintenance. I quote: "... thawing permafrost causes severe distortions of the road surface as well as significant cracking along the shoulders..."

The government expects to spend close to \$12 million in 2016-17 completing Shakwak program highway improvements. From the results of the study, can the minister tell the House if Yukon's highway maintenance crews will have the resources they need to deal with the effects of permafrost in the Shakwak north Alaska Highway?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: As we have heard and we can see through the budget, we have significant capital investments in highways, roads and bridges across this whole territory.

Let's be clear about what this discussion is about with respect to the Shakwak. This is an agreement between two sovereign nations. This was an agreement signed between the Government of the United States of America and the Canadian government. That is where this agreement is. The US government had cancelled the funds in 2012. They still have not completed their commitment through that agreement.

We have engaged and have the support of the Alaskan senators, the Alaskan congressmen and, of course, the Alaskan governor. We have spoken with senior leaders in the appropriate committees in both houses in Washington. We have had the support of our senator. I had spoken to former Prime Minister Harper on this. We have also had the support of the Foreign Affairs minister and, of course, our Ambassador down there as well. We also have very clear support from both labour and business on this issue.

The reality is that we do not anticipate that there will be any change before the presidential election that will occur in November. After the presidential election, we will continue with earnest to ensure that we convince —

Speaker: Order, please. The member's time has elapsed.

Question re: Diabetes programs

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, diabetes is one of the most common conditions affecting Canadians, with an estimated two million people diagnosed. Still more live with this chronic condition undiagnosed for years. Dr. Adeera Levin, a nephrologist at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver, treats patients with chronic kidney disease, one of the more serious complications from diabetes. In March 2015, Dr. Levin warned that the Yukon did not have an accurate gauge of the prevalence of diabetes in the territory. Statistics Canada also warns that current statistics on diabetes prevalence in Yukon should be used with caution.

When will this government produce accurate statistics on type 1 and type 2 diabetes prevalence in the territory?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I certainly extend my thanks to the member opposite for asking this question. We have had a number of opportunities to talk with people who are both working in this area here and in BC, as we have agreements with those professionals down in that province, and also individuals who are affected by diabetes here in the territory. We certainly extend our thanks to those who are working both in the department and at the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

Diabetes and the issues around supports and services are certainly something that is important to this government and we will continue to work with our department, the Yukon Hospital Corporation and other agencies on providing that type of information to those who are looking for it. Again, I thank the member opposite for her question.

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned in this House before, it is hard to manage what you are not measuring. Numbers — accurate numbers — of type 1 and type 2 diabetes are important to be able to plan. A serious complication of diabetes is chronic kidney disease, and kidney disease can be treated by kidney dialysis. In this case I am speaking about hemodialysis, which requires dialysis machines, specialized nurses and technicians. Hemodialysis is not available in Yukon. Yukoners requiring hemodialysis have one option, and that is to move away from the Yukon to BC.

As more Yukon residents choose to remain in the territory after retirement, accessible treatment for kidney failure will become an increasing concern. That's why we need these numbers, Mr. Speaker.

When will this government consider offering these services, hemodialysis, here in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Again, I thank the member opposite for the question. I recently had the opportunity to go down to the gala for the BC-Yukon kidney foundation and certainly had this very discussion with those individuals and looked at the numbers for the Yukon Territory.

I can report to the member opposite that the department informs me that there are currently no Yukon patients with chronic kidney disease living in BC in order to receive full-time hemodialysis.

Dialysis is required when a patient's kidneys fail to the extent that everyday toxins cannot be sufficiently removed. Dialysis replaces normal kidney function.

During the conversation that I had with those involved in the BC-Yukon kidney foundation — it simply comes down to a matter of numbers and there just aren't the numbers to support the hemodialysis operations or supports here in the territories — and we're not talking close numbers by far. There is just simply no business case to support that up here.

On top of that, the individuals and professionals who are providing that service need to do so many hours to maintain their credibility and licensing. Again, we just don't have the supports and the numbers of individuals faced with those issues to support that type of service here in the territory.

I thank the member opposite for her question —

Speaker: The member's time has elapsed.

Ms. Stick: Certainly in the past, Yukoners have moved away, have lost their jobs, have sold their homes and have had to move to Vancouver in order to receive the dialysis service. I remember meeting them in Vancouver General Hospital where that service was provided.

The Yukon is one of the few jurisdictions in Canada that does not offer this service. Northwest Territories certainly does. In some places there are some that are enclosed in a bus and actually can travel.

Diabetes prevalence rates among First Nation and aboriginal populations are three times higher than the general population, and for aboriginal women they are four times higher.

This is a serious issue and one that we need to be able to manage by knowing the numbers, by knowing the numbers of First Nations. A quarter of our population is First Nation, Inuit or Métis.

When will this government work with the federal government —

Speaker: Order, please. Time has elapsed.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: In addressing the member opposite, again, I thank her for her question. This is something that is certainly important to this government and one that we continue to work on collaboratively with our partners here in the territory and down in BC.

For the member opposite, I can report that recent advances in technologies now also allow for home hemodialysis for patients who are thoroughly trained. This is a major boon to Yukon patients who would have had to stay out of territory to receive hemodialysis in previous years. I know that one patient is presently on home hemodialysis here in the territory.

Given these new technological advances, the need of hemodialysis in Whitehorse General Hospital has actually decreased over the last several years.

Again, as I indicated in my first response, I would like to thank those professionals here in the territory and in BC who certainly help us out a great deal in providing these supports and services for Yukoners.

Providing those supports and services for Yukoners is certainly something that is very important to this government and one that we'll continue to work on.

Again, I really thank the member opposite for bringing this forward and giving me the opportunity to highlight the work that we're doing here in the territory.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of opposition private members' business

Mr. Silver: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, April 20, 2016. It is Motion for the Production of Papers No. 13.

Ms. Stick: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Official

Opposition to be called on Wednesday, April 20, 2016. It is Motion No. 1142, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Mr. Elias: I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

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

Bill No. 23: *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Department of Highways and Public Works

Hon. Mr. Kent: It's my pleasure to present the Department of Highways and Public Works 2016-17 budget. The details of this budget highlight the continued commitment and dedication of the department toward ensuring a safe and efficient transportation system, modern building infrastructure and effective information systems. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the departmental staff, no matter what branch of the department they work in, for their support and dedication to Yukon citizens, whether they're travelling on our roads, using our airports, in the buildings that we manage or any other aspect with respect to Highways and Public Works' interaction with the Yukon public.

As one of the government's central agencies, we enable and provide services not only to the Yukon public, but also to Yukon government employees. This budget supports the achievement of many of our government's priorities and

mandate items, including the following: development of asset management for Yukon government infrastructure; successful delivery of capital programs; development of resource access roads; progress on the climate change action plan; improvements to government procurement processes; completion of functional plans for key highway corridors; development of safety management systems; and implementation of e-services.

As a department, HPW is responsible for: constructing, maintaining and managing our roads, bridges and airports; providing capital development, space planning and facility management services for all government-owned and leased facilities; developing, supporting and protecting the information and technology infrastructure of Yukon government for the delivery of services to both government and the public; planning, reporting and communicating department priorities, policies and initiatives; as well as Yukon government procurement; Central Stores; fleet vehicles; motor vehicles; road safety; travel services; goods acquisition; asset management; Queen's Printer; government mail services; and risk management. The department faces many challenges in meeting its responsibilities, such as extreme weather conditions, permafrost, vast distances between communities, aging infrastructure and limited resources.

Yukoners and visitors to the territory depend on our services, as well as the infrastructure provided by our department, to go about everyday life. The development of maintenance of this diverse infrastructure and the provision of an increasingly wide range of services is not without its challenges.

Madam Chair, Yukon is facing the same challenges as many jurisdictions across Canada with our aging infrastructure, increasing expectations from the public regarding what types of services are available and how they are accessed, greater safety and regulatory requirements, the impacts of a changing climate and a myriad of competing interests to be addressed within a limited budget.

Despite these challenges, HPW staff work hard to ensure that the work this budget supports has a positive impact on the local business community. HPW investments make a significant contribution to Yukon's GDP and create thousands of jobs for the Yukon's economy. We also support Yukon First Nations through the Yukon asset construction agreements, or YACAs, which build capacity within the territory. The extent of HPW's support for Yukon's private sector is unique within this government. We tender projects related to roads, bridges and airports, including earthwork, paving, design, surveying, environmental studies and other engineering services. Through our work on buildings — both maintenance and new construction — we tender contracts for design, engineering consulting services, construction, plumbing, electrical, carpentry, custodial services and leasing.

In the IT sector, we support local IT companies in designing made-in-Yukon IT solutions for Yukon government departments. These responsibilities and challenges are reflected in the initiatives identified in this budget.

As an overview, the budget provides \$62.8 million for transportation capital maintenance, planning and infrastructure: \$10.2 million for capital building maintenance, planning and infrastructure; and \$9.5 million for IT infrastructure, systems development and support. This last figure represents an increase of \$3 million to support this government's IT initiatives. I know this is a welcome increase by the local IT business sector, as it reflects a commitment made by the Premier last fall at the Opportunities North conference. At that time we committed to a \$2-million increase. I'm pleased that we identified projects that represent a \$3-million increase to the IT envelope.

The department also manages a large facility and building construction portfolio on behalf of other Yukon government departments. This year, the Property Management Division will be working to deliver 15 major works projects with a total budget of more than \$130 million. Over the past five years, our investments in major capital works and maintenance projects have consistently put Yukoners to work, benefitting many local contractors, suppliers and service companies.

Local construction and service industries are the engines of the Yukon economy, and Highways and Public Works is committed to enabling and sustaining a strong, resilient, local labour force. Departmental staff teams are rising to the challenge, not because they have more project managers and officers looking after the portfolio, but because of the department's commitment to continuous improvement and the application of portfolio and asset management best practices.

Some of the other ways we have been working to improve project delivery and private sector collaboration are through the annual fall capital announcement for contractors and through outreach initiatives of the Procurement Support Centre. This year's second-annual industry conference took place in February and lived up to the expectation of being another productive cross-sector gathering, building on the successes of the previous year's events.

Ultimately, when it comes to identifying and planning capital projects and bringing them to market, our aim is to make tax dollars go further and ensure value for money. Local benefits are considered as part of each and every project. A look back over the past five years of capital and project spending demonstrates that the contributions by Yukon companies have been essential in our ability to deliver on the promise to Yukoners — our promise to provide the essential infrastructure needed to enable healthy, productive and meaningful lives.

Madam Chair, we know just how important a functional transportation network is to ensure the continued flow of goods and services. Yukon's transportation network enables the movement of resources that this territory relies on in order to thrive and connect our northern communities. Serving the needs of a territory as vast and remote as Yukon requires strategic planning and the ability to rank capital projects in a manner that best uses public funds and meets the needs of Yukon infrastructure. We do this while ensuring that Yukon transportation networks, buildings and other resources are maintained in a safe, effective and efficient manner.

Highways and Public Works is committed to providing safe and efficient transportation infrastructure to maintain the vital transportation links for Yukon residents, commercial carriers and traffic and visitors alike. The department has allocated almost \$5.4 million for such work as engineering, predesign, mapping, surveys, industry analysis, policy development, feasibility studies and airport development plans. Work is also being done to develop new and improved asset management systems, intelligent transportation systems, capital planning and business modernization.

All of this is underway, and I am happy to discuss some of our capital transportation highlights planned in this year's budget. Our Transportation Engineering branch uses a bridge and culvert management system to determine bridge rehabilitation and replacement needs for our transportation network. This program identifies investment requirements and priorities.

Deficient bridges represent weak links in the transportation system. Adequate bridges permit heavier trucks and bulk hauls in both directions for industrial and resupply shippers. Many of our Yukon bridges were built in the 1950s and 1960s and are at an age when major rehabilitation efforts are required to keep them in service. In Carcross, for instance, the Nares River bridge replacement project involves the replacement of the existing timber structure with a new bridge designed to handle both current and future traffic needs. The new bridge will be a reinforced concrete structure. Not only will this bridge be structurally enhanced, but the look of the bridge as part of the Carcross marina landscape will also be improved. Replacing this aging bridge will ensure that the south Klondike Highway is well prepared to serve public and tourist traffic as well as commercial traffic such as that serving Yukon mines.

The Dempster/Klondike corridor is one of the most important corridors that we have in the territory, along with the Alaska Highway corridor and the Robert Campbell/Cassiar corridor as far as trade routes both in and out of the Yukon.

We have committed about \$1.5 million to be spent this year on the Nares River bridge, which is in the first part of a two-year construction period. The project team has spent the last year consulting with the community of Carcross as well as the Carcross/Tagish First Nation to address their concerns and we will continue to do so moving forward with this important project.

Madam Chair, I would also like to provide the House with an update on the improvements to the Nisutlin Bay bridge in Teslin — another important bridge that is part of the transportation network. It's scheduled for a significant rehabilitation project that includes deck and substructure improvements. Design, permitting and geotechnical work will continue this year, with construction expected to start in 2018.

Madam Chair, the Fox Creek bridge on the south Klondike Highway will also have design, permitting and geotechnical work done this year and next, and we have allocated \$200,000 in the current budget for this project. The bridge will be replaced with a reinforced concrete bridge. The

new deck will be wider, longer and higher — making it safer and more resilient to climate change. Construction is anticipated to begin on this project in the 2018-19 fiscal year.

We have a presence throughout the Yukon in every community, hamlet and every bump in the road. We live in the areas where we work and those staff care about the places that they live in. Highway maintenance camps are an important element in maintaining our transportation networks safely and effectively. This year, we have allocated \$2.6 million to replace the living quarters at both Swift River and Drury Creek maintenance camps because deficiencies with the current facilities are creating health and safety risks for our dedicated employees who work in those facilities. We are improving those living facilities at our maintenance camps in order to best support the men and women who live there while maintaining our highway systems.

Work continues this year with existing funding for the Shakwak project — a topic of recent Question Periods in this Legislative Assembly. This work is in partnership with the governments of Canada and United States to ensure a safe and modern highway corridor leading to Alaska. The Shakwak agreement, originally signed in 1977, has always envisioned that the roads rebuilt under the program would be paved. Funding for the Shakwak agreement was not included in the last US transportation bill, as we know. The remaining funds are focused on rehabilitating sections of the road that are impacted by permafrost thawing. Funds of more than \$12 million will be focused on construction projects that will maintain the Alaska Highway to as high a standard as possible; however, without dedicated funding in place, paving is no longer included in this work.

Work this year will include surfacing and rehabilitation sections between kilometre 1710 and kilometre 1832 that have deteriorated due to permafrost thawing. The Government of Yukon, together with the Government of Canada, will continue to make representations to US legislators to restore funding for the Shakwak project in any new bill. Highways and Public Works is continuing to work closely with the US Federal Highway Administration to determine how to best spend the remaining funds and the time frame over which such spending should occur. Madam Chair, before I move away from the Shakwak project, I should also thank the efforts of the MLA for Kluane and the former Minister of Highways and Public Works on this file.

I know that he was extremely engaged with the Alaskan congressional delegation in Washington — the two senators and the congressman who are active down there — as well as former Alaska state senator, Mr. Randy Phillips, who has a recreational property within the Member for Kluane's riding close to the Mackintosh Lodge on the northern part of the Alaska Highway. He, when he was in office, was a tireless supporter of a number of things for the Yukon including, not only the Shakwak, but also the reciprocal fishing agreement that we have in place with the State of Alaska where our residents and their residents are treated as residents of each other's jurisdiction when it comes to fishing licences.

Again, I would like to thank the MLA for Kluane for his significant interest as well as efforts in our ongoing attempts to have the Shakwak funding program restored so that we can complete the important work on that section of highway.

The Alaska Highway is one of our most critical highways and has likely seen the most changes since it was completed in 1942, when more than 7,000 pieces of military equipment were used to build it.

There are several locations on the Alaska Highway where settlement continues to develop due to permafrost degradation and settlement of soft soil. Restoration will take place over three years beginning in this construction season. This is part of our continuing efforts to improve the overall safety of our highway network.

We have allocated more than \$2 million in funding for this very important work on a significant stretch of road that connects us to our Alaskan neighbours.

Another \$368,000 is allocated to develop a functional plan for the section that lies between the British Columbia border near the community of Watson Lake and the Golden Horn subdivision so that the department is able to manage and prioritize improvements that need to happen in this area.

As we get closer to Whitehorse, work is also slated for the section of highway in front of the Pioneer RV Park, which is just south of the Robert Service Way, which is the southern access to the City of Whitehorse. This is part of the Whitehorse corridor work and we'll be allocating \$2.5 million to construct turning and passing lanes to ensure a safe and effective flow of traffic moving toward the city. The passing lane will be in the northbound lane of that section of highway. Again, it's to address safety concerns. This is part of the broader Whitehorse corridor redevelopment.

As I have mentioned previously in this House, I have asked the department to focus on safety issues. Of course this is one that has been identified. Anyone who travels that section of highway in the summertime recognizes that there could be delays or potential hazards when there are some of the larger RVs turning into that particular RV park, so we're happy to move forward with this important project in this construction season.

Work continues this year with the reconstruction of the Robert Campbell Highway section up to kilometre 190. The department has allocated \$11.4 million toward improvements that include realignment to meet the 90-kilometre-per-hour design standard, road reconstruction, resurfacing, drainage improvements and right-of-way clearing for future years' construction.

The Robert Campbell Highway improvement work will be carried out in collaboration with the department's Transportation Engineering branch, private contractors and private equipment rentals. The commercial trucking industry and the private citizens as well as visitors will benefit from these upgrades.

This highway is an important transportation link, because it provides redundancy for our transportation network. Not only does it link communities along this road together, it also provides an alternate route through the territory in the event

the Alaska Highway is closed between Watson Lake and Whitehorse.

The Yukon government continues to invest in road infrastructure to maintain vital year-round access across the territory and to ensure that the groundwork is in place to foster prosperity and economic development opportunities for the future. The Dempster Highway is Canada's only all-season public road that crosses the Arctic Circle. Starting near Dawson City, this 736-kilometre unpaved two-lane highway traverses northern Yukon all the way up to Inuvik in the Northwest Territories, soon to be extended on the Northwest Territories side to the community of Tuktoyaktuk.

The work slated for this year includes erosion protection in the Blackstone and Ogilvie rivers and Engineer Creek areas, as well as retrofitting the Engineer Creek bridge, replacing culverts, resurfacing and spot improvements and investigating sinkholes and slope stability. These projects are part of our continuing effort to improve the overall safety of our highway network. The department has allocated \$3.2 million for this critical work to be done.

Madam Chair, I recognize that my initial 20 minutes are close to expiring. I do have some more information for members with respect to this budget and, just before I sit down and cede the floor to opposition members, I would like to welcome two officials from the department to the House today. To my right is Clint Ireland from the Transportation Maintenance branch. He's the director of Transportation Maintenance, and I believe this is his first time attending the Legislative Assembly. To my left is Mr. Scott Milton from the Property Management branch in Highways and Public Works. I think he has been here a couple of times at least before, so I would like to welcome both of them to the House and thank them for their support as we move throughout debate in Highways and Public Works for the balance of the day.

Ms. Moorcroft: I thank the minister for his introductory remarks. I would like to thank the officials who provided the opposition with a briefing on the Highways and Public Works budget. I would also like to acknowledge all the hard work that's done by the many employees of the Department of Highways and Public Works, across several branches of the department, and all the public service for the work they do.

During the briefing, we had asked a number of questions and were looking for responses from the minister. The department budget was called up for debate before we could get responses to any of those, so I'm just going to put those on the record for now, and then I'll allow the minister to complete his remarks when I'm done.

The Alaska Highway corridor is one of the most significant projects in the Whitehorse corridor that the government has planned. They spoke in last year's budget about over a 30-year period, depending upon certain population projections — as much as \$200 million for the Alaska Highway corridor in the Whitehorse area, and in the first five years of that project, they were looking at spending \$50 million.

The minister has just spoken about the initial work that will be done in this budget, adding a northbound passing lane in the area of the Pioneer RV Park.

The question that we had asked related to background information. When the Alaska Highway corridor functional plan was put together, the department had access to information about traffic accidents. The minister referred to safety being the first priority when the department came to a decision on what major intersections would be improved, what upgrades would be done depending on increased traffic, where to consolidate accesses and where to put in better traffic control signage. I have asked the minister if his department can provide traffic safety data, based on 2010 to 2015 — 2009 is a bit dated. I think that there is more current information that's available and I would like to ask the minister about that.

Last year's budget had \$1.3 million to begin work in responding to the functional plan. I would like to ask if the department has done more comprehensive work on developing a program to bring to Management Board what their priorities will be.

The minister also spoke to preparing a functional plan in the Golden Horn area in order to look at what changes or what potential intersection changes or additional lanes might be developed in the Golden Horn area. I would like to ask the minister who the department officials have met with in their initial planning of that functional plan and to provide a few more details. The minister also referred to the functional plan between the BC border and Watson Lake. For both of those functional plans, I would like to ask the minister if he has a date for when he expects them to be completed.

The minister also spoke about the Robert Campbell Highway and I have a fair amount to follow up with there. One of the questions we had asked about in the briefing was to provide opposition parties with a copy of the Kaska Nation agreement on the Campbell Highway. The minister indicated that the consultation would be from kilometre 10 to kilometre 190. I would also like to ask the minister if he has a five-year plan related to the Alaska Highway corridor, or more details about what the government plans to do in the five-year plan.

We had asked for details related to the YACAs, the Yukon asset capital agreements with First Nations. I would like to ask the minister whether the department officials can provide us with an accounting of YACA agreements for the period from 2011 to 2016 — the projects and the amounts provided to First Nations for those projects. One of the specific ones that we had highlighted was airport construction projects, but we would like to have a broader list.

Madam Chair, I have a number of questions on each of the branches of the Department of Highways and Public Works. Noting that the minister has not completed his opening remarks, I am going to allow him to continue on that before I proceed to go into details.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, I thank the member opposite for her indulgence in allowing me to complete my opening remarks on this. I do have a list from the department. I believe that during the briefing there were 29 questions raised by opposition members — from both opposition parties

— and, if I have time at the end, I will start working my way through them. Some of the questions that were asked here by the Member for Copperbelt South will be addressed in there. I do have some answers — not all of them yet — but will endeavour to complete this in the coming days and get a more fulsome response to members opposite.

Madam Chair, just to complete my remarks — I do have a significant amount left here — the Klondike Highway is what I wanted to talk about next. It is one of our oldest highways and, like the Alaska Highway, it has seen many changes over the years. It also experiences erosion and drainage problems that compromise the structural integrity of the highway. We have allocated \$1.25 million to address these problems and to get this work done. As well, to improve safety, some project work is planned to minimize the risk of falling rock and rehabilitate the driving surface.

The Silver Trail project this year involves driving surface rehabilitation to address safety concerns and replacing a failing culvert at kilometre 94.7. We have dedicated funds of \$550,000 for these improvements.

The Nahanni Range Road will see work involving the restoration of the existing highway surface, which has degraded, including subgrade repairs to the gravel highway, which is susceptible to soft areas in the spring and in wet weather. The department has committed \$100,000 to ensure that this work is done so this road remains safe for traffic flow. With respect to the Nahanni Range Road, I did run into some of the principals from the Golden Predator company when I was recently at PDAC in Toronto. They wanted me to pass on their thanks and appreciation to highway maintenance staff, particularly those at the Tuchitua camp, for the excellent work they did in maintaining that road this spring to allow for their exploration project to go forward. Again, this is an opportunity on their behalf to thank staff of highway maintenance and those situated at the Tuchitua camp at the junction of the Nahanni Range Road and the Robert Campbell Highway for their tremendous efforts in assisting them with a project that employed many Yukoners in the winter months.

Madam Chair, I have previously mentioned functional plans. We use these plans to assist us in deciding how best to manage our transportation network. The two referenced by the Member for Copperbelt South in her question actually are one functional plan, and that will take place from the BC border at Watson Lake through to the Golden Horn subdivision. It will be tendered.

This allows us to set the table for future capital improvements when it comes to our road network — and has been very useful in helping us to plan our transportation network going forward. We can get into some more detail once I conclude my remarks on the planning.

What these plans do, of course, is determine the short-, medium- and long-term upgrade needs of a highway for maintaining an acceptable level of service over the foreseeable future. This year, we have allocated funds for functional plans for the Tagish Road and the Top of the World Highway. As well, Madam Chair, work continues on the Atlin Road, and this year the department has allocated \$660,000 to complete

the reconstruction of the highway and ensure that this road continues to service commercial traffic for Yukoners, British Columbia residents and visitors alike. I believe we're close to completing the improvements on the Yukon side of the border. For those people who have recreational properties or other properties in Atlin, many of the placer miners who work in the Atlin area but live in the Yukon, and then, of course, those who visit Atlin for events such as their music festival will appreciate the work that we've done to the Atlin Road on the Yukon side of the border.

Work slated for the Carmacks bypass and the Dawson Gold Field Road project both require an environmental assessment for these projects. We've allocated \$200,000 in this year's budget to ensure these environmental assessment works are completed. Planning for a \$4.8-kilometre bypass road, and a new bridge over the Nordenskiöld River is under development. This bypass will route industrial traffic away from the downtown and residential cores of the community of Carmacks and will connect the Klondike Highway to the Freegold Road.

Madam Chair, Yukon has the mining potential and the shipping access to get minerals to market. The missing element is the road network to make projects economically viable or to de-risk them. The Carmacks bypass will provide an essential link in the road network and ensure Yukon's economic and export potential is supported. Of course, as I mentioned, work will also include environmental assessment on the gold field roads, which service a number of placer mines in the Dawson area south of Dawson. This will also allow us to access many hardrock projects, including Kaminak's Coffee project, which they are planning to get into environmental assessment very soon. This is one of the asks that we have submitted to the Government of Canada for major infrastructure investment in the territory to help us improve those roads and a couple of other important transportation links.

Madam Chair, as I've said before, the preservation of our existing infrastructure is of critical importance as well. A comprehensive pavement management system has been in place for a number of years. This system indicates that much of our pavement is long overdue for rehabilitation. Over \$3.8 million has been assigned to the rehabilitation of existing pavement using full pavement overlay, recycling the pavement into base course, aggregate production and resurfacing with BST or other rehabilitation procedures at locations throughout the territory.

I'm going to talk about airports and aerodromes, starting with the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport. To support our economy and our growing population, the Transportation division and the Property Management Division continue to work together to deliver enhancements to the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport. We have expanded the airport terminal building in past projects.

We have expanded and improved the parking lot and also worked to enhance services for our tenants. This year we have allocated \$1.5 million to a project that will include a suite of upgrades selected to improve travellers' experience.

A 2015 space-use assessment found ways to improve the critical functional areas in the airport terminal building that are currently undersized or deficient. These improvements will improve the atmosphere of the airport, which is so important because this is often what visitors first see when they arrive and the last thing they experience when they leave.

Improvements include improvements to the washrooms in the public area, as well as the area beyond security, and improvements to the holding area beyond security I believe for domestic flights, in particular. A further allocation for our local airport of \$2.4 million includes the following: lease lot development on the south and north sides of apron 2; design work for the ATB baggage handling system — an upgrade in that system; rehabilitation of the north apron; and pavement patching.

Highways and Public Works is committed to ensuring the Whitehorse airport continues to support our economy.

When it comes to the community aerodromes, \$2.3 million has been designated for continued improvements at various Yukon community aerodromes. Projects in the communities include the following: repairing drainage issues at the Dawson Airport; resurfacing and dust control at the Faro aerodrome; resurfacing at the Pelly aerodrome; and improving the fencing and dust control at the Old Crow aerodrome.

The department has also committed \$395,000 toward a functional plan at the Dawson Airport. This plan includes assessing current infrastructure, including surfaces for the runway, taxiways, aprons, vehicle access and buildings, both existing and required, to determine the level of investment required to meet the identified needs. Once this has been determined, Madam Chair, the department will prepare a construction sequencing plan. This will assist the department in making effective decisions about the future of this important component of our aviation network.

Of course, of particular interest to the citizens of Dawson and some of the commercial users of the airport will be the paving. I've met recently — I had a teleconference recently — with the Dawson City Chamber of Commerce, and we've agreed to work together in partnership on this functional planning and, barring any major obstacles or hurdles that we run into, we would look to initiate paving of the Dawson City runway in the 2017 construction season.

Madam Chair, we have also committed \$500,000 for the Burwash Landing aerodrome for some needed renovations to the air terminal building that's located there.

I'm going to turn my attention now to Property Management in Highways and Public Works. The Property Management Division, or PMD, is committed to providing capital development, space planning and facility management services on behalf of Yukon government departments.

With approximately 550 buildings in the portfolio, totalling more than 3.5 million square feet, it takes a team of dedicated project and facility managers to maintain safe and healthy work environments for the Yukon government departments and the Yukon public.

The department takes pride in the entire stock of buildings in the portfolio and is committed to delivering major works and capital maintenance projects responsibly, planning government space efficiently and maintaining our buildings effectively. Many of our buildings are aging and in need of substantial upgrading. Poor insulation, inefficient design and aged heating systems make them more expensive to operate. This is something to bear in mind when considering the cost of upgrades versus the cost of replacement.

PMD advocates a holistic approach to planning, managing and maintaining government facilities. This means looking at the diverse facility needs of departments as a whole and identifying opportunities to maximize energy savings and program delivery efficiencies through coordinated initiatives. HPW is committed to enabling Yukoners and enriching their lives by providing them with high quality, safe, comfortable and energy-efficient government facilities.

On the building maintenance and space planning side of things, we manage and oversee capital building maintenance and upgrades to the existing inventory of Yukon government buildings. Typical projects under this program include building roof reconstruction, interior and exterior painting, flooring and window replacement, lighting, insulation, energy upgrades and space planning.

Each year, PMD issues approximately 150 contracts for capital maintenance projects. The majority of these are delivered by local Yukon firms. They are smaller projects, but they are crucial in terms of providing sustained local economic benefits, as they typically leverage local capacity in trades, including electrical, mechanical, roofing, painting and flooring. Since 2010, PMD has delivered more than 850 capital maintenance contracting opportunities to the market as I mentioned, the majority of which are delivered by local contractors.

PMD also manages the planning, programming, designing and constructing of facilities to meet the accommodation needs of public programs. This is achieved by managing building development and maintenance projects and procuring buildings and services necessary to meet programming needs. This year, Madam Chair, the department has allocated \$1.1 million toward this program to assist in managing our facilities.

Also \$1 million is dedicated to project management on behalf of external clients. This enables the project sponsors to achieve desired outcomes on projects in terms of quality, costs and schedule. All dollars spent are on behalf of external clients and are 100-percent recoverable. External clients may include the federal government, Yukon Liquor Corporation and Yukon Housing Corporation, or the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board.

I am extremely pleased and proud to update members and Yukoners on progress at the main administration building here in Whitehorse: \$4.5 million is allocated in this budget for the main administration building, or the MAB, including a building envelope upgrade to enhance its performance and reduce energy costs consumed in this core facility of the government's inventory. Once complete, it is estimated the

upgrades will reduce annual heating costs by more than \$225,000, which allows us to spend those resources on other important projects for Yukon taxpayers and also reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 400 tonnes each year. The department will continue implementing energy-efficiency projects to reduce operating costs, cut greenhouse gas emissions and advance the commitments outlined in the climate change action plan and Yukon energy strategy.

Madam Chair, turning our attention to ICT, this branch is the Information and Communications Technology Division — or ICT, as it's known. The ability to access it promptly as needed, to organize and manage it, to create and edit it, and analyze it has become crucial in our current era. The Yukon government is the custodian of sensitive information that is of high value to our government and to its citizens for effective delivery of health care and social services, education, justice, lands, highways, properties and many other important programs delivered by each and every Yukon government department.

ICT's role is to work with, and on behalf of, government departments and to put in place the base information infrastructure needed to effectively and efficiently deliver — and continuously improve — services to Yukoners. E-government, in which government services and information can be more readily accessed directly by the public wherever and whenever it is convenient is of growing importance in an age in which digital access is broadly available in most places and to most people.

We are recognizing this opportunity in partnership with our fellow departments in Yukon government by redirecting existing resources to create an e-services branch to accelerate our progress in this area. We don't do this alone; we work closely with our local IT industry sector to deliver in this complex area.

I would like to thank the members of YITIS for all of their work and efforts in convincing not only me, obviously, but colleagues, that increased investment in the IT envelope was good for local businesses and good for Yukoners as a whole.

We have also recognized the opportunity to operate more efficiently through a shared services approach to information delivery. We have already achieved some efficiency in the common corporate delivery of applications and infrastructure and we continue to look for additional opportunities for a strategically holistic approach to government-wide needs. ICT provides cost-effective information management, IT and telecommunications support for internal government administration and the delivery of services to the public.

As I have mentioned, funds of \$9.5 million will support information and technology requirements and meet business needs including network infrastructures, systems development and workstations for all of government. This initiative includes Highways and Public Works systems development projects, further development of e-services and improvements to the mobile radio system and telecommunications network.

Just to conclude my remarks, I would like to talk a little bit about the ATIPP act review, which again was a question

raised in the opposition briefing by members opposite and their staff. ICT oversees our *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* office, or the ATIPP office, which works with the public ATIPP-related matters and requests. The office then works with internal program areas to manage requests for access to information while remaining a primary point of contact for our government and the Information and Privacy Commissioner. A legislated comprehensive review of Yukon's ATIPP act will meet current and future needs of Yukon government, accommodates modern digital technologies and addresses information management and privacy issues.

In this current budget, we've allocated \$120,000 toward this review, which will include a public education campaign to establish a base of knowledge and gather broad preliminary input so that we can move forward with the balance of the ATIPP act review in subsequent fiscal years.

That concludes my opening remarks. Again I would like to thank all the staff in Highways and Public Works who assisted in putting this budget together. I think the Premier mentioned in some of his remarks that he would like to thank caucus members for all their effort. I would like to thank department officials for all their effort in assisting with the preparation of this budget. There was an awful lot of work done to get us to where we are in the House today and kudos to all of those officials throughout Highways and Public Works who helped us get here.

I will turn the floor over to the member opposite and, after her remarks, I can go individually through the questions raised in opposition debate and provide the answers that I have so far, with a commitment to get back on those that I don't have.

Ms. Moorcroft: At the outset, I would like to ask the minister if perhaps he could provide the opposition critics with a copy of the information that has been prepared already in response to the questions that we have put on record. This would help to keep us organized as we go back and forth on outstanding questions and questions coming out of the budget and the minister's remarks.

I'm going to start with the Alaska Highway corridor. I had asked the minister if he was able to provide a construction plan or to let us know whether a major comprehensive development program on the Alaska Highway corridor had proceeded to Management Board and what were the initiatives the government would be planning to spend funds on over the next five-year period.

One intersection I wanted to draw attention to — because we've had a number of calls in our office — and I expect the minister has too — is the intersection of the Alaska Highway with the south Klondike Highway, or Mayo Road. At that intersection, particularly during commuter times in the mornings and the afternoons, there's a lot of traffic that comes from north of Whitehorse, south on the Alaska Highway, around a curve and down a hill to where the south Klondike Highway then turns on to the Alaska Highway. There's no left-turn lane for the traffic that comes off the Mayo Road and turns on to the Alaska Highway, and so the traffic that's

southbound from north of Whitehorse has to merge. We've had concerns expressed about accidents occurring there if that's not dealt with, and so I would like the minister to come back and indicate whether that intersection is in the plans for the next year or two.

Moving on to the Robert Campbell Highway, for years the community of Ross River has demonstrated a need for repairs to the section of highway between Ross River and Faro, and for years this government hasn't heeded their calls. I fail to understand why the government doesn't seem to be interested in investing in the 71 kilometres of road between Ross River and Faro and improving it. Instead, this government has invested millions of dollars into the Robert Campbell Highway going north of Watson Lake. The spending on this section of highway this year is all in the first 100 kilometres of the highway. The Campbell highway is 582 kilometres long, so it's certainly understandable that Ross River residents would ask why it was that the Campbell highway between Watson Lake and Ross River was getting all the attention and not the highway between Ross River and Faro.

The Yukon NDP obtained the feasibility study that provides the rationale for the Robert Campbell Highway improvements. The study confirmed what we had expected; that the highway improvements were undertaken to benefit the Wolverine mine. The Robert Campbell Highway feasibility study makes no mention of tourism, the residents of Ross River, Faro and Watson Lake or any other development along the highway. The study states and I quote: "All of the expenditures identified above are made necessary by the development of a single mining project."

This year, there is \$11.4 million in new money for these improvements. Were there any changes made to the work being done on the Robert Campbell Highway since the Wolverine mine closed down? As I mentioned, the feasibility study revolves almost entirely around the existence of that mining project. Is the government shifting its priorities?

There was a recent announcement of a consultation and accommodation agreement with Liard First Nation regarding the Robert Campbell Highway reconstruction. A government press release described it as — and I quote: "... intended to increase Liard First Nation's capacity to participate in consultation related to the Campbell Highway Reconstruction, and provides Liard First Nation with the opportunity to participate in some of the economic opportunities arising from the project."

Can the minister explain how the agreement accomplishes those goals? Was the Liard First Nation able to take advantage of it with the most recent investments in the Robert Campbell reconstruction?

Earlier this year, the Yukon government submitted its request to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance for federal infrastructure projects. One of the projects identified was the Yukon resource gateway project. The Yukon government estimates that the project would cost an estimated \$468 million. The document states that of this total, industry would commit an estimated \$108 million; Yukon

would commit \$112 million; and Canada would commit the remaining \$248 million. This is obviously a request for a significant amount of money designed to help mines access their projects. A 2015 submission to the *Canada Transportation Act* review panel stated — and again I quote: "Yukon is too small a jurisdiction to aggressively pursue a 'build it and they will come' approach to public infrastructure."

Can the minister explain the competing positions at odds here — at one point saying that we are too small for "build it and they will come" projects and then turning around, less than a year later, and requesting money for "build it and they will come" projects?

That quote that Yukon is too small a jurisdiction to aggressively pursue a "build it and they will come" approach to public infrastructure is from the Government of Yukon's submission to the *Canada Transportation Act* review panel, dated April of 2015.

Looking at the report as it addresses infrastructure development for Yukon, nothing on the public record has shown any indication that this government has done a full accounting of the source of funds and the project costs for what it calls "targeted strategic investments" in four key areas.

The request for nearly \$250 million to spend on resources' roads also raises a number of questions when it comes to government doing their due diligence. The Yukon's *Resource Access Roads Framework* states — and I quote: "Before making a decision to fund or participate in resource access road development, an economic impact assessment of the relative costs and benefits of the project to Yukon will be considered."

It goes on to state the factors included in this assessment, and those factors are estimates of mineral resources, cost estimates, project timelines, production estimates and schedules, payments to governments, employment, wages and salaries, possibly affected communities and First Nations, and estimates of potential impacts on the Yukon population. From the submission to the federal government for infrastructure money, it is clear that the government is looking to go ahead on this project. Has the government satisfied these elements when it looks at what would be considered in the assessment? If so, can the minister provide the economic analysis that was conducted?

Madam Chair, I have put a number of questions on the record, and I think I will pause there and allow the minister to respond and then continue with more.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, I will respond to the number of questions that were raised in written form once it is in an acceptable format and all of the information is complete. I did want to get some of those responses on the record here today. We might as well start with the Alaska Highway corridor, which was identified by the member opposite. We do have \$2.5 million in this budget for upgrades, as I mentioned, around the Pioneer RV Park to just south of the Miles Canyon turnoff. That includes the addition of a northbound passing lane as well as some intersection improvements in that area. This is one of the safety issues that were identified by the

department when I asked them to come back. This was upon completion of the extensive public consultation that we saw last year on the Whitehorse corridor.

I have been briefed by department officials on some of the next steps they would like to take. I do have to take that to caucus colleagues and then beyond that to Management Board to identify some resources, not only for additional consultations that need to be completed on the heels of the public consultation, but what projects will be sequenced. We did identify safety as an issue. The project that we are undertaking will accomplish some of those safety aspects with respect to the corridor, but there are some other safety opportunities that we need to take a look at. Two were identified by the member opposite at the intersections of the Klondike Highway, both north and south, with the Alaska Highway, but there are other ones.

One of the questions raised during the briefing was: If the plan was based on safety, was any traffic data more recent than 2010 or 2012 available and considered? The extension of Hamilton Boulevard, for example, would have changed traffic patterns. This functional plan was developed using published traffic count data up to 2009, and collision records from 1996 to 2009. There is a project currently underway that is analyzing 2009 to 2014 collision data.

A report called *In-Service Road Safety Review: Existing Conditions Alaska Highway (Highway 1) Corridor Near the City of Whitehorse*, dated October 30, 2011, is a safety review report that was completed. Although some recent collision data has become available since this October 2011 report, the report is considered to be sufficiently current to characterize the existing safety performance on the corridor. It is also understood that some improvements have been made to the corridor, but the safety impact of these improvements may not be clearly understood within the short time frame after which they were implemented.

Traffic count data continues in the Whitehorse corridor and data exists up to very recently. HPW is collecting additional data this summer with some additional mobile captures, including pedestrian data. That will help to inform our decision and our longer term planning for improvements in the Whitehorse corridor. I've always said that safety is of paramount concern to me, and that's why we've chosen the project that we have for this existing year and we will look forward to other projects in the years coming out.

Obviously there was a lot of concern by business owners and individuals who reside in the corridor, and we'll have to regroup with them, based on their concerns coming out of the public consultation. That will be another aspect going forward. As I've mentioned, I haven't had the opportunity to bring this forward to caucus colleagues or prepare anything for Management Board yet, but when I get that chance, I will do so.

Madam Chair, maybe I'll turn my attention now to the Robert Campbell Highway. Work on the Robert Campbell Highway benefits all Yukoners who depend on that road, especially residents of Ross River and Watson Lake and visitors to Frances Lake. This is the portion of the road that's

under improvement now. Making that highway safer is important for local users and for other Yukon residents and tourists, and perhaps commercial carriers that use that highway.

The Robert Campbell Highway and the Alaska Highway are the only all-season highways connecting the eastern part of the territory to the west, connecting major Yukon communities. It is also an essential emergency response route, especially when the Alaska Highway or the north Klondike Highway may be closed.

Improvements to the highway provide a resilient emergency response option for communities connected to the highway. We anticipate expenditures on the Robert Campbell Highway to slightly exceed \$11 million this year. Of course, that figure is based on estimates. We won't know the actual amount until the tenders come in. This work should expand the Yukon's GDP by an estimated \$5.5 million and provide for as many as 60 jobs over the course of the 2016-17 year.

Reconstruction of this important highway is ongoing — and this is the piece between Watson Lake and the Tuchtutia highway maintenance camp, which is essentially three kilometres past the Nahanni Range Road junction with the Robert Campbell Highway. Road quality between Watson Lake and Tuchtutia has been an issue where the road has not been reconstructed. Commercial vehicle traffic resulted in the department expending additional resources to maintain the road during the spring thaw to mitigate the impacts of that heavy traffic.

Of course, the member opposite mentioned the Wolverine mine. That mine is in temporary closure, so there's no heavy industrial traffic there now, but now is the time to not only plan, but also to make the improvements. There have been other emerging projects in that area since what the member opposite referred to — that snapshot in time. The Kudze Kayah project, which is owned by BMC Minerals, will be the largest exploration project undertaken in the Yukon this year. I believe they're planning on spending close to \$14 million US to further define their deposit.

I understand they're anticipating potentially going into YESAB later on in this calendar year or early in the 2017 calendar year. My understanding is that they would prefer to move their product south from their mine through the community of Watson Lake and down to the port at Stewart. That is some of their initial planning in initial conversations. Of course it's subject to change. I also understand there is a potential for some caribou issues if they were to go the other route, so that is the route that they've chosen.

Another important project in that area that has emerged is the Selwyn deposit. Although they are in a holding pattern with that project, they certainly are anticipating putting that project into development at some time in the future. Of course now is the time to seek funds and to look to advance those projects.

This \$11-million expenditure is about one-sixth of the entire transportation budget. We are spending money throughout the territory when it comes to maintaining and improving our transportation network.

The Ross River-Faro stretch that the member opposite referenced — kilometre 362 to kilometre 414 — is a 52.4-kilometre stretch of the Robert Campbell Highway. It was recently analyzed as part of a larger functional plan undertaken by Associated Engineering on behalf of the Yukon government. The road currently services approximately 100 vehicles per day, has a posted speed limit of 90 kilometres per hour and is considered to be a safe operating road. In assessing the existing conditions of the road, deficiencies in the alignment were noted. Such deficiencies are not uncommon on low-volume roads. The Campbell Highway functional plan that was completed in March of this year, which included that particular section, identified some improvement options and we will look to prioritize that section between Ross River — I know it's important to the MLA for Pelly-Nisutlin and I know it's important to the residents of Ross River, the First Nation. We met during our budget consultations with representatives of the First Nation and this was one of the things that they brought up, as needing improvement. Again, we'll work within the functional plan to prioritize that improvement.

I want to touch briefly on the agreement with the Kaska. It was a capacity development agreement signed by representatives of the Liard First Nation and me on November 5, 2015. The Yukon government, led by ECO Aboriginal Relations, is negotiating a reconciliation agreement with the Kaska First Nation. This is not directly linked to the reconciliation agreement; however, Highways and Public Works and the Kaska agreed to negotiate a capacity development agreement in relation to the ongoing Campbell Highway reconstruction project. The purpose of the agreement is to increase Kaska capacity to participate in the review of highway projects in their traditional territory and develop contracting expertise and opportunities for their citizens while allowing reconstruction activities to continue unimpeded for the duration of this agreement.

The agreement itself commits HPW to funding the following: capacity development for consultation on proposed and ongoing road reconstruction activities for a total of \$300,000 over three years starting in the previous fiscal year, 2015-16, and ending in 2017-18; right-of-way and pit development clearing contracts for reconstruction work to a total of \$600,000 over three years; and \$450,000 in funding for brush and weed contracts over three years in support of this agreement.

In 2015-16, HPW provided \$100,000 in funds for participation and consultation, awarded \$350,000 in contracts that include right-of-way and pit clearing, and consulted with the Liard First Nation designated representative to discuss work scheduled for this year.

We'll continue to work with LFN and their designated representative on project-specific issues such as fish habitat and environmental effects of the highway construction project.

I think that provides an answer to what the member opposite was asking with respect to the Robert Campbell Highway and the improvements in there.

It segues nicely into final comments on the national infrastructure components or the resource gateway project. I noted that the member opposite mentioned a quote from the *Canada Transportation Act* review — that we're too small to take an "if we build it, they will come" approach — but, in the case of this project, they're already there. Let's talk about northern access into the Dawson Range from the community of Dawson City south toward the Kaminak Coffee project.

Kaminak is looking to enter the environmental assessment phase sometime this summer, but there are so many other projects in that northern end of the White Gold district that were explored during the busy exploration boom of about 2010 to 2012. This infrastructure will certainly help them.

It will also help the existing placer miners. There are over 100 placer miners active throughout the territory. Many of them are in that area of the Yukon, south of Dawson City — Hunker Creek, Dominion Creek, the Indian River. Many of them will benefit from improvements to that particular section of the road.

They're already there. This isn't an "if you build it, they will come" aspect. The placer miners and the hard rock companies that are looking to go into development and those looking to enhance their exploration will benefit from improvements. It will drive down the costs of operating for them and essentially de-risk their projects and allow more money to be put — in the case of the hard rock miners in particular — into drill core, which is obviously one of the important steps in proving out a mine so that it can be developed.

The other aspect of that particular project is access from the south into the Dawson Range. The end of that road would be the Casino project. We know that is currently before YESAB and has been referred for a panel review, and that process is underway.

We need to plan at this time for improvements to the road. This is not just specifically a driveway to one particular project. There are several projects in the southern part of the Dawson Range that will benefit — from Sonora Gulch to Northern Freegold to Carmacks Copper — a very placer-rich area as well that will benefit from improvements to that section of the road. That is why we chose that particular section to advance in our national ask of Canada.

The other one is the Nahanni Range Road. It is bookended by the Selwyn property, which is one of the largest undeveloped lead-zinc projects in the world. We know that the company that owns that project has slowed down their efforts with respect to developing it, but they are still very interested in developing that project — from my conversations with them. Now is the time to plan; now is the time to look to set aside the dollars. We are fortunate in the sequencing of these projects to be able to sequence the environmental assessment and construction as well. Obviously, the Yukon government would not be able to fund in one or two fiscal years our share of what it would take to build these roads, but we have an opportunity over a number of years to advance these projects. The first one that we will look are the gold field roads in the

Dawson area. That seems to be the one that will require the least amount of environmental assessment. It can be done, we believe, at the designated office level. We are still preparing the environmental assessment piece. There is money in this budget for environmental assessment of that particular project.

When it comes to all three of those potential projects, the exploration companies, the placer miners — those advanced projects are already there. We feel that this is a good investment for Canada. Since devolution we have managed the resources, but Canada still owns them. They will continue to get the majority of the royalties, taxes and other benefits associated with it. I think we have a good business case to put forward to them that they will receive a return on investment.

I certainly recognize that members opposite may be concerned with these projects, but we feel there are great opportunities, short term — for job opportunities involved with the construction — and longer term — with potential maintenance opportunities as these are roads that we don't maintain on a year-round basis. There are opportunities for potentially others to move in and maintain that, particularly the First Nations, which have expressed an interest in maintenance contracts on these roads, whether it is the public portion or the portion that is owned by the mining company or will be funded by the mining company. There are lots of questions still to be determined, but we are working in a time when there is an opportunity to address these critical infrastructure needs so that we can de-risk projects and allow more money to be spent on exploration and placer projects rather than on transporting in there. We have a network in place that will allow them to easily access the project. It is something that we are excited about. I know there was a large business contingent that travelled to Ottawa with us in early February for Yukon Days.

We spoke to a number of officials and ministers in the federal government — and I believe the Premier brought it up with the Prime Minister as well — about the importance of these projects and how they will benefit the Yukon and provide a good return on investment for the Canadian government.

Ms. Moorcroft: About a year ago when we were debating the Highways and Public Works budget — on May 19, 2015 when we were speaking about the Alaska Highway corridor — the minister indicated that he would be focusing the attention on meeting safety needs in developing a construction plan, elements of which would have to go to YESAA, and then proceeding to take that to Management Board.

Just this afternoon, the minister has said that he has not yet had a chance to take a development plan to caucus and then on to Management Board. The minister also spoke about traffic count data that had been done, and I would like to ask him whether that traffic count data included the intersection of the Alaska Highway with the south Klondike Highway and the intersection of the Alaska Highway with the north Klondike Highway.

I would also like to ask the minister if can release the data from those traffic counts.

The minister also spoke about a 2011 collision data report. I'm not certain if that is one of the reports included in the functional plan. It may be something the minister has already provided but, if not, could he let us know whether he would do that?

Still on the Alaska Highway corridor in the Whitehorse area, the Alaska Highway Corridor Business Association has raised a number of concerns that the case hadn't been made for twinning the highway between the Two Mile Hill and — I want to say the south access road intersection — the Robert Service Way intersection. There are a number of turning lanes being added there and there's a fairly narrow section along there. I'm wondering if the minister has an update on that particular section and whether he has come to a resolution regarding that development and addressing the interests and concerns of the Alaska Highway Corridor Business Association.

The final point that I have on the Alaska Highway corridor is what response the minister has asked his department officials to develop on interests that were expressed by both the City of Whitehorse and by constituents living along that Alaska Highway corridor related to improving safety for cyclists and for pedestrians. This would affect, not just the configuration of the highway itself, but also places where pedestrians or cyclists might cross the highway.

On the Robert Campbell Highway, I would like to ask the minister whether he has any traffic studies related to the volume of traffic on the 520 kilometres on the Alaska Highway between Ross River and Watson Lake to support his statement that there would be a lot of benefit to local users, to tourists and to commercial carriers. It's not clear how many commercial carriers might be using that route certainly at the present time, when there is a temporary closure of — what the minister called a temporary closure — the Wolverine mine and I wondered if the minister had any examples of that Robert Campbell Highway being used for a central emergency response route.

The minister stated that the 52.4-kilometre stretch of road between Ross River and Faro was recently analyzed and is considered safe. He indicated there were deficiencies in alignment that were not uncommon in low-volume roads. Again, I would ask if there are traffic volume numbers that show what the volume of traffic would be between Ross River and Faro, and how that would compare to the traffic volume numbers on the Robert Campbell Highway?

How much would it cost to address the deficiencies in alignment along the road between Ross River and Faro? The minister said that he knew it was important to the residents and that it was important to the MLA. Are there any expenditures this year on improving the section of road where they have identified some deficiencies between Ross River and Faro?

Turning to the resource access roads, the minister said that this wasn't a case of build it and they will come — that they were here already — and so I would like to repeat the question to the minister about what economic analysis was done in relation to these expenditures and if the minister could

provide the economic analysis that was done. Can the minister confirm if he has spoken to affected First Nations and communities close to the proposed roads? Can he confirm that estimates of mineral resources, cost estimates, project timelines, production estimates and scheduled payments to governments for all of the projects these roads will benefit have been satisfied? Can the minister indicate whether there have been any revenues to date to the Yukon government from any of the projects?

Hon. Mr. Kent: With respect to the traffic reports that I mentioned in my response, we can make available any of those that are complete, including the 2011 one that I referenced. I don't have the information with me, but I'll find out if traffic counts at the two intersections of the Klondike Highway were included there.

When it comes to the corridor itself, obviously there was public interest last year around this time as the public consultations were underway. Part of that is that we still need to engage with some of those groups, like the Alaska Highway Corridor Business Association. As I mentioned, I still need to go to caucus colleagues, as well as Management Board, to determine the next steps. We have included some dollars for safety in this budget — \$2.5 million — to improve the piece for the northbound lane between Pioneer RV Park and the Miles Canyon Road. The issues that were raised by the City of Whitehorse, as well as others, on safety for cycling and pedestrians — I know there was some potential for cycling lanes and a paved multi-use trail to be included as part of the original report. We'll have to analyze what we heard from the various stakeholders with respect to that so we can make a revised plan going forward. As I've mentioned, that work has not been completed yet. I do have a couple of steps yet to undertake, including a briefing of my caucus colleagues.

When it comes to the Robert Campbell Highway, as I mentioned in my initial response — I guess I'll focus first on the Ross River to Faro stretch that we talked about. I did mention earlier the traffic counts on that particular stretch of highway. There are 100 vehicles per day and a posted speed limit of 90 kilometres per hour. As I mentioned, it's considered safe at that speed limit.

In assessing the existing conditions of the road, deficiencies in the alignment were noted. Such deficiencies are not uncommon on low-volume roads. The Campbell Highway functional plan, which was just completed in March 2016, will help us to identify future budget allocations for that particular section of highway. I can tell members that the functional plan provided two options for improving the stretch of road. Overall safety of this section of highway can be improved with either of those two options. Significant funding would have to be dedicated to this section of road to upgrade it.

The two functional plan options that were identified — the first one is to deliver a BST road surface width of 10 and a half metres and meet the requirements for a design speed of 90 kilometres per hour. The total cost for this improvement is estimated — and again, these are estimates — at \$66.4 million. The second option to improve this stretch to meet

low-volume road standards for a seven-and-a-half-metre-wide gravel surface with a 90-kilometre-per-hour posted speed limit would come in at a cost of \$20.3 million. Again, this functional plan was just completed in March. This is new information for us as a government, but will help inform future decisions with respect to this particular stretch of highway.

The Watson Lake to Tuchitua highway maintenance camp section — the plan is to complete reconstruction of the road to Tuchitua within the next three years. However, if industrial traffic has not resumed or is not on the horizon, expenditures may be adjusted accordingly.

Reconstruction of kilometre 67 to 73 is complete; reconstruction of kilometre 88 to kilometre 97 began in 2015 and will be completed in this year, in this construction season; and reconstruction of kilometre 79 to kilometre 88 will start this year and be completed next year.

I did mention some of the other projects that have emerged in that particular area. Once we get a better handle on the plans of BMC with respect to their Kudz Ze Kayah project, it will help us inform future budgeting exercises.

Again, this has been a good project from improving safety issues with respect to that road when there was commercial traffic active from the Wolverine mine. There is the potential for additional commercial traffic in the near term — or near to medium term — from the Kudz Ze Kayah property and then significant industrial traffic going forward if the Selwyn project goes ahead in the next number of years.

We certainly don't want to be caught flat-footed if these projects do advance. It does take a significant amount of time to make these improvements — to plan for them and to budget for them, given the other competing priorities that we have. Again, if we can do this in a way that improves the infrastructure that we have and makes it safer for the travelling public, that's something that is extremely important. I don't have any figures with respect to the traffic volumes on the road at present, but again there is anticipated commercial and other traffic that could use that particular stretch.

When it comes to the New Building Canada fund national infrastructure component application, what we're focused on is delivering a safe, reliable and sustainable transportation network in Yukon, but it's not without its challenges. We have a very small population spread over a large area. It creates unique service delivery challenges. A small tax base from which to generate revenues limits our government's ability to build, improve and maintain transportation infrastructure. The Yukon economy is heavily influenced by market forces outside of our territory — specifically the resource sector, which is one of the pillars of our economy. It does contribute a significant portion of the Yukon's GDP; I think in and around the 20-percent mark is the number that I'm aware of.

Yukon possesses a significant resource base from which to develop and expand our economy. However, we face a challenge within the overall lack of suitable infrastructure along what we're calling "the last mile to significant mineral deposits" — I've mentioned the Dawson Range and the Nahanni Range in particular.

The potential costs of building this infrastructure lay beyond the financial capacity of Yukon government alone and that's why we've approached other partners, such as the federal government. They see the most tax and royalty benefits from these projects going forward.

Yukon has the mining potential and the shipping access to get our minerals to market. The missing element is the road network to make some of these projects economically viable — de-risk them to a point where they would be able to compete with projects getting financed south of 60 or perhaps in some of the northern areas of provinces that have better infrastructure.

We applied for funding under the national infrastructure component for needed access upgrades to Dawson Range and the Nahanni Range, which are areas of high mineral potential and active mining within the Yukon. I have mentioned that the Dawson Range access will include upgrades to four separate systems: Freegold Road, Casino Road, Gold Field Road and the potential to connect the Coffee project and the Casino properties at some point, although that's not anticipated in the initial project plans.

Yukon government has had preliminary discussions with Selkirk First Nation, Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, as well as the Kaska. Discussions to date have focused on increasing understanding of the proposal and scoping issues for further discussion and negotiation on project-specific agreements.

Further, White River First Nation has asserted aboriginal rights and title in an area outside of their *Umbrella Final Agreement*-asserted traditional territory. Both the Freegold and Gold Field roads are in this asserted area and the First Nation has raised concerns regarding the level of consultation with them in this area, so that is certainly something that we'll have to be aware of, as well as the First Nation partners and those companies that are looking to develop their projects.

The Nahanni Range Road extends northeast from the Campbell Highway to the Yukon-NWT border and provides access to another rich mineral area with a number of projects, mostly on the base metal side, but there are some precious metal projects in there as well.

The total project proposal for this ask is \$468 million. As mentioned, Canada is being invited to invest \$248 million, or, 53 percent. Yukon would commit \$112 million, or 24 percent, and industry commitments of \$108 million are 23 percent. The approval process on this type of an application is understandably extensive. We will be working through the application with Infrastructure Canada over the coming months. We started this, of course, in early February and we hope to have an agreement in principle with Canada sometime later on this year.

Yukon will continue consultation with affected First Nations with an objective of having signed project-specific agreements in place by late 2016 to allow for initial construction to begin in the 2017-18 construction year. Again, this is an exciting opportunity that has been presented to us, as I mentioned, to de-risk some of the projects that we have.

For information purposes, this national infrastructure component of Building Canada was something that was put in place by the previous federal government. It isn't in relation to the new pillars that the new federal government has established as far as infrastructure or new funds. It's something that has been in place — I believe every other jurisdiction in the country has applied for a project under this program except for the Yukon, so this is why we feel there is a real opportunity for federal investment on this project.

To be considered nationally significant, projects must support one or more of the following objectives: generate positive economic activity, reduce potential economic disruptions or foregone economic activity, generate productivity gains for the Canadian economy, and provide benefits that extend beyond the provinces or territories where the project would be located. Eligible projects are limited to those that provide the greatest economic impacts under the following seven categories, of which one of them is highways and major roads, so we certainly meet the criteria there. For projects located north of 60, the federal government will fund up to 75 percent of total eligible costs and, as I mentioned, we're asking for 53 percent, so we're well within those parameters as well. Industry stepping up is helpful in making our case to the federal government to make these investments.

I think it was the federal government with their roads to resources program back in the 1960s — and we still are still enjoying the benefits of those infrastructure investments today. Not only were those for major trade corridors, such as the Dempster, Klondike and Campbell highways in the territory — but they have continued to pay dividends, providing employment opportunities during capital improvements for maintenance that we have on those highways and the impacts for tourism. I know that one of the recent tourism ads features iconic drives, and many of those iconic drives are done on infrastructure put into place to support resource development.

At this point in time — obviously recognizing that we want to be mindful of impacts on wildlife and hunting pressures and other things like that — we feel that this is a great investment for Canada to make. We and industry are willing to step up and assist them in making that investment. Perhaps different parties in this Legislature don't agree on this type of investment, but on the government side, we feel that this is a positive opportunity to move forward and create significant jobs for Yukoners in the short term, in the medium term and even in the long term, as some of these projects could be generational mines or multi-generational — such as the placer properties that exist in the Klondike and Carmacks areas.

Chair: Would members like to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order. We are resuming general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works.

Ms. Moorcroft: I'll come back to the minister's responses related to the Alaska Highway corridor and then move on. The minister has said that Alaska Highway corridor improvements would prioritize fixing the most dangerous sections first. Can I gather, then, that the section between the Miles Canyon Road and the Pioneer RV Park has been identified as the most dangerous section of road? If not, why are they doing it first? Is it simply because there's easy permitting there, which was one of the comments provided at the briefing on the budget?

Another area that the minister and I have been discussing about the Alaska Highway corridor is the potential for paved multi-use trails, and also looking at cycling lanes. The minister has said that he would be developing a revised plan, based on public input and the "what we heard" document after the government consulted on the draft functional plan.

I would just like to say that I've heard lots from residents in the City of Whitehorse — from city officials, from constituents — that modern, progressive cities do invest in bike lanes. In relation to making a revised plan, I would like to ask if the minister has requested his officials to do that yet, and whether he might be able to provide a copy of a revised plan for us.

Turning then to the minister's responses on the Robert Campbell Highway, I just want to confirm, when the minister said that there were 100 vehicles a day and the speed was set at 90 kilometres an hour, whether that was for the Watson Lake to Ross River —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Ms. Moorcroft: No, that is for Ross River to Faro. Okay, that is what I had understood — so I thank the minister for nodding his head to confirm that the 100 vehicles a day is from the highway between Ross River and Faro, and thanks for providing the information for the costs of options to improve that stretch.

Turning to the new national building fund and the national infrastructure component through which the government has submitted for funding for a safe transportation network, I would like to come back to a number of the questions that I had asked the minister in relation to this and ask the minister if he does in fact have some information about an economic analysis to go with the submission to the federal government. The minister has not said that they have done an economic analysis. I will again ask the minister what information he has on the factors that would be included in an assessment of road development projects — those factors being cost estimates and project timelines, production estimates and schedules, estimates of mineral resources, payments to governments, employment, wages and salaries, estimates of potential impacts on the Yukon population and possibly affected communities and First Nations. The minister did indicate which First Nations he had spoken to but didn't provide a lot of detail about the economic impact of benefits.

One of the components of the submission is the indication that industry would commit an estimated \$108 million for this project and the minister referred to that. Is the \$108 million reflective of any commitments made by industry? If yes, can the minister describe what those agreements are and how reliable the commitments are? Can we take them to the bank? If there isn't any firm commitment and it is just an aspirational estimate, how did the government come up with that number?

The cost for building roads isn't just in the up-front cost of building the road, but the significant costs of maintaining roads as well. We all know that Yukon pays more for road maintenance than other jurisdictions due to a number of different environmental factors. This year the government has allocated \$43 million for highway maintenance alone. If these resource roads are constructed — and I will note that we were told these roads aren't just driveways to mines — and they are open to the public, they will increase our road maintenance bill. Does the \$468 million estimated for this project take into account the full life-cycle costs of these roads?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I will start with the Whitehorse corridor.

What I asked the department to do after public consultations concluded last year — before we could re-engage with the public on some of their concerns and additional concerns — was identify some of the safety priorities or safety issues in the corridor.

The portion that we're improving this year does have safety aspects. It may not be the top safety priority in the corridor but it is one that has few external issues. There are no property owners for the most part. Perhaps the White Pass and Yukon Route's old Utah transfer yards that are no longer in operation would be the only historic property owner and the one that would benefit, of course, is the Pioneer RV Park, as well as all those who use that section of the highway. That's why that project was chosen.

As I mentioned a couple times earlier today, we're looking at getting a presentation in front of caucus and then, beyond that, going through the Management Board process on consultation for a revised plan. There is no revised plan that we have in place at this point. It would have to be done in consultation with groups such as the City of Whitehorse with respect to multi-use trails and the Alaska Highway Corridor Business Association that has the concerns between Robert Service Way and the Two Mile Hill.

There is an awful lot of outreach that still needs to be done, but I need to return to caucus and I haven't done so yet. I would hope to get some sort of a briefing to caucus in the next couple of months, as everyone is here for the Spring Sitting of the Legislature, and proceed from there.

Again, when it comes to the Robert Campbell Highway, we did confirm that it was 100 per day between Ross River and Faro.

On the national infrastructure component, a lot of the information that we garnered and gathered for the application was given by the proponents — the three in particular that have the Coffee project, the Casino project and the Selwyn

project — so that's where those numbers came from. The Yukon Geological Survey would have been involved with providing information about other potential projects, both hard rock and placer, in those two mineral-rich areas of the Yukon.

I think probably the easiest thing for me to do would be to table a copy of the actual application that we submitted to Canada in early February. I will just confirm with the Government of Canada that we are able to do that, as they would be the funding agent. Once I get that confirmation, if it's positive, I can table it. It will answer a lot of the questions asked by members opposite. It is an active application. There are requests for information and clarification going back and forth right now as we move toward what we hope is a successful resolution to it. I would ask members to keep that in mind if we are able to table it. I will table it as soon as possible, as soon as we hear back from Canada on whether it can be a public document. We do have a summary document as well that we provided to business officials and others that perhaps would be of interest to members as well. I will commit to tabling that as soon as possible.

This number that we've put forward is a capital investment number. Only maintenance costs will be over and above the capital costs that we've identified. We'll look to partner with industry on those as they will be the primary beneficiaries of those roads and the use in what has traditionally been the off-season.

I should remind members that the portions that we're talking about — there are significant public portions to those roads. Of course the Nahanni Range Road, the Freegold Road — the Nahanni Range Road is an all-season road. The Freegold Road and the Dawson goldfield roads are seasonally maintained roads, active in the summer only at this point.

Ms. Moorcroft: I would appreciate it if the minister could provide us with a copy of the summary document that he has already provided to business. It would certainly also be helpful to have a copy of the full application — if the Government of Canada does respond positively to the minister's inquiry — that it could be provided to the opposition.

The minister has said that this is for capital costs only and doesn't include maintenance costs. Is there any estimate or any formula regarding what the maintenance costs might be? The minister has said that these roads will primarily benefit the industries that will be nearby. He has indicated that they would be covering some, or most, of the maintenance costs. I would like to ask if he could be a little bit more specific about maintenance costs and how those will be covered.

The minister's response about the Alaska Highway indicated that he has still to put together a presentation for his caucus. He referred also to the stretch by the Pioneer RV Park and the White Pass & Yukon Route. I did have some inquiries from people about some construction work that was done near the White Pass Utah yard, off the Alaska Highway, and it looks like there was a new road that was built. There were reports that some of the work had encroached on the White Pass property. Could the minister provide some information

on what was done? Was there a YESAA application? I would appreciate an update on that.

The minister provided information about some of the bridge work that is scheduled for the coming year through the Highways and Public Works budget. I would like to ask the minister about the Takhini River bridge. We did spend a fair bit of time in the Legislature discussing that bridge, and I understand that there are now plans to add a pedestrian crosswalk on both sides. Is that anticipated to be completed in this fiscal year? I also had questions about improving the access to the bridge. Is there increased signage and are there rumble strips there?

I would like to ask for a little more information related to that.

Hon. Mr. Kent: With respect to the maintenance costs for what we hope to be improvements to existing roads, I don't have a cost estimate at this time. I would be happy to provide one when we get one; as well as any other aspects as far as cost-sharing on those maintenance costs or who will cover the costs.

The project that the member opposite references close to the Utah transfer — Energy, Mines and Resources lands has been leading this work. It was undertaken by a local contractor doing some geotech — looking for sources of gravel within the City of Whitehorse. I believe that initial project did go through the YESAA process; however, I would just beg the indulgence of the House until I have some Energy, Mines and Resources' notes or officials with me. I don't have that information in front of me so again, EMR lands is doing the work. HPW did provide, I think, a permit for work within the right-of-way for access there, but there have been some concerns around that as well. Again, EMR is the primary lead on that and I know I'm the minister responsible, but I just don't have the information in front of me.

Takhini River bridge — there are planning dollars in this budget to address some of the concerns raised by area residents and brought forward by the MLA for Lake Laberge. As it currently stands, it does meet the Transportation Association of Canada standards, in terms of both signage and design. Based on the collision that occurred on the bridge in February of last year, a review of activities that support this bridge was conducted to determine opportunities to improve the safety for bridge users. Centreline rumble strips were installed on both approaches to the bridge as an added safety measure. A signage review was carried out on both approaches to the bridge. In order to follow current standards, an updated signage plan was subsequently installed at both approaches. A temporary radar sign was installed over the summer months to track vehicle speeds and serve as a reminder, and it will be reinstalled this spring. It's my understanding — and I did communicate this to the MLA for Lake Laberge — that it is being repaired at this point, so it will be placed back there.

The planning dollars that are in this current budget will be primarily for a pedestrian and other use walkway, to be installed on the bridge itself. The Klondike Highway

functional plan will address some of the potential long-term improvements that need to be made, not only to that bridge, but to other bridges within the Klondike corridor.

Ms. Moorcroft: Another question that we bring to the minister's attention every year in Highways and Public Works debate relates to the Highways and Public Works maintenance yard in Carmacks. The Village of Carmacks and the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation have asked that it be moved. I would like to ask the minister if there is any activity planned to address that in the next year.

I would like to turn to expenditures on airports. There is \$2.44 million in Whitehorse airport improvements — \$1.5 million is for Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport terminal improvements. What are the improvements to be carried out in the Whitehorse terminal? What role will the YACA agreement play, if any, and will that have any effect on the costing?

Given the recent issues with the apron contracting and construction, how is the government moving forward to make sure that those same issues don't crop up with the improvements on the south and north sides of apron 2? Will engineering, soil and other relevant studies be conducted before beginning construction?

Also at the Whitehorse airport, with construction projects that have already been undertaken, I have a question related to the accessibility of the parking lot and the ramp down to the airport. We have discussed this before in Highways and Public Works debate. I brought forward to the minister's attention the concern from the disability community that the grade of the ramp isn't quite right. I would like to know if there are any funds in this budget to address those deficiencies.

I want to thank the minister for providing a six-page response to the questions that I and the Member for Klondike had asked during budget debate in 2015. Those questions were put on the record in May of last year and we got the response on April 8. The minister did not provide a copy to the Member for Klondike, so I have provided him with a copy. Some of the questions that the Member for Klondike had asked — I don't know if there has been a response, but I haven't seen them if there was. We did put on the record that we would appreciate when the minister is responding to questions from opposition members that they provide them to both opposition parties. I want to repeat that.

One of the questions that I had put on the record related to airports was to do with the soil backfilling as part of the water and sewer expansion. The response indicates that two percent of the soil samples collected were above the commercial standards and 13 percent of the sampling of the upper tank farm excavation area exceeded the regulation limits for residential standards. At the airport, the commercial standards apply. Did the government conclude that because only two percent of the soil samples were above the commercial standards that there was no remedial action required?

Another question that I have related to airports is the leasing of lots at the Whitehorse airport. I have been corresponding with the minister by e-mail about that, so we

can follow up on that once the minister is able to give me a response to the questions I have already provided for him. I do have some questions related to the Dawson City Airport development plan, but I think I will pause to hear the minister's response on the questions related to Whitehorse airport improvements.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, the first question raised by the member opposite was with respect to the grader station at Carmacks. There is money in this budget to develop a generic grader station design that we can not only use at Carmacks, but also use to plan long term as far as grader station replacements at other maintenance camps throughout the territory as warranted. I certainly know — and have heard from the First Nation as well as the village council — the importance of Carmacks. It is our priority-one to replace, so the planning and the design work will be done this year. Next year hopefully we will be able to put dollars in the budget to replace the grader station and relocate it to a more suitable location for the Village of Carmacks.

As I mentioned, it has always been a project that has been around and needs to be done. We are investing in living facilities at two maintenance camps in this fiscal year — Swift River and Drury Creek — as I mentioned, and making improvements to the facilities is also something that is important to our government for the health, well-being and safety of our workforce.

I may have to get the member opposite just to repeat a couple of her questions with respect to airports, but I can say that on the \$1.5 million that we have for investments in the terminal building at the Whitehorse International Airport, upgrades and renovations to the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport include the following: modernizing the check-in area and expanding or remodelling the check-in washrooms; reconfiguring the gate 5 holding area for better utilization and to reduce the loading in the main hold area; improving the washroom access of the main hold room to code requirements; and making upgrades to other important aspects such as elevators, HVAC, and chillers. I believe there is some office space that is in the newer portion of the building — above there — and we're going to look to identify what it's going to take to upgrade that. I think the plan right now would be to move the airline offices into there so that we could upgrade the baggage-handling facilities in a future fiscal year but that's part of that \$1.5 million.

I know the member opposite had some questions about the water and sewer project. Obviously we rely on the Department of Environment with that fill. I apologize; I don't have a copy of the response I sent her so I don't think I can read that into the record. Perhaps I'll get one before we conclude debate today and I can come back to that aspect.

I don't believe, Madam Chair, that there is anything in this budget to re-slope the grades or the access ramp grades at the airport. I will have to follow up with officials to get a determination on when that work is contemplated to be undertaken, or when studies on what needs to be done there will be undertaken.

I can talk a little bit — and I know I'm missing one question in here for sure, but hopefully we'll be able to come back to it fairly quickly. I do want to talk about the airport lease issue though because, as the member opposite said, she and I have been back and forth. I won't reference the individual in question who we've been working with, but I'll provide a bit of a background for the member opposite on this file.

Following amendments to the *Financial Administration Act* in November 2014, it was determined that aviation leases required a review and updating to include clauses introduced by Transport Canada and to clarify some of the terms and conditions. Since that time, Highways and Public Works has been working with the Department of Justice to review the current lease template and develop new lease terms and conditions for leases on airport land. Through this review, Yukon government is standardizing leases and lease terms to ensure consistent clauses in all future leases and compliance with the regulations. Our primary goal is to ensure the Yukon government continues with fair, equitable and future-focused management of public lands, so until the review is completed, any leases which expired since December 2014 are in an over-holding tenancy. The over-holding tenancy is essentially a month-to-month lease with the same terms and conditions as the expired lease. Existing leases with renewal clauses are able to be renewed and have been renewed as per their terms and conditions. Tenants who currently do not have renewal clauses in their leases need to enter into new leases when the review is complete. While the time frame for when the review will be complete has not yet been determined, HPW has no intention of evicting any tenants at the airport and is continuing to allow tenants requiring new leases to remain in that over-holding tenancy.

Hopefully that provides a bit of information for the member opposite, as I know we have been going back and forth with, I believe, one of her constituents who is affected by this.

Ms. Moorcroft: I thank the minister for his update on the review of the leases at the Whitehorse airport. The minister has indicated that there was a need to insert new clauses, as determined by Transport Canada, so that they are clarifying the terms and conditions and developing new terms and conditions. The government is also making sure that there are consistent clauses in all of the leases.

The question that I have been asked relates to exactly what the minister just said about having a fair and equitable focus. The information that I've been provided — and the minister can correct that if there's an error — is that there are some leaseholders at the airport who have been able to renew a 10-year lease for an additional 10-year period under existing terms and conditions and have also been told that there was a lease that was renewed for a 30-year term.

Have new terms and conditions been inserted into the leases that have been renewed for 10 years? Have new terms and conditions been inserted into a lease that has been renewed for a 30-year period — if that has happened? Does the minister have a date that he can provide as to when he

thinks the review of the leasing at the Whitehorse airport will be completed?

The final question that I will ask is: Can the minister then confirm that every tenant who did have a lease that may have expired is still able to continue with an over-holding tenancy lease from month to month under the terms and conditions that were in effect before the lease expired?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Yes, there are two — I'm sure there are more, but there are two sort of separate aspects at play here.

There are some existing leases that did have renewal clauses and are able to be renewed and have been renewed as per their terms and conditions. The tenants who don't have renewal clauses in their leases need to enter into new leases when the review is complete.

Again, as I mentioned, the review is about standardizing leases and lease terms to ensure that consistent clauses in all leases are compliant with what we've identified by Transport Canada and clarifying terms and conditions, so there are two different aspects at play.

As I mentioned, while the time frame for when the review will be complete hasn't been determined yet — officials are working with Justice officials on nailing down that date — we have no intention of evicting any tenants at the airport and we will continue to allow tenants requiring new leases to remain in an over-holding tenancy, which, as I mentioned, is that month-to-month lease arrangement.

Ms. Moorcroft: The minister has said they are clarifying the terms and conditions and developing new terms and conditions to ensure there are consistent clauses in order to meet Transport Canada requirements.

Can the minister tell us what the new Transport Canada requirements are? Can the minister explain whether the new Transport Canada requirements have been inserted or are being met in the renewal of leases?

If the goal is to standardize and if Transport Canada has established new requirements, how can the government renew leases for 10-year periods without meeting those Transport Canada requirements? Perhaps the minister can clarify that for us.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I don't have the Transport Canada requirements here with me but I will endeavour to make those available.

I can tell the member opposite that as recently as February 1, 2016, the Department of Justice confirmed with the Aviation branch that airport leases that do have a current renewal clause could and should be renewed as per their renewal terms.

Airport leases that do not have a renewal clause will need to remain in the over-holding tenancy or the month-to-month lease until new lease terms are drafted.

Since February 1, the Aviation branch has proceeded with processing lease renewals for leases that have valid renewal clauses. Again, this has been done in consultation with our legal experts at the Department of Justice.

Ms. Moorcroft: There is \$395,000 in the budget for a Dawson City Airport development plan. What would the

development plan address? Are there terminal development options? Are they looking at expanding or reconfiguring the passenger terminal? Are there airside and infield development options? Would it also include an economic impact analysis?

What is the timeline for this plan? What are some of the issues this plan will examine? Is it related to potentially paving the runway?

When we debated this last year, the minister spoke about the new 2015 Transport Canada regulations, the TP 312 5th edition, which would come into play if there was new construction at an airport. What are the cost implications of that new standard? I'll leave it at that for the minister's response for now.

Hon. Mr. Kent: When we were conducting this work over the past couple of years, it became apparent that the paving aspect alone, which was considered initially, would lead to the need for new building development for equipment that would be required for the increased maintenance cost at the Dawson Airport. What we decided to do was embark on a functional plan for the entire Dawson City Airport.

Obviously the terminal building itself, right now — if it's not in the highway right-of-way for the Klondike Highway, it's pretty darn close to the highway right-of-way. There are opportunities to move it. There's the Canada Border Services Agency that is used by Air North for the Holland America passengers they're bringing into Dawson. I think it was designed to be a temporary measure for handling the passengers.

Congratulations to Air North, Yukon's Airline. I think they've entered into a two-year agreement with Holland America now to shuttle passengers back and forth from Fairbanks to Dawson City.

What we're going to look at, through this functional plan, are many of the things the member opposite spoke of, whether it's a relocated terminal building, improvements to the apron, additional equipment storage sheds that will be required — a lot of the new development has moved to the far side of the runway — and the paving. We don't want the paving to get tied up with everything else.

As I mentioned earlier today, if there are no showstoppers with work that's underway, we plan on proceeding with the paving of the runway in 2017. Some of the showstoppers that I identified last year have still yet to be resolved, unfortunately. I think Transport Canada is working with Air North on the approach path. Again, we've received verbal assurances that it will work but nothing in writing, and now there's something that — I believe Transport Canada has asked Air North for at a recent meeting with the Dawson City Chamber of Commerce. There is an Air North representative on the chamber, and he mentioned to me that work was underway between Air North and Transport Canada in meeting their information requests.

Some of the other aspects that we need to work on over the next year with respect to paving — the budget numbers that we have, the estimated cost right now, is \$11 million for the paving itself. That is capital cost spread between the installation of the asphalt surface and then the equipment

purchases. I think the last number I saw was about \$4.5 million for paving and \$6.5 million or so for additional equipment and facilities to house the equipment.

This will also increase the annual operating costs. It is estimated to increase the annual operating costs at the Dawson City Airport by \$500,000. We would like at the end of this exercise to have a better cost estimate on both of those numbers when it comes to the paving aspect at the airport.

The other important thing is the service interruption. My understanding from Aviation officials and Transportation officials is that when they paved the runway at the Whitehorse airport, it was out of commission for about 14 days. It was the auxiliary runway, of course, so obviously the main runway was still available, but there is only one runway in Dawson so we are going to have to ensure that we pick a time where the asphalt can be properly installed with the least disruption to service at the airport as possible. Obviously the Air North flights will continue, and then there are the private planes and, most importantly, the medevac planes that still need to access that airport during that time. During this exercise, we will look to ensure that we have identified all of the concerns that could be raised.

As I mentioned earlier in this Sitting, I am pleased that on this functional plan we have partnered with the Dawson City Chamber of Commerce. I did send a letter to Mr. Dick Van Nostrand from the Dawson City chamber inviting him to partner on this, similar to what we have done in partnerships on functional plans with the Vimy Heritage Housing Society or the CSFY — the francophone school commission — on their facilities. Obviously this is a little bit different, but I am happy that they have agreed to be our partners in the development of this functional plan. It is something that we will tender very soon and have the work completed over the course of this fiscal year, targeting an opportunity when budgets are being developed later on in the calendar year and early into 2017 for the following fiscal year.

As I have said, we would like to pave the runway in 2017, provided there is nothing that stops us from doing that, either on a safety standpoint or because of service interruption or those types of things. That is what we are targeting at this point. I don't have a copy of the Transport Canada regulations that the member referenced and that I did talk about last year. I would be happy to provide a link to that, and I can ask officials in the department what cost or service implications those Transport Canada regulations would have with respect to the Dawson Airport.

Ms. Moorcroft: Madam Chair, as far as providing a link to the TP 312, 5th Edition, which are the new Transport Canada regulations relating to airports, I did attempt to look at those but the site required a log-in access, so I wasn't able to open that. Perhaps it is available but, if not, I would like to ask the minister if he can respond to the question about what the cost implications would be of meeting the standards with the fifth edition, which, as with any editions of safety regulations, would go a lot further and would introduce a lot of new measures.

The minister referred to the fact that Transport Canada and Air North were in discussion related to the approach path and the larger planes. I just want to ask the minister if he can assure us that a high-cost project like this would not be proceeding without due diligence. If there are concerns related to the approach, then is it wise to go with the considerable expenditures of paving and will the government take a full look at all of the costing implications of improving the airport to the new standards set out by Transport Canada?

Another question that I have related to airports is the improvements to the Pelly airfield. This is something that my colleague, the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, has been asking about on a regular basis. Will the plans for upgrades to the Pelly airfield in this budget allow that airfield to accommodate medevac planes?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I just want to take a step back and respond to a question raised earlier about compliance of the soil at the Whitehorse airport for the water and sewer project. Steps were taken to process and treat materials originally found — and this was soil removed from the former Whitehorse upper tank farm. Steps were taken to process and treat materials originally found to exceed the Yukon contaminated sites regulations for commercial land use and residential land use standards for regulated hydrocarbons. There was a letter from Golder Associates — I am assuming on February 12, 2015 — indicating that two percent of the 145 in-situ soil samples collected were above the commercial standards and 13 percent were above the residential sampling at the upper tank farm of the excavation for the stockpiled material, originally exceeding the above-regulation limits.

Mechanical processing, screening and crushing of the excavated stockpiled material provided additional treatment for hydrocarbon and concentration reduction. The stockpiled screened and crushed material was re-sampled and analyzed for regulated hydrocarbons after processing to further characterize the material, assess whether it could be removed from the site for use, and assess whether additional permitting was required. Analytical results from the crushed material, hydrocarbon sampling program as provided in the Golder report indicate that all samples collected were below residential standards. Golder states that no material with regulated hydrocarbon concentrations greater than residential standards has been removed from the site.

No relocation permit has been obtained for the stockpiled crushed material, as the analytical results indicate a permit is not required. The lease properties at the airport, where the crushed material was placed, are considered to be a commercial area and therefore subject to the commercial standards. Residential standards are, of course, more restrictive than those for a commercial land. I thank officials in HPW for sending that answer over to us based on a question asked by the member opposite earlier.

Of course when it comes to the Dawson Airport, as I have mentioned, through this functional planning process, one of the things that needs to be addressed is the approach path at the airport. I've said on many occasions in the House that if Transport Canada, for safety reasons, does not allow airlines

to use larger jets at the Dawson Airport, there is not much sense in spending the \$11 million or so plus \$500,000 per year to pave the runway at this point.

Planning is an important aspect when it comes to this and this functional plan will help our government to prioritize future investments at the Dawson City Airport.

Again, we're hoping that we get the all-clear from Transport Canada as well as under the new regulations that the member opposite referenced. If they are available publicly, I will make them available here. I wasn't aware of the login and the password, but I will certainly look to do that.

The Pelly airstrip question was raised during the briefing, I assume, by the member opposite or one of her colleagues. The question asked by opposition was: Will the amount here enable medevac access to Pelly? The runway resurfacing will enhance — here's the answer, pardon me — the airstrip and address the effects of spring thaw and summer precipitation on the surfaces that were making the site unusable. There is a system review scheduled for 2016 and Highways and Public Works Aviation branch will consult with the Department of Health and Social Services, which oversees the air medevac contract, to discuss their program needs. Obviously we want to advance to a point where the Pelly airstrip can be used for medevac equipment. This system review that is scheduled for this year will hopefully allow us to identify what further improvements are required. It doesn't look like the improvements underway this year will allow that to happen, but again we are planning for the future and looking to identify how we can best accomplish what the member opposite is asking for.

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

I did earlier ask the minister whether he could provide us with the responses that have been prepared to date to questions that were asked in the briefing. If he is able to share that document with the opposition members, it would expedite debate.

Turning to one further question related to airports, I had asked the minister whether there would be airport-specific snow-clearing equipment purchased in 2015-16. The minister's response some 11 months later was that there had been equipment purchased through the road and airport equipment revolving fund, but none of it was, as far as this response indicated, airport-specific snow-clearing equipment, but that there would be one single-axle dump truck replaced with airport-specific snow clearing equipment in the current 2016-17 budget, if that is approved.

I just wondered why there was delay on that. I also would like to ask the minister whether the government has given any thought or done any work toward developing an airport act, since we're a number of years past devolution.

I do have a number of questions relating to property management, but I think I will pause and allow the minister to respond on those last few airport questions before I put them on the floor.

Hon. Mr. Kent: As with any budgeting exercise, obviously there are a limited number of resources. The revolving fund for equipment purchases prioritizes the

purchases that are needed. We want to make sure our equipment is as up to date as possible, no matter where it's operating, but there are competing interests from all over the system, whether it's highway maintenance or the Aviation branch, so we want to make sure we have the most up-to-date equipment possible and look to find ways to prioritize equipment purchases, and perhaps extend the life of existing equipment so we can make better decisions.

With respect to an airport act, there are no immediate plans. Obviously there has been nothing tabled in the Legislature this spring, so there's no airport act underway. I haven't had an opportunity to discuss that further with senior officials in the Department of Highways and Public Works and what the benefits and consultation requirements and other aspects would be to introduce an airport act. I will take that under advisement from the member opposite. I know the previous Minister of Highways and Public Works spoke about it as well. Again, if there's a demonstrated need to proceed with it, then we will do so and we'll try to work it into our legislative calendar.

Ms. Moorcroft: The Highways and Public Works department is responsible for managing government buildings, from schools to office space, and highways and camps and nursing stations. One of the concerns they need to address is that many of the buildings are older and they have poor insulation, which leads to excessive heating costs. I would like to ask the minister about empty buildings. Of the buildings that the Yukon government owns and maintains, how many are empty? We know the old Whitehorse Public Library is empty, for instance. I would like to ask the minister to respond to that.

The old Carcross Visitor Information Centre has been empty for three years and the community wants to use it. The visitor information centre moved to a Caribou Commons building and the old Carcross Visitor Information Centre is currently only used during the summer and provides additional bathroom facilities during the tourist season.

The Southern Lakes Artist Collective and other community groups wanted to use the space year-round. It has potential to be used for a youth centre, for an artist space. Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes residents have asked about this. It could be a senior gathering place. The Southern Lakes Artist Collective partnered with the Yukon Arts Centre to request that the space be used as a gallery for local Carcross and northern artists to show their work.

We know that buildings deteriorate more rapidly when they're not used. I wonder why this new purpose-built building is being left empty. The Southern Lakes Artist Collective had support letters from Carcross/Tagish First Nation, from the South Klondike Local Advisory Council, the Tourism Industry Association and the Yukon Art Society. Can the minister give us an update as to whether Highways and Public Works will approve the request for the Yukon Arts Centre, in collaboration with the Southern Lakes Artist Collective, to lease that space so that it could be used for a gallery that would also be a tourist attraction?

I also have questions related to property. The minister spoke about the funds that have been put in this building to build staff residences for Highways and Public Works. I wanted to ask what plan the government has across all departments for housing for staff in different communities. Across the Yukon, people who work for different departments will request housing because there is a housing shortage in many of the rural communities — not only in Whitehorse — so I would like to ask the minister if he can provide some information on that.

I also want to put on the record, while I'm standing, a question related to underground oil tanks. The minister has informed us that there are 440 underground tanks. In the 2015-16 budget year, they planned to replace 21 of those. I wanted to ask the minister to give us an update. Have all those replacements been done? Have there been any spills since the last time we debated this subject? Are there plans in this budget to replace any underground oil tanks? How many are there remaining that need to be upgraded or replaced?

Hon. Mr. Kent: With respect to the Carcross Visitor Information Centre, there was a request made by the Southern Lakes Artist Collective — I think that is the name of the organization. I'm very happy to report that Highways and Public Works has gone through some of the other requests and this has emerged as the top request for that space. Negotiations on a lease arrangement will begin later this week.

I reached out to the Carcross/Tagish Development Corporation CEO this morning, also a constituent of mine, and let him know. Again, we'll have a more public announcement as to timing with respect to that project going forward. Congratulations to all those artists in the Southern Lakes area who will benefit from this space. We couldn't be more pleased. There were a number of other considerations — a mountain bike interpretive centre and other considerations — for that, but this has emerged as the best use for that facility.

Again, I spoke with one of the proponents this morning and officials will reach out to the proponents this week to begin negotiations on a lease for that space.

When it comes to staff housing, obviously the majority of the staff housing responsibilities lie with Yukon Housing Corporation. I know that in this budget there are plans for a six-plex in Ross River to replace existing staff housing. That will be one of the newest staff housing projects undertaken by Yukon Housing Corporation.

When it comes to the maintenance yards, we'll be putting in housing for maintenance workers at Swift River and Drury Creek in this budget. Mobile homes are what we're looking at; I believe two staff to a mobile home. That's how we're proceeding from a Highways and Public Works responsibility when it comes to housing our staff at some of the grader stations that aren't close to communities.

I want to talk a little bit — obviously the final question raised by the member opposite was with respect to oil tanks. I do have some information here. The Yukon government does place the highest importance on the safety of Yukoners and

protecting our environment. As part of an overall approach to risk management, HPW has taken a practical approach to managing the concerns associated with underground fuel tanks at some of our buildings.

We've identified 21 underground tanks as a priority to be replaced with above-ground tanks that will be easier and less costly to monitor and repair. Eight tanks were replaced last year, and the remainder will be replaced over the next three years. So the eight that were replaced in last year's budget: in Beaver Creek, the one at Nelnah Bessie John school; in Destruction Bay at the Kluane Lake School; in Whitehorse, Grey Mountain school, Porter Creek school and the T.C. Richards Building; in Dawson City, three tanks replaced — at the Old Territorial Administration Building, the air terminal building and the visitor information centre. I know that in this upcoming budget there are plans to replace one at Macaulay Lodge in Riverdale, and I believe at Vanier school as well — one of the other ones in Riverdale. There are others that, perhaps when we get into line-by-line debate, I can provide more information on, but that's what's happening with the underground oil tank replacement program. As I said, we're doing what we can within existing resources and making sure we prioritize those that could be problematic.

Ms. Moorcroft: Could the minister give us an update on the oil spill at the J.V. Clark School in Mayo?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, on January 30, 2016, a snow-clearing contractor damaged a fuel line at the J.V. Clark School, resulting in a fuel leak of approximately 3,000 litres. The fuel spill resulted in the contamination of adjacent soil and groundwater. Sampling of adjacent municipal and private wells shows no signs of hydrocarbon contamination to date. The school receives its water through the municipal water system and is therefore not affected.

Yukon government hired an environmental consultant to lead a mitigation plan for the site. Priorities include the remediation of contaminated soil and groundwater as well as ongoing monitoring. I should note that this briefing note was prepared on March 16, 2016, so if there are further updates, I can provide them in writing to the member opposite or perhaps if we don't clear Highways and Public Works today, we can provide them at a future date when we are back up for debate.

Ms. Moorcroft: I have a question related to leased space and owned space. The minister and I have had discussions on the Auditor General's report of Highways and Public Works from 2007 and then the update in 2012. One of those issues had to do with the purchasing of office space and leasing. The Auditor General pointed out that the cost of leasing is three to eight times higher than owning buildings. I am aware that the government has constructed some new office space and is working on building new space for government operations as well as updating space.

One of the other issues raised by the Auditor General was carrying out leasing activities in a fair and fiscally responsible, open, accountable and competitive manner. Some 28 of 30 leases were sole-sourced at the time this report was published in 2012. I would like to ask the minister to give us an update

about leasing. How long are the terms of the leases? Does the government ensure that before it leases a building that those buildings are accessible so that employees or members of the public who require accessibility can get into the buildings? What are the long-range purchasing plans for office space and for government buildings?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, Highways and Public Works works closely with Yukon commercial landlords to provide accommodation solutions for Yukon government programs. The government is currently leasing over 500,000 square feet from the private sector throughout the Yukon. This, of course, includes private owners as well as First Nation development corporations and First Nation governments in some cases. I know there is leased space in the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in building in Dawson, for instance, and I am sure other First Nation buildings around the territory.

In 2007, the Auditor General of Canada noted that the Yukon government lacked a master space plan and their leasing practices relied on the high use of — as the member opposite mentioned — sole-source leases without a long-term strategic approach to provide accommodation. HPW has since followed up with implementation of a master space plan, annually updated five-year space plans and increased use of both longer term leases and competitive processes for space procurement. This has resulted in a more certain leasing environment for both the Yukon government, as well as our commercial landlords.

Just a couple of notes — the Yukon government holds 87 leases in 69 buildings. As I mentioned, they total just over 500,000 square feet and annual lease costs are about \$15.3 million. Currently, 27 of the 95 leases have been converted to long-term leases, which are for five years or more. However, these 27 leases total 346,000 square feet, or approximately 67 percent of the leased portfolio. Obviously we took the suggestions of the Auditor General in 2007 to heart and embarked on a number of initiatives to address this and we'll continue to make progress down this road going forward.

Ms. Moorcroft: In the budget speech, the Premier said that the investments we are making strategically in other sectors — such as the knowledge economy increasing a \$6.5-million IT envelope by an additional \$3 million this year, which will create a number of good-paying jobs here in Yukon for Yukoners.

The budget has indicated there is a \$9.5-million information technology envelope in this budget. I would like to ask the minister whether he can provide details on what this increase on the IT envelope is, and can he provide some meaning to how it will create a number of good-paying jobs. Are there details available on how increasing the envelope will create any Yukon jobs? Is this going to go through procurement? How can the government assure that this will have any benefit for the Yukon? We have had discussion about the *Agreement on Internal Trade* and the fact that the government took out of the contracting regulations provisions related to local hire. I would like to ask the minister to provide an explanation for this \$9.5-million IT envelope investment.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I'm happy to talk about this because I think it is something that our government is very proud of — that we were able to direct additional resources to the ICT sector, with the expansion of the IT capital envelope. Again, this was something that was raised by industry representatives with the Premier last fall during one of his community conversations, and we made an announcement last fall that we would enhance the IT envelope by \$2 million. Fortunately, this year we're able to enhance it by \$3 million, so there will be additional opportunities for Yukon businesses.

Local capacity is critical to our ability to deliver systems development projects. Since 2011, the Government of Yukon has directed more than \$9 million to local suppliers in support of IT improvements. Investments in IT pay those immediate dividends in the form of enhanced connectivity, mobility, new program development to better serve citizens, support local innovation and drive economic development opportunities.

The \$3-million IT capital envelope expansion that is planned for this fiscal year will again increase the opportunities for local IT businesses to bid on projects, helping businesses expand in creating jobs in the sector. The planned 46-percent increase will work to ensure funding levels keep pace with the high degree of local capacity that exists throughout Yukon's rapidly emerging and maturing IT sector.

Some of the key IT capital initiatives that I can talk about that will be undertaken this year — there will be some additional e-services. Hunting licences will now be available online. There will be a phase 1 of that project to bring those hunting licences online. Professional and trades licensing will be made available online, so phase 1 foundational work toward registration, payment and management of trades licensing in an online form.

Government forms available online — this will replace the current need to download or pick up, print, scan, fax, or e-mail a number of government forms and allow the ability to complete forms online as well. You will be able to request birth, death or marriage certificates online.

Continued web infrastructure work to lay the foundation for improved Yukon government websites — new sites will be able to leverage tools, such as calendar functionality, to look at themes, events, social media integration and improved search, as well as other functions.

There is a major Justice project for court systems called the JEIN system. This year, phase 1 of the new system to improve efficiencies in the courts will go live. A local contractor has already been engaged as the primary developer to configure the system to Yukon's requirements. The project budget for this year is approximately \$800,000, with two-thirds of the work completed by Yukon companies.

Land Titles — in 2016-17, Yukon will tender to identify the best approach for a Yukon land titles system to allow Yukon to evolve from a paper-based titles system to a digital system that will eventually provide for electronic access to land title information. Then with respect to cyber security — continue to invest in our information security architecture to keep pace with increasing threats to digital information.

Madam Chair, perhaps I will close with a quote from the president of the Yukon Information Technology and Industry Society that he inserted into our April 12 press release announcing the expanded IT fund. Mr. Chris Lane said, "The Yukon Information Technology Industry Society" — or YITIS — "has long advocated for an increase in the Yukon government's investment in its information technology capital funding envelope... We view that investment as a vital component in the health of the IT ecosystem in Yukon. We are very gratified it has come about."

Obviously we have the support of the industry. This is an industry that I believe is a contributor to GDP and is close to what tourism contributes to Yukon's GDP.

Again, we're excited about the opportunities. I know that I've had the opportunity to tour some of the local firms with the Minister of Economic Development and very much enjoyed the opportunity to meet some of those people who are working there and get a better sense for the types of things they're able to provide and what they're doing.

When we get to line-by-line, perhaps — probably not today, but the next time HPW is up — I'll be able to provide a more comprehensive list to the member opposite of what projects we're contemplating under that \$9.5-million envelope for this year.

Ms. Moorcroft: The Transportation sector of the Highways and Public Works budget is a significant portion of the budget overall. This budget referred to the government's initiative toward innovative budgeting and a savings of \$2 million that would be accomplished through the innovative budgeting exercise. Given the significant portion of the budget that is within this minister's department and his comments about achieving efficiencies in the debate this afternoon, could the minister give us an indication of how he anticipates the Department of Highways and Public Works will contribute to efficiencies and savings toward that \$2-million target to be achieved through innovative budgeting?

Hon. Mr. Kent: This initiative is being led through the Department of Finance, but I fully expect both my portfolios — Highways and Public Works, as well as Energy, Mines and Resources — to participate in identifying efficiencies and reaching the target that has been set by Finance officials to meet within this existing budget.

Like other ministers, I see some opportunities and will wait to hear back from officials within the department on where we can see these efficiencies and innovations in the budget process to meet what has been set out by the Department of Finance.

Ms. Moorcroft: I have some questions related to procurement and local procurement. The minister stated on April 7 — and I quote: "The member opposite raised the Procurement Advisory Panel that I as minister, with the support of my colleagues, established in November of last year. We would expect a report to come from that advisory panel in the coming months that I will table in the Legislative Assembly during this Sitting."

Does the minister have any idea when the plan will be presented? Will it be presented with sufficient lead time for all

parties to examine it and question it? The minister also indicated that he and his department would — and I quote: “... continue to work to advance the procurement process so that it does offer opportunities for local companies.”

What is the government’s definition of “local companies”? Does a company that gets a business licence and opens a small office here qualify as a local company, even though it is well-known that the head office, the profits, the corporate taxes, et cetera, are paid outside the Yukon? Does a business from outside the Yukon that is awarded a contract need to register their company with Corporate Affairs? What has the government done to support and engage local companies in becoming more competitive? How many non-Yukon companies have obtained a Yukon business licence in order to qualify as local? The minister also said, “We will continue to work on issues when it comes to procurement and some of the themes, of course, that emerged from the Procurement Advisory Panel work and engagement with Yukon businesses are around local purchasing and local contracting.”

Did the government set priorities for dealing with the issues? Can the minister provide an example of some of the issues that they are working on? Can he explain how those will help solve the local procurement issue?

A final quote from the minister, again from April 7 of 2015: “... we also want to recognize that those businesses here can and do compete against other businesses and we have a responsibility to spend taxpayers’ dollars wisely and we’ll continue to do that and continue to find ways where local companies can be successful in bidding on government contracts and where government purchases are involved.” How is the government helping businesses become more competitive?

I’m looking for the minister to address more than the industry conferences that have been staged. What ways is the government continuing to find where local companies can be successful in the bidding process? Is the work being done on adapting contracting requirements to fit Yukon needs?

Hon. Mr. Kent: There were a number of questions in there, so I apologize if I miss answering some of them. Some of them will require me to go back and request additional information from the department as well, but I can say that procurement is one of the top issues that I deal with as Minister of Highways and Public Works. The Yukon government is a very large procurer of goods and services and contracts. For instance, in 2014-15, of almost 11,000 total contracts, 4,400 of those were for services of a construction nature. Of those, approximately 82 percent went to local companies. In addition, 19 of the 20 largest contracts awarded in 2014-15 went to local contractors — that’s 95 percent. These statistics are typical for the past five years.

As I mentioned previously in this House, of the top 15 major capital work projects undertaken between 2010-11 and 2014-15, I believe 14 of them were awarded to local contractors. The one that wasn’t was the F.H. Collins replacement. In the envelope itself, it had a value of just less than 30 percent but, as I’ve noted, the project averaged 75

percent local labour participation over the course of construction, so there was still significant benefit that went to Yukoners from that project. Over 70 percent of those projects — \$77,071,510 went to local companies — so there has been a significant amount of work.

When we look at the projects that were delivered by local companies in 2010-11 — waterfront seniors housing, Dawson campus and the Pelly campus; in 2011-12, Dawson district heating, the Canada Border Services Agency Housing at Pleasant Camp, Ross River fire hall and water treatment plant; in 2012-13, Betty’s Haven and the emergency response centre; in 2013-14, the Alexander Street apartments, the arrest processing unit and the Ross River arena; in 2014-15, the Watson Lake district office; Alexander McDonald Lodge and the Beaver Creek fire hall. Again, the exception in 2014-15 was F.H. Collins, but I’ve mentioned the significant amount of local content that was involved, not only on the labour side of things, but also with respect to subcontractors. The electrical subcontractor was local, of course, and one only had to drive by there to see the number of local subs, with their signs on the construction fence at any given time, who were involved in delivering that educational facility for Yukon students.

When it comes to the Procurement Advisory Panel, I can tighten up the timelines a little bit. I’ll narrow it down from the next number of months to the next number of weeks. I’m reluctant to go below that, because there’s some work I still need to do with the advisory panel itself.

I want to make sure, though, and let everyone know that there won’t be any editing by myself of their report. This was something — I respect the time the local and national procurement professionals put into this and I think their panel report needs to be tabled in the form that they want it tabled in.

I will have a response to the panel report — some initial responses — and then a longer term vision toward the end of this session but, again, we established this panel to address suggested inconsistencies in Yukon government procurement and issues associated with the vendor complaint mechanisms. The panel heard that Yukon businesses would like YG to provide more opportunities for Yukon businesses to win contracts. There are perceptions in the local business community that the current procurement model is too decentralized and results in inconsistent practices by procurement authorities. This creates challenges for contractors to understand tender documents and authority expectations, resulting in fewer and possibly deficient bids.

The AIT and the BIP raise some procurement concerns in the business community, and the panel itself is looking at the current procurement model as a whole.

The industry conference — I know perhaps the member opposite didn’t mean for it to sound this way, but it’s not something to be flippant about. On February 23 and 24 of this year, we were proud to deliver the second annual industry conference with our partners, the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies, Yukon; the Yukon Contractors Association and the Yukon First Nations Chamber of Commerce.

The 2016 industry conference built on the success of the initial one that we held in 2015. Improvements were made as a result of the evaluations and what was heard at the first conference. Again, some of the thoughts and recommendations from the first conference led to the establishment of the advisory panel itself. The 2016 “what we heard” document will soon be added to Highways and Public Works’ public website. I will look forward to that as well.

When it comes to AIT and BIP — of course, that is the responsibility of the Minister of Economic Development, so I would leave it to him to respond to any specific questions about that when his department is up for debate in this current Sitting.

I think, as Yukoners, we need to be proud of companies that are operating outside of our borders. Air North, Yukon’s airline is one with flights from Yellowknife to Ottawa and other gateway cities outside of the Yukon. Underhill Geomatics won a major contract on the Site C dam near Fort St. John — a major surveying contract. I know that they continue to have people who are Yukon residents working on that project. There are two major earth-moving or road-building contractors that are active in northern British Columbia on that section of the Alaska Highway. Yukon Brewing, as well, is able to provide their product in other jurisdictions. Some of these are a result of freer trade within the country and knocking down some of those challenges between provinces and territories — some of the restrictions.

Again, there are some positive aspects of the national trade agreements that we have entered into and that are being shown on the ground here in the territory.

Madam Chair, I understand that some members are going to be attending another event at 5:30 p.m., so seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

Mr. Elias: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Elias that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair’s report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Mr. Elias: I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:22 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 257

1st Session

33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, April 20, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER — Hon. David Laxton, MLA, Porter Creek Centre

DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Darrell Pasloski	Mountainview	Premier Minister responsible for Finance; Executive Council Office
Hon. Elaine Taylor	Whitehorse West	Deputy Premier Minister responsible for Tourism and Culture; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Justice; Yukon Development Corporation/ Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Doug Graham	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Education
Hon. Scott Kent	Riverdale North	Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources; Highways and Public Works
Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Community Services; Public Service Commission
Hon. Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Minister responsible for Environment
Hon. Mike Nixon	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin	Minister responsible for Economic Development; Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Party

Darius Elias	Government House Leader Vuntut Gwitchin
Hon. David Laxton	Porter Creek Centre
Patti McLeod	Watson Lake

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

New Democratic Party

Elizabeth Hanson	Leader of the Official Opposition Whitehorse Centre
Jan Stick	Official Opposition House Leader Riverdale South
Kevin Barr	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes
Lois Moorcroft	Copperbelt South
Jim Tredger	Mayo-Tatchun
Kate White	Takhini-Kopper King

Liberal Party

Sandy Silver	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, April 20, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of a matter regarding the Order Paper. Motion No. 1144, notice of which was given yesterday by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, was not placed on today's Notice Paper as the motion is not in order.

Annotation 565 on page 174 of the sixth edition of *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms* says, in part: "A motion should be neither argumentative, nor in the style of a speech, nor contain unnecessary provisions or objectionable words."

The motion begins with the assertion that the Official Opposition has chosen not to work collaboratively with regard to the amendments to the *Elections Act*. The motion supports the assertion by listing instances where proposed amendments to the *Elections Act* could have been raised. The chair takes no position with regard to the validity of the issue raised in the motion; however, it is the Chair's view that the motion, taken as a whole, is written in a style of a speech.

The Chair also notes that the motion urges the Leader of the Official Opposition to explain the conduct of her party with regard to the proposed amendments to the *Elections Act*. The Chair would remind all members that each member of the Assembly has the right to propose amendments to legislation. Members should consider whether this, rather than the substance of the bill, is proper matter for a stand-alone debate. If the method that a member used to develop a bill is truly of concern to a member, the member can raise the issue should the bill be brought forward for second reading.

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed with the Order Paper. Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Biodiversity Awareness Month

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I rise today to pay tribute to Biodiversity Awareness Month. Biodiversity is the variety of life found on Earth.

Here in the Yukon, we are surrounded by a diverse array of plants, habitat and wildlife. The Yukon government observes Biodiversity Awareness Month every April as a way to celebrate the plants, fish, birds and animals that call Yukon home. The north is a biologically diverse place and Biodiversity Awareness Month is meant to recognize and protect each of these organisms that keep our ecosystem healthy.

Our government has an important role to play in educating residents and visitors on the richness of biodiversity in the Yukon through experts in Environment Yukon's Fish and Wildlife branch, our conservation and park officers and programs such as the Conservation Action Team, summer camp and the Yukon Youth Conservation Corps and, of course, we are helping to foster an appreciation for biodiversity in Yukon.

The Yukon government is celebrating Biodiversity Awareness Month in 2016 by hosting the annual Celebration of Swans, recognizing Earth Day, along with offering a suite of outreach activities coordinated by Environment Yukon. A listing of nearly 20 events can be found in the annual springtime guide on the Department of Environment's website. These offerings aim to celebrate biodiversity in the Yukon, but our efforts extend beyond these areas. Each year, the Yukon government works together with our partners to protect and promote biodiversity in the territory, and we certainly are rich in biodiversity. Within the territory, we boast 38 fish species, 66 mammal species, 227 bird species, over 1,600 types of plants and well over 6,000 insect species. I would like to recognize the many people and organizations involved in making these events possible.

They are far too many to list, but I would like to give a few examples to show the diversity in our partners: the Kluane First Nation, the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, the City of Whitehorse, the Town of Faro, the Whitehorse United Church, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Environment Canada, Girl Guides of Canada, the Marsh Lake Community Society, the Society of Yukon Bird Observatories, the Yukon Bird Club, Yukon College and Yukon Energy. I would also like to mention that the Yukon Wildlife Preserve is a unique institution that encourages Yukoners to appreciate the territory's biodiversity with woodland caribou, Canadian lynx, Rocky Mountain elk, mountain goats, Alaska/Yukon moose, mule deer, muskox and wood bison, two varieties of thinhorn sheep, several bird species, red foxes and Arctic foxes, cared for in the habitats suited to each species.

Of course we know the Wildlife Preserve showcases some of the best and most unique mammal species that call the Yukon home, and I definitely applaud the staff at the Wildlife Preserve for the spirit of the work that they do and their contribution to fostering a sense of appreciation for biodiversity in the Yukon. If members haven't had the opportunity to see the Wildlife Preserve and tour it, I would definitely recommend it.

Mr. Speaker, Yukoners increasingly recognize the importance of maintaining and protecting biodiversity both in the Yukon and around the world, and this means ensuring that habitat remains healthy for the widest variety of species. We are fortunate to host thousands of plant and animal species in the Yukon, and some of these are found nowhere else in the world. I would like to encourage everyone in this House to take a moment to reflect on the living organisms and take the time to enjoy some of the biodiversity in the Yukon this coming summer. I know I will.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the NDP Official Opposition to celebrate the wonder of biodiversity.

Everything on the planet is interconnected. We are part of a much bigger picture than just ourselves. We are all part of the human family. Biodiversity encompasses all things and is the relationship between all things: ecosystems, genetic and cultural diversity, and the connections between all species on Earth. Our decisions and our actions here cause a ripple effect that is felt on the other side of the planet. What affects one thing will ultimately affect another.

I have said it before and I will say it again: our planet is facing a biodiversity crisis. Right here at home and around the world, it is clear that our biodiversity is under threat, from competing land uses, from pollution, from population growth and human activities. The potential losses are staggering — 32 percent of all amphibians, 12 percent of all birds and 23 percent of all mammals are facing extinction. That works out to 16,000 individual species. It doesn't have to be this way. As legislators, we could be a positive piece in the world biodiversity puzzle by creating our own stand-alone species at risk legislation that would help protect the valuable biodiversity within our borders for the good of the planet, but we all know that this leadership has not happened yet.

I would like to think that, when it is all said and done, we would have done everything in our power to protect the planet we share with others — that those generations that are yet to come still have the chance to experience the wonders of the world in person by touch and by smell instead of looking at images in a book and lamenting what was lost.

Mr. Speaker, I will end with a poem written by my friend Lawrence Alvarez to his goddaughter just after her birth:

Dear small human,

Your cells are like evolutionary singing bells, they write a song of right in a world that's been made wrong. It was never a fight, but a negotiation of our own heights. We took our gifts from the ground, spun them around and found we'd made waste.

In our haste to level up, to fill from an emptying cup, we drove faster.

In our speed to fulfill our need, we lost those who came last.

In our drive to create a beautiful human hive, free from loss and pride, we sold our souls for our goal.

When you've learned to form words will you ask, "why, if we reached so high did we instead focus on what was mine, forgetting our humanity in moments we'd regret?" Maybe you'll know we tried.

But I would instead like you to know that in my lifetime we sowed seeds to feed our worldwide family. We realized our fate is shared, that nothing mattered until we cared, and that we weren't scared to hold hands, play in one giant band, and speak with one collective voice the only right choice.

Mr. Silver: I would like to rise on behalf of the Liberal caucus to also pay tribute to Biodiversity Awareness Month.

April is a month of great change in the Yukon. The snow melts — or in this year's case a bit earlier — buds begin to open and animals come out of hibernation. It is a grand display of our territory's biodiversity. Biodiversity defines many stages of biological interaction within species, between species and between ecosystems. It is an ever-changing balance with time and is greatly affected by human activity. As individuals, we all have a part to play in ensuring that our actions do not have a negative effect on the flora and fauna, but instead promote healthy human interaction with them.

Occurring this month is the Celebration of Swans on Marsh Lake where Yukoners can peacefully view the monumental migration of swans northward for the summer months. This April, the birds are closer to the beach than in previous years due to the early melting and the viewing is particularly spectacular.

The interpretive centre at Swan Haven is a museum of information on the swans' migration and houses many family-friendly activities for visitors to enjoy. Migrations of birds and other animals within and from outside the Yukon is only one example of our biodiversity. The Yukon Invasive Species Council is a group of Yukoners working toward the management of invasive species in the Yukon. Their recent forum brought up many Yukon issues, noting that an increase in public education and government involvement are key to combatting invasive species that threaten our ecosystem.

The Department of Environment has put time and effort into educating the public about biodiversity, including putting together a booklet for middle-school-aged children, which is a much-needed, education-based resource.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all persons who engage and educate the public about biodiversity in the Yukon and what we can do to protect our ecosystem.

In recognition of National Oral Health Month

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I rise in the House today on behalf of all members to pay tribute to National Oral Health Month. Each April, the Canadian Dental Association celebrates dental health month to highlight the importance of good oral health and its role in maintaining overall health and well-being. Your oral health can offer clues about your overall health, and problems in your mouth can affect the rest of your body. Oral diseases are linked to health problems such as diabetes, heart disease and stroke, certain kinds of pneumonia, and even premature and low birth weight in babies. Dental problems can also be a sign of oral cancer, a disease that approximately 3,200 Canadians are diagnosed with annually.

While you would likely visit a doctor for an irritation or a pain elsewhere in your body, people often delay visiting their dentist if they have bleeding or tender gums. We have to shift our thinking and take our oral health as seriously as we take the health of other parts of our body. Brushing and flossing, following a healthy diet and visiting a dentist regularly are all part of ongoing oral health care for healthy teeth and gums.

Yukon Health and Social Services helps to ensure Yukon children have a good start on having a healthy mouth. Since 1969, the Yukon children's dental program has provided

diagnostic, preventive and restorative dental services to Yukon children at no cost to the family. This unique program ensures that preschool and school-aged children receive necessary oral care. While the dental program has evolved over the years, it has remained focused on ensuring good dental health for Yukon children and youth.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Yukoners to brush up on their oral health and schedule regular dental checkups for themselves and their children and, if they have any undiagnosed oral pain, to visit a dentist to have it diagnosed. Oral Health Month is a reminder that we should give oral health the importance it deserves.

In recognition of Yukon Young Authors' Conference and Yukon Writers' Festival

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to the 36th annual Yukon Young Authors' Conference and the talented young writers of Yukon.

Live Words, the Yukon Writers' Festival 2016, is an annual literary festival produced by the Yukon Public Libraries branch, Public Schools, and the Yukon Science Institute. A number of mini-festivals under the broad umbrella of the Yukon Writers' Festival occur each year. This year, Reading and Reception, Reading and Talk, Reading, Storied Science and the Young Authors' Conference are all part of the writers' festival.

Each year, the Young Authors' Conference brings dozens of aspiring grades 8 to 12 Yukon students together at the F.H. Collins school library, and this year, 2016, will be the first year that the new F.H. Collins school is hosting this conference.

This year students will work together with professional writers: Dr. Sandy Marie Bonny, Bob Hayes, Heather O'Neill and Noah Richler. Each visiting writer will perform a reading at the school, both tomorrow and on Friday — April 21 and 22. These readings are open to the public, Mr. Speaker, for anyone who wishes to attend.

I would also like to take the opportunity to recognize the people who have worked together year after year since 1980 to put this excellent program together. Terry Burns, Irma Bourassa, Marg Healy, Marion Noone, Val Ross, Marg Wicken, Scott Henderson, Joyce Sward and Clare McDowell have demonstrated remarkable commitment to the art of writing and to the students of Yukon.

The Young Authors' Conference is, as I said before, part of the Yukon Writers' Festival and it has been happening all week. I encourage all Yukoners, especially those in Whitehorse, to take in the various festival events that are happening throughout the territory this week. Once again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity of congratulating F.H. Collins Secondary School for hosting the event this year.

Most importantly though, I want to recognize the young writers and educators who inspire themselves to chase their dreams. Writing helps young people to express themselves, to engage their imaginations and to develop critical thinking and communication skills. The Young Authors' Conference

nurtures the young talent of Yukon, inspiring the authors of tomorrow.

I urge my colleagues to join me in wishing these writers an excellent conference tomorrow and on Friday. I encourage everyone to learn more about the Young Authors' Conference, as well as the Yukon Writers' Festival, which has been going on all this week, with events lined up until April 24.

Congratulations to all of the folks involved with this program.

Mr. Tredger: It gives me great pleasure to rise in the Legislature to pay tribute to the Young Authors' Conference and the Yukon Writers' Festival. I speak on behalf of the Yukon NDP Official Opposition and the Third Party and pay tribute to the festivals.

The Yukon Young Authors' Conference, held annually, gives aspiring student writers the opportunity to work with professionally published authors and the opportunity to share writing and ideas with each other. Each year, published writers from across Canada visit the territory for a two-day conference. The purpose of the conference is to encourage students who have interest and potential in writing to pursue their interest and develop their potential, to make students more aware of Canadian writers and the vast array of their stories, to introduce students to successful Canadian writers, and to introduce young Yukon writers to each other.

But, Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Young Authors' Conference is much more than that. I can tell you that it has had a significant influence on many, many young people. This is truly an idea that has grown.

The first Young Authors' Conference was held in 1980. It was the brainchild of Mr. Terry Burns, who was then the librarian at F.H. Collins Senior Secondary School. He created the Young Authors' Conference to be the local cornerstone of a Canada-wide National Writers' Festival.

The first conference had 33 students from five schools working with three visiting authors. Terry Burns was the overall conference organizer for the next 10 years. The conference was then taken over by Joyce Sward, who was the main organizer for the next 20 years. Now, even in retirement, she works with Clare McDowell.

Mr. Speaker, the conference has become nationally known and respected. The following story speaks of connections and familiarity. A young aspiring student from one of our communities had participated in several Young Authors' Conferences and was attending UBC. Having enjoyed the Yukon Young Authors' Conference and maintaining an interest in literature, he attended the annual Vancouver Writers Fest on Robson Street on Granville Island.

The next time he returned home and saw his teacher, he remarked on how much he had enjoyed the fest, how he recognized and remembered the names of the authors who were presenting. He also mentioned how much he appreciated the intimacy of the Yukon conference, the small workshops, the time each participant had to spend and the relationships built. He noted the exceptional opportunity to meet and learn from practising writers in the Yukon.

For me, past names like Ivan Coyote, Patti Flather, Donna Morrissey stand out, a credit to the organizers for building on Yukon strengths, including authors with Yukon connections and bringing authors from across the country.

This year's authors are Heather O'Neill, Sandy Marie Bonny, Noah Richler, Dianne Whelan and Bob Hayes. Most impressively about the Yukon Young Authors' Conference, one of the things that affected me most was the way the conference went out of its way to ensure students from communities had the opportunity. More than the opportunity, they were encouraged to attend. Shy, reluctant students from communities were invited in and made to feel a part. As principal, I saw first-hand the effect this conference had not only on the students attending, but their classmates.

I taught in Pelly Crossing. It was a wonderful, supportive community, but it was small and it was isolated. It was through programs like the Young Authors' Conference that community students were able to expand their horizons. Last year in my tribute, I spoke of the positive and lasting effect the conference had on a student from Pelly Crossing.

Mr. Speaker, I was introduced and encouraged to have students from Eliza Van Bibber participate by Terry Burns and a teacher from Mayo, Linda MacGregor. Linda taught English and Language Arts at J.V. Clark. Linda's students were initially reluctant to participate. Why would they want to go to a writers' conference? One could only imagine their comments, but Linda persisted, and several students attended in 1990. They had a positive experience and discovered a new concept: writing and reading can be rewarding and fun.

The next year, there was a lineup to attend the conference. Mrs. MacGregor was able to incorporate writing, rigor and submissions into the application process. Students were hooked and recognized the seriousness and work good writing entailed. For the next 20 years until her retirement from teaching, Mrs. MacGregor took students from J.V. Clark to the Young Authors' Conference.

It is thanks to the inspiration of organizers like Terry Burns and Joyce Sward and teachers like Linda MacGregor that many rural schools over the years had writing units built around the Young Authors' Conference. Students learned the strength of their stories. It gave them a voice and, for some, a broader audience. They gained a sense of themselves as being important — and the power of language. Sometimes we don't realize the effects of our ideas and how they can build our society into a better place.

I would like to say thank you to all the teachers, all the student participants and all the volunteers who have made the Young Authors' Conference a success in so many ways — and a special thank you for including the communities and students from the communities. I encourage everyone to attend many of the events happening around our territory, in Whitehorse and in the communities, over the next week.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Kent: I have for tabling the Yukon Resource Gateway Project application for national infrastructure component funding, dated January 2016, and appended to that is a summary document of that application.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I have for tabling today a complete list of projects submitted for approval by the Yukon government to the Government of Canada for the New Building Canada fund. More specifically, this includes projects under the national/regional projects fund and the small communities fund.

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

PETITIONS

Petition No. 24

Ms. Hanson: I have for presentation a petition. The petition reads as follows:

This petition of the undersigned shows:

THAT in a number of formal agreements since 1997 between the Government of Yukon and the Kaska (including the Kaska represented by Ross River Dena Council), the Yukon government has repeatedly acknowledged that the Kaska have aboriginal title, and other rights, in and to the Kaska Traditional Territory in the Yukon;

THAT the Kaska Traditional Territory in the Yukon — to which the Yukon government has acknowledged that the Kaska have aboriginal title — includes a tract of land known as the Ross River Area that is of particular importance to the Ross River Dena Council;

THAT the Supreme Court of Canada has confirmed that aboriginal title includes the right to the exclusive use and occupancy of land subject to that title;

THAT, despite the fact that the Yukon government has acknowledged that the Kaska have aboriginal title in and to the Ross River Area, the Yukon government has issued and is continuing to issue hunting licences and seals (more commonly referred to as "tags") to sport hunters which, among other things, allows those sport hunters to hunt big game in the Ross River Area;

THAT the Ross River Dena Council has demanded in writing that the Ross River Area be immediately be designated as a "permit-only area" for purposes of sport hunting in order to respect — and to provide the basis for accommodation of — the aboriginal title of the Ross River Dena Council (and other Kaska) in and to that area, but the Yukon government has refused to respond to, much less comply with, this request.

THEREFORE, the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to request that the Executive Council immediately designate the Ross River Area as a permit-only area for purposes of sport hunting in order to respect — and to provide the basis for accommodation of — the aboriginal title of the Ross River Dena Council (and other Kaska) in and to that area.

There are five signatories to this petition.

Speaker: Are there any further petitions for presentation?

Petition No. 25

Mr. Tredger: I have for presentation a petition regarding the Hot Springs Road local area plan and the implication of lot development on that plan.

THAT the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to request that the Member for Lake Laberge make the necessary inquiries and thereafter report to the Yukon Legislative Assembly in respect to the following issues:

(1) whether the terms of Schedule “B” of the *Amended Development Agreement* dated February 17, 2015, which provide for the transfer of residential development potential to Lot 1533, Lot 1536 and Lot 1095 which exceeds the maximum of two residences per lot permitted under the CMT designation were subjected to community consultation and rezoning in accordance with the terms of Policy 5.17 of the *Hot Springs Road Local Area Plan*; and,

(2) if the aforementioned terms of Schedule “B” of the *Amended Development Agreement* regarding the transfer of residential development potential to Lots 1533, 1536 and 1095 were in fact subjected to community consultation and rezoning, then specifically when, how and by what means did such community consultation and rezoning occur?

That is signed by about 12 people.

Speaker: Are there any further petitions for presentation?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to use the 2016-17 budget to invest \$1.2 million in continuing the successful domestic water well program, which has supported over 300 home water well projects since its inception.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to use the 2016-17 budget to invest \$593,000 to support the continuation of the licensed practical nursing program at Yukon College.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon of immediately accept and take steps to implement the recommendations identified as “highest priority” as described in the WildWise Yukon’s *Whitehorse Bear Hazard Assessment*.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?
This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Renewable energy strategy

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that ordinary Yukoners are facing tough economic times with three years of recession and counting and a government that is placing our hope of recovery in the boom and bust cycle of the global commodity market. This government has defined no clear path to real, long-term prosperity for all Yukoners.

Mining will always play a role in Yukon’s economy; however, anybody with a stock portfolio knows that you should never put all your eggs in one basket. The land of the midnight sun has serious potential as a green energy powerhouse. The technology to develop a green energy sector is becoming more affordable every year, and there is a growing local capacity for technology, like small-scale solar power projects.

Does the Premier agree that the green energy tech sector has massive potential to bolster Yukon’s fiscal stability?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, our government is certainly very proud of the work that we have done on the energy portfolio, especially the renewable energy portfolio. Of course the work of the Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation on next generation hydro is a longer term vision, but in the short term and medium term we have the microgeneration program that provides funding and incentives for homeowners to sell excess renewable energy back into the grid. The IPP policy was released last year. A big component of that is renewable energy.

Most recently, we released the biomass strategy that will help to identify Yukon government buildings where we could use biomass energy for space heating on top of other aspects for biomass energy. Mr. Speaker, we only have to look at the main administration building here to see the energy-efficiency accomplishments that are underway. Of course, residential and commercial energy efficiency is continuing to be very successful programs that we have introduced as well.

When it comes to renewable energy, we are very proud of our track record — working with the Kluane First Nation on a windfarm. I know the Member for Kluane, the Minister of Environment, was just in Burwash Landing recently at an energy forum. There are lots of great things for us to talk about and celebrate on the renewable energy front.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, there are some good things going on. People are already hiring Yukon companies to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels. For instance, many Yukoners are taking steps to renewable energy sources by installing solar panels on their own homes, but the government does need to lead the way. Government infrastructure projects have been touted for many years as potential green energy projects, only to see the government backtrack on its commitments. The new F.H. Collins Secondary School building and the thwarting of the Whistle Bend subdivision geothermal district heating potential are glaring examples of failure.

When will this government finally really realize that Yukon’s path to economic prosperity needs deliberate and

positive government support for a local green energy technology sector?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, again, our government is very proud of our track record when it comes to renewable energy and investing in our facilities. I mentioned the retrofit to the main administration building — new windows and increased energy efficiency with insulation.

Let's talk about the commercial energy incentive program that we introduced in May of last year. So far, the lighting systems of 10 commercial buildings, including hotels, a curling rink and a vehicle service centre have been upgraded to LED lamps. These energy-efficient upgrades represent an approximate annual energy savings of 1.189 million kilowatt hours and an annual cost savings of \$143,000. The residential energy incentive program that we introduced in January of 2015 offers incentives to improve airtightness and insulation levels of existing homes to achieve an EnerGuide rating of 85 or better in new homes and to install renewable energy systems for generating electricity.

Mr. Speaker, with that program we have revolutionized the homebuilding industry here in the territory, where, in a normal year, only about 10 houses would be built to that energy-efficiency rating, and now we have upwards of 100 homes being built to that energy-efficiency rating.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to people installing solar panels and renewable systems on their homes, we offer up to a \$5,000 incentive, so we're investing in Yukoners for energy efficiency and renewable energy and, in turn, leading to private sector development and jobs.

Ms. Hanson: It's true — the studies are there. When the government invests in green technology to save energy and shift away from fossil fuels, we save money in the long term. Instead the government has chosen the path of one-off projects while it hopes for an eventual bounce back in commodity prices.

Mr. Speaker, green energy technology should be the new normal. We save money and diversify our local economy in the process.

The minister speaks of local projects. Note that the \$146-million continuing care facility explicitly excludes green energy technology in its new RFP. When will the Premier commit to incorporating green energy provisions into all new government building projects and all government retrofits?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: What we do know is that the NDP and the Liberals would have us shift away from carbon — at least in ideology or theory — by making it more expensive — by putting a new tax in this territory on carbon, which will make everything more expensive.

This government wants to do its part and we have a plan that actually will reduce our greenhouse gases and create jobs for Yukoners — but not making everything else more expensive. That is a plan for the Yukon Party. That is a plan that we know that Yukoners appreciate. We're investing to create jobs and we're going to ensure that we won't impose a new tax on Yukoners that will make everything more expensive.

Question re: Whistle Bend continuing care facility

Ms. Moorcroft: This government budgets \$41.4 million in 2016-17 for continuing care operation and maintenance. The \$41 million is split between program management, extended and complex care, and intermediate and community care. \$41 million in O&M covers the current 190 care beds available. This government has embarked on the construction of a new 150-bed facility in Whistle Bend that will add to the current inventory.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister give the House a clear answer — what are the estimated costs for the annual operation and maintenance of the new 150-bed facility in Whistle Bend?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I certainly extend my thanks to the member opposite for bringing this question to the floor of the Legislature. Speaking about jobs and continuing care is something that we're very proud to take on. We know a number of people in the health sector in the territory and in other provinces have already been calling to find out when they can apply to work at the new continuing care facility. We're kind of excited about that buzz. We're excited about the construction of the Whistle Bend continuing care facility, and we know that it will have a great impact on our wait-lists. At any given time, there can be 60 to 90 people waiting for a bed. Those are Yukoners; those are our neighbours, our friends and our family.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to jobs at the continuing care facility and the O&M costs — is something that this government is proud to take on and we're proud to be able to provide those new opportunities for our professionals here in the territory.

Ms. Moorcroft: We know the capital costs for the Whistle Bend facility are estimated at about \$146 million. What we continue to request are the operation and maintenance costs. By refusing to answer, is the minister telling Yukoners that this government is building a \$146-million facility without knowing how much it would cost to operate it? This would be a new low in fiscal management, even for this government.

Mr. Speaker, either the minister doesn't know the O&M costs or he refuses to tell Yukoners — neither is acceptable.

Would the minister tell us — does he now know the O&M costs of the new continuing care facility, or is he refusing to reveal what the costs are?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for bringing this to the floor of the Legislature. It gives me the opportunity to highlight not only the good work that we foresee in the future when the Whistle Bend continuing care facility is open, but it also gives me an opportunity to highlight some of the work and jobs that are offered currently in our current continuing care facilities.

I've been to all the facilities, Mr. Speaker, and I can tell you that people are very appreciative of the work that they have. As I mentioned in my first response, we're getting phone calls from people living in the territory and people from other provinces seeking employment in this new continuing

care facility, one that will be one of a kind in Canada in the service delivery.

As the department moves forward with working on the O&M costs of the continuing care facility and tightening up those numbers, we don't have an answer for the member opposite today, but I can tell the member opposite and assure Yukoners that the department is working very diligently on the programming that will be offered in the continuing care facility and the dollars that are needed on a more definitive basis to provide those services.

We're proud of the staff and the management that provide the care on a daily basis currently and, as I mentioned in my first response, we're very eager and are looking forward to opening the doors as a renewed government in two years.

Ms. Moorcroft: In 2014-15, the Department of Highways and Public Works contracted Partnerships BC to conduct a procurement options analysis of the Whistle Bend facility at a cost of \$45,000. Last year, the department once again contracted Partnerships BC for design/build procurement services for a cost of \$830,000. I will quote from the Highways and Public Works minister's response letter to my questions about the Partnerships BC contract regarding the Whistle Bend facility — and I quote: "During the planning and procurement stages, YG was focused on achieving strong value for money outcomes, especially on a project of this size." Value for money not only includes construction cost but it also would include life cycle costs, which reveal what the O&M are.

Mr. Speaker, will this government provide Yukoners the operating costs of this facility so we can get a clear idea of the total actual cost?

Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: What we actually have heard again is what we have heard many times — that the opposition would cancel this project.

Mr. Speaker, this government will continue to stand up for what is necessary and what is needed for Yukoners. We have focused on health care. We know there's a large demand for this continuing care facility. We have a long waiting list.

We are working with Partnerships BC to ensure that we do this in a manner that we get the best value for every dollar.

What the opposition failed to understand is that we have produced not only a budget for this year, but ongoing for multiple years that shows this government will be building this facility; we'll continue to have modest surpluses and we'll continue to have money in the bank.

Mr. Speaker, that is the difference between the Yukon Party and the NDP and the Liberals who would tax and spend Yukoners right back into where we were with the previous NDP and Liberal governments — a mass exodus of people and double-digit unemployment.

Question re: Whistle Bend continuing care facility

Mr. Silver: I also have a question for the Premier about the Whistle Bend seniors facility.

Yesterday in Question Period, the Premier said he put a great deal of stock in what the Auditor General of Canada has

to say about budgeting and Yukon's finances. In 2013, the Auditor General released a scathing report on the Yukon Party's fiscal mismanagement on the construction of two rural hospitals. In it, he was sharply critical of the decision to begin construction before knowing the operation and maintenance costs of these facilities. As the election looms, the Yukon Party is once again starting construction on a very large project — the Whistle Bend seniors facility — with no idea of what the operation and maintenance costs will be.

Mr. Speaker, why is the Yukon Party ignoring the advice of the Auditor General when it comes to financial management of projects?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: As Yukoners know, there have been needs assessments done; there has been a business case done for this facility. We are looking after Yukoners. That is a priority for this government to do that, and we will do it in a fiscally responsible manner. Yukoners are comforted to know that, through good times and bad, this is a government that continues to see that we have money in the bank — the envy of the entire country that has massive amounts of debts, that has to put money every year into servicing debt, whereas this government continues to pay its way. We put all of the revenues that we have into programs, services and capital investment to create a better Yukon for everyone.

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier said the Auditor General was his go-to guy for financial advice and today he won't even talk about him. Here's the actual advice that the Auditor General gave this government in 2013 — and I quote: "... the hospitals were designed and built without knowing the... operating costs — costs that should have been available to decision makers before approval for the projects was given".

It's obvious that the Yukon Party is more concerned about the upcoming election and getting construction going than it is about following the advice from the Auditor General. This is nothing new and it speaks to how politics trumps good financial management time and time again with this administration. The government is building a massive new facility, and with it comes new major operation and maintenance costs but the government doesn't know what they are, even though construction is already well underway.

Why is the Yukon Party once again ignoring the Auditor General?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, I thought that the Leader of the Liberal Party would shy away from the previous hospitals — the previous hospitals that we invested in in Watson Lake and Dawson that he was vehemently opposed to — the construction of those. I dare to ask the Leader of the Liberal Party and the Member for Klondike to ask his constituents today what they think of that investment.

I want to acknowledge the previous MLA for Klondike for his work and persistence in delivering one of many important projects that the former MLA, Steve Nordick, delivered for that riding.

The Auditor General is very clear. In the audit of our Public Accounts every year, they have said that we had an unqualified position and that we have net financial resources.

The best indicator of financial management is a party that runs a consistent, modest surplus — and the envy of the country by having money in the bank.

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, my constituents know that I was not against the facilities, but against the fiscal mismanagement by this government of those facilities. It is funny to watch the government pick and choose which advice from the Auditor General that it wants to follow.

Not that long ago, the Auditor General criticized the government because it did not identify the operating costs of the two new hospitals until the new hospitals were under design and construction was well underway. That was my criticism.

It is straightforward advice: before you build something, know what it is going to cost before you operate. The government has not done that. It has released no information on O&M costs because they have been cancelled. The Premier said yesterday that he would always take the word of the Auditor General. In this case the government has done exactly the opposite of what the Auditor General has recommended. It is a lack of leadership, and it is a lack of planning, and the Premier refuses to address this issue.

Why did the government give the construction go-ahead without knowing the operation and maintenance costs? Would the Premier answer the question?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, we just heard again the lack of leadership with another flip-flop by the Leader of the Liberal Party. We will look forward to sharing with Yukoners some of the previous quotes the Liberal leader had with regard to the hospital in Dawson City. We will enjoy the reaction that people have if he wants to talk about leadership.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: What we are hearing off-mic — disruption that the Liberal leader will try to do.

Mr. Speaker, I have said it before and I will say it again — that the health and welfare of Yukoners is paramount for this government. We have invested in MRIs. We have invested in hospital expansion here. We have built two regional hospitals. We are investing in new alcohol and drug services with the Sarah Steele. We continue to keep health and welfare of Yukoners a priority and we do it by being responsible fiscally with their money. We are the envy of the rest of the country. Sadly, that is what the other two parties have to deal with.

Question re: Departmental recommendations to YESAB

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, earlier this month Environment Yukon and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources provided contradictory recommendations to YESAB on a proposed placer mine on the Judas Creek tributaries. Environment Yukon has recommended that the project be rejected because of the high risk it poses to caribou and caribou habitat and the risk to soil and water quality in the region. However, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources has stated that the environmental impacts of the operation could be mitigated through reclamation work.

How does the government reconcile the opposite recommendations made by Environment Yukon and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources on the proposed placer mine on the Judas Creek tributaries?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I think, in fact, what we do hear and what Yukoners expect is that the departments within this government are doing their due diligence. The Department of Environment is doing their due diligence and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is doing their due diligence. Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the work of the non-partisan professional employees who work here, and we know that everyone is responsible for the jobs that they fulfill and we're confident that they'll continue to do that.

Ms. White: In its submission to YESAB, the Carcross/Tagish First Nation voiced opposition to the proposed placer mine. They expressed their concern that the proposed placer mine would compromise the Carcross caribou recovery program and the Southern Lakes caribou recovery program. Mr. Speaker, it's important to note that the Carcross/Tagish First Nation has voluntarily refrained from harvesting caribou in the area for 27 years. The Carcross caribou herd has been the focus of the recovery plan by all levels of government since the early 1990s when the herd population numbered just 400. With careful management, that herd has since grown to 800 animals.

Mr. Speaker, Environment Yukon has echoed the concerns that this project would threaten caribou and caribou habitat. Does this government accept Environment Yukon's assessment of the environmental risks of approving a placer mine on the Judas Lake tributaries and do they respect the opinions of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: What we do respect is the independent, transparent process that YESAA in fact is. As we know, this is still before the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board, and we will allow them to continue to do their due diligence. I am very proud of the work and the partnerships that exist between this government and First Nations on such things as wildlife monitoring. I am proud of the work that the departments are doing, representing their concerns from their individual departments. I am also very proud of the independent transparent process that YESAA is. This project is still before YESAB.

Ms. White: My concern is that this government has a track record of rejecting recommendations made by YESAB. Mr. Speaker, we have seen this before on a number of occasions where the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is seeking to open an area for development, while the Department of Environment is doing its best to protect land, water and wildlife. The Minister of Environment's role is to provide support to his officials, whom he relies on for their knowledge and expertise. He should strongly be advocating for the department's official stance when it comes to the Southern Lakes caribou herd.

Mr. Speaker, what concrete steps has the Minister of Environment taken to support his officials in their efforts to protect the Southern Lakes caribou herd and maintain the

hard-won successes of the Southern Lakes caribou herd recovery plan?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Today, what we have heard many times is that an NDP government would politically interfere in a process. Mr. Speaker, this government will not politically interfere in the work of the officials to represent their departments. This is the process that exists. This government will not politically interfere in that process.

Question re: Oil and gas development

Mr. Tredger: This year the Government of Yukon budget allocates \$369,000 for an oil and gas action plan. In a briefing, the opposition was informed that this money is to establish water monitoring wells in the Kotaneelee, focusing on collecting water data in an area with oil and gas potential, instead of establishing a much-needed comprehensive baseline data collection for all of Yukon.

Officials also indicated that this oil and gas action plan was created to meet the recommendations of the Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing.

Can the minister confirm that the oil and gas action plan was put in place in an attempt to satisfy the recommendations of the select committee, and will he commit to tabling this plan in this House?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I would like to thank members from this side of the House, as well as the other side of the House, including the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, for their work on the Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing. That has led to the development of an action plan, accepting and responding to the recommendations. First is an engagement strategy. The goal is to lead a broad and balanced dialogue on the government's role in responsible oil and gas development. The second component is with respect to First Nation government-to-government engagement. The goal is to have discussions with First Nations about the development of oil and gas in their traditional territories.

There are technical projects that are part of this oil and gas action plan, as well as work on the regulatory regime. Again, Mr. Speaker, it's surprising to me that the member opposite, who was a member of the select committee, would now criticize the recommendations that the select committee made and that the government is responding to.

Again, I would thank him for his work on the committee and invite him to stop criticizing the results and the recommendations of that committee.

Mr. Tredger: I look forward to the minister tabling his action plan. A plan sets priorities and goals and assesses how resources are to be allocated in the long term. Presumably this plan has some long-term financial planning associated with it. This one component of the action plan only partially satisfies one of the 21 recommendations this government committed to meeting and is expected to cost over \$360,000 this year alone.

As a simple matter of principle, this government should tell Yukoners how much it plans to spend to pave the way for

a fracking industry in Yukon, an industry and practice that most Yukoners are opposed to.

Mr. Speaker, how much has this government budgeted to satisfy all the recommendations of the select committee on fracking?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Our response to the select committee's recommendations will be a multi-year project. I mentioned the components, including an engagement strategy, First Nation government-to-government engagement, some of the technical projects that are underway, as well as work on the regulatory regime.

Our government believes that Yukon's path to self-reliance includes safe and responsible natural resource development. Shale oil and gas resources are one part of that mix. We're very much interested in mineral development and ensuring — unlike the NDP and the Liberal Party, that we don't pick winners and losers when it comes to Yukoners looking for jobs and opportunities. We want to make sure that those Yukoners who work in the mining industry can have jobs here at home. We want to make sure that those Yukoners who are currently working outside of our borders in the oil and gas industry have the opportunity to come home and take advantage of opportunities here.

As we've mentioned, when it comes to shale gas development, we're focusing on a very small portion of the Yukon — a land mass of about four percent, the Liard Basin. Again, recent scientific studies released by, among other groups, our Yukon Geological Survey suggest that is the second-largest basin in North America for shale gas potential.

We're excited about that and we're excited to build upon the natural resource economy as well as tourism, IT and other sectors of our economic development.

Mr. Tredger: Yukoners are waiting for the minister to table his action plan.

One of the committee recommendations of the select committee on fracking was that the development would not go ahead without First Nation approval. This government allegedly accepted those recommendations. As far as we know, no First Nation has approved fracking on their traditional territory yet, once again — just like in the megahydro project — we have a government spending money to facilitate a project that doesn't have committed support from the most important partners.

A fiscally prudent government would get approval first, before spending the money. Why is this government once again spending public money on a project before getting First Nation approval?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Again, the member opposite — the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, who sat on the select committee, travelled to Yukon communities with government members and other members of the opposition — is now criticizing the recommendations of that committee.

Mr. Speaker, we made our position clear last year when it comes to shale gas development. We will only focus on the Liard Basin and we will not proceed without the support of the affected First Nations. There are the Kaska First Nations as well as the Acho Dene Koe.

Again, the Member for Mayo-Tatchun has a revisionist sense of history when it comes to the select committee and the work that they accomplished and the recommendations that they have made.

We know that the members opposite do not support natural resource development. We know the Liberal Party does not support shale gas development. They support some conventional oil and gas development, but I would be interested to hear what some of the people he has talked to in the oil and gas industry think about only conventional resource development in the Yukon.

Again, we're not going to pick winners and losers. We're investing in resource development. We're investing in tourism. We're investing in IT. We're investing in health care and education — jobs for Yukoners. We're not picking winners and losers as they would.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Silver: I would like to take this opportunity to introduce Eira Thomas of Kaminak in the gallery today.

Applause

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS FOR THE PRODUCTION OF PAPERS

Clerk: Motion for the Production of Papers No. 13, standing in the name of Mr. Silver.

Motion for the Production of Papers No. 13

Speaker: It is moved by the Leader of the Third Party:

THAT this House do order the return of all current applications for infrastructure funding that the Government of Yukon has submitted to the Government of Canada.

Mr. Silver: The motion today is quite simple, and I won't take a lot of time on it. We're looking for information from the government on what it has asked the Government of Canada for financial assistance with.

It's a direct attempt to get a straight answer and to determine what projects the government is actually pursuing and what projects it is just talking about but not necessarily really pushing forward.

Earlier the Government of Yukon had made a submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance and it said — and I quote: “We wish to highlight several projects to the Committee. We believe investments in these key projects will have positive economic and social impacts for Canada”.

It listed four projects at that time: (1) the Whistle Bend continuing care facility; (2) the Dempster fibre project; (3) the

Stewart-Keno transmission line project; and (4) the Yukon resource gateway project.

The submission noted that the resource gateway project had been submitted to Canada under the New Building Canada fund. It is interesting to see that the government was saying that the private sector was interested in committing over \$100 million to this project. I am curious to see what signed agreements are in place with the private sector confirming this commitment. I would also like to get a full copy of that application, Mr. Speaker.

The document doesn't say an application has been made on the Whistle Bend facility, but the government has confirmed in this House that indeed an application has been made to Canada. Perhaps the government — I see the minister shaking his head, but I do have documentation here — *Yukon's Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance* that states so and he can clear it up for me in his rebuttal.

Perhaps the government can inform Yukoners under what fund that application was made, if it was, and provide a copy of that as well.

The approach the government is taking on funding of this facility is interesting. With no assurances whatsoever that Ottawa will say yes, the government has decided to start construction anyway. It is a risky and very political approach to take — one that will tie the hands of the next government for years to come if that application is in fact unsuccessful.

Mr. Speaker, just today, I asked about the Auditor General's advice not to build things until you know what the costs will be to operate. The government has ignored that advice. I expect the Auditor General will also have some serious reservations about beginning construction without knowing where the money will come from to pay for this. Nonetheless, that is the situation that the Yukon Party has put itself in and also the Yukon taxpayers, for that matter. It will certainly be left to the next government to resolve these outstanding financial questions.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note that despite the government saying that they're moving ahead on a fibre project, as far as we understand, no application has been made yet. In the Premier's report to Yukoners, the government again wants to take credit for moving this project along, but the fact is that the government hasn't submitted an application to Ottawa as far as we can tell for this. This project certainly falls under the IOU category. After 14 years of not addressing this issue, on the eve of an election, the government is anxious to look busy on this file. The reality is that people's phones still won't work when that line is cut because this government has not addressed that problem.

It's very curious to see that the Dawson Airport expansion is not on the list submitted to the federal finance committee and that no application for funding has been made to Ottawa. I believe this was confirmed this week by officials in the Department of Highways and Public Works. If this is true, it demonstrates how low on the priority list this project really is. After two years of talk, we now know that the

government isn't serious on moving forward and it will be left to the next government to have to address this issue.

With respect to the Keno power project, there is a proposal that has gone from costing approximately \$40 million to now \$80 million. It is another one that will fall to the next government to make a decision on.

These are Yukon-wide projects and I would now like to turn to the municipal, First Nation and community level projects. There has been conflict between this government and municipal leaders over infrastructure. Municipalities have noted that they make their requests to the Government of Yukon and are often surprised at the end at what actually gets approved. It would be helpful if the Government of Yukon actually releases what applications go forward to Canada, and that is what I am asking for here today.

The Minister of Community Services did release some documents today. They have not hit my desk yet, but I just sent them off to the office. I assume these are some of those projects and thank him for that. That is fine, I'm good. After informing the House that I would call this motion for debate, we finally get these documents. That is fantastic. It is a reactive approach as opposed to a proactive approach, and I really expect no more from this government. It would inform citizens and municipal leaders, First Nation governments and the private sector what the government was actually working on if it made these releases — these requests to Ottawa — routine, instead of refusing to release them as a matter of fact and a matter of course.

I hope all three parties can support this motion that I made for debate today. It is a straightforward request to make information on what the government is up to available to the public as a matter of course, not left for a motion for the production of papers in the Legislative Assembly to be the trigger to allow this government to release that information. It would also be a good step toward making the government more open and more accountable.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues today.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, earlier today I tabled a list of projects that have been submitted to Canada by the Yukon government for the New Building Canada fund. Those include projects under the three different components of the New Building Canada fund. As members will recall, those three components are: the small communities fund, the national and regional projects fund and the national infrastructure component fund — the very large piece.

My colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works tabled Yukon's submission for the national infrastructure component fund for the Yukon resource gateway project. It is a lengthy document, but I believe it meets the needs of members to understand that project, given its significant size. With regard to the smaller projects included in this list that I have tabled today, they include projects led by my department in collaboration with municipalities as well as some projects that are led specifically by the Department of Highways and Public

Works. In the cases where a project is going to be done in a municipality, the municipal governments took a significant role in working with us to develop these projects. This will come as no surprise to them, of course. I have met with every mayor and council and talked about which projects are going forward and talked about their priorities. This will come as no surprise to them, but of course the Third Party was not aware that they have taken such an important role in providing their priorities to us.

The list is here, Mr. Speaker — the list of small communities fund projects I should note have already been approved. Five of them are here. The MP and I had a chance to announce that they had been approved a few weeks ago. Only one of the other projects, the Burwash water treatment plant, has since been approved by Canada, and it's noted in this document that this is the case as well.

This document includes the list of projects, the eligible costs associated with those projects and a brief description about the projects themselves. I don't believe it's necessary for us to table the engineering drawings — or anything like that — that accompany the broader applications. I don't think that's a good use of the Legislature's time, but I think it's fine that we share the list of projects.

As far as I'm concerned, we've met the action required in this motion, so I don't see any need to pass it and I'll be voting against this motion.

Ms. Moorcroft: I'm pleased to rise to speak to the Member for Klondike's motion urging the government to table all requests that they have made — all current applications that this government has submitted to the Government of Canada for infrastructure funding. We will be supporting this motion.

We are a small jurisdiction and we rely heavily on federal streams of support for infrastructure investment. Under this government, we have become more and more reliant upon federal transfer money, because Yukon revenue has fallen, so these federal contributions become all that much more important.

This government hasn't been forthcoming with the House and the public on how these requests are made, when they are made and how they are incorporated into the budget.

Let me turn first to the national infrastructure component of the New Building Canada fund. The Yukon government's submission has a list of four priorities. Their requests on the submission were for the Whistle Bend care facility, the fibre optics line, resource access roads program and the Keno-to-Stewart transmission line.

The national infrastructure component of the New Building Canada fund sets out the following requirements for these infrastructure submissions: "To be considered nationally significant, projects must support one or more of the following objectives: Generate positive economic activity; reduce potential economic disruptions or foregone economic activity; generate productivity gains for the Canadian economy; or, provide benefits that extend beyond the provinces or territories where the project would be located.

“Eligible projects will be limited to those that provide the greatest economic impact under the following seven categories: highways and major roads, public transit, rail infrastructure, local and regional airports, port infrastructure, intelligent transportation systems (ITS), and disaster mitigation infrastructure.”

It further states that projects must have an estimated cost of \$100 million, but that projects can be less than that if they can demonstrate significant benefit to Canada. An initial reading of those conditions, compared to the projects that Yukon submitted, leads us to a number of questions.

This government has not put any evidence on the public record indicating that they have done comprehensive fiscal planning for the projects they have requested federal money for. With the first phase of the 300-bed Whistle Bend facility, this government has yet to show us that they've done a full life-cycle costing of the facility and that they cannot explain how they plan to pay for it, should federal money fall through.

Just today in Question Period, Mr. Speaker, we saw that the government was unable to answer questions on what the operation and maintenance costs would be after spending millions on the capital construction of a new continuing care facility.

There is the Stewart-Keno transmission line, which this document estimates will come with a price tag of \$86 million and it too seems to lack rudimentary financial due diligence. The project is being built to support mining in the area, but the minister responsible for Yukon Energy Corporation cannot point to any business case or economic analysis to support such a large investment. At the very least, this government would sign a power purchase agreement with the customers who they plan on providing electricity to, because if any of the planned mines fall through, this would be a very expensive project to provide more reliable electricity to approximately a dozen residents of Keno at a cost of \$86 million.

Yesterday in Question Period, when I asked the Minister of Highways and Public Works, he didn't indicate that they had conducted all of the economic analysis for the resource roads that their own resource roads framework requires them to do. Surely these requests for millions of dollars come with some additional documentation detailing how these projects will actually affect Yukon's and Canada's economy and how they arrived at their estimates for these projects.

Mr. Speaker, I noted that one of the areas covered under the projects for the New Building Canada fund relates to airports. In the past, this government has received significant funding from the airport capital assistance program. This is money that the federal government allocates to Yukon to improve our airports and aerodromes. Most notably, we saw \$3.5 million allocated to replace the Whitehorse apron runway panels and that was mismanaged by this government and is now deficient. If this government will be requesting ACAP money, or has requested ACAP money for projects like the work that will be identified through the Dawson City Airport functional plan, we would hope that they would be tabled as well.

Under the Building Canada fund for the communities, we saw in this year's budget that there is money earmarked for projects that haven't actually been approved yet. Generally it is good practice to have the money in hand before announcements are made about projects that are included in the budget. We have seen this lack of clarity around how the submissions are compiled, prioritized and sent to Ottawa lead to significant frustration from Yukon's municipalities, First Nations and communities that rely on this money to fund these projects. Mr. Speaker, it's about having respectful relationships with other orders of governments.

Then there's the national green energy infrastructure and the national social infrastructure. The new federal government has announced funding for social and renewable energy, so we're hopeful that this government is going to be a little more forthcoming if and when they make submissions under these funding streams.

The wider issue with this government is that there is a lack of clarity around the way that funding is being allocated for major projects. We are seeing projects being approved and money being earmarked in the budget that simply hasn't been approved yet.

Last week, the Minister of Community Services said that they hadn't received a response from the federal government on their submission requesting \$109 million for infrastructure, yet they were going ahead with the project. This raises questions. Is the government comfortable about not getting the money and going ahead regardless, or they need it and they're taking a major risk by beginning construction without having the money approved?

Government should be conducting long-term fiscal planning. The Auditor General has pointed that out repeatedly to this government. The government should have the money approved before they begin work on these projects whenever possible. This government should be transparent when it comes to providing Yukoners with information on how these projects will be paid for.

I do want to acknowledge that the government has tabled details on the Yukon resource gateway project, which we requested yesterday during Highways and Public Works debate. The government submitted a list of the national and regional projects fund applications and the applications under the small communities fund. That is a start but, as I've said on debate on this motion, we would like to see more information coming from the government. We would like them to be transparent. We would like to ask this government to submit any applications for infrastructure funding that they have put forward under the airports capital assistance program and any new funding streams that are available from the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, we do support this motion.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Silver: I'm not surprised that the Yukon Party will not be supporting the motion to produce papers. It is a regular

occurrence for this government to say that all is good with communication with partner governments in the Yukon — between First Nation governments and municipal governments — and then us hearing the exact opposite when we do meet with these partner governments.

A good example — money flows from the feds to the Yukon territorial government, and First Nation governments don't get to see these agreements. In specific examples that I've been talking with First Nation governments about, some of these projects and some of these funding allocations — the top mandate is to advance economic development for those affected First Nations but the First Nations aren't allowed, by YTG, to see these agreements. Then they are told that they don't necessarily have the capacity for the projects. "Don't worry — we'll give you some jobs anyway in this particular envelope." But again, if the First Nation governments were involved from the start, they would be able to build their capacity to be able to complete these tasks with the support of YTG in conversations with the federal government.

Again, we hear that all is well here. We have heard it with municipalities as well — that everything is working fine when we talk to the Minister of Community Services and the Yukon Party government — but we do hear a different dialogue. I'm very much looking forward to AYC. I'm very much looking forward to these documents being discussed at the AYC in Watson Lake this year. Municipalities, as I mentioned, are often asked to provide their priorities, but what they find in the end is not necessarily the same ranking or the same issues, and it's good to have that dialogue. One way of doing that is to have a more open and transparent policy when it's going from partner governments in the Yukon to an ask in Ottawa and then coming back here with the pockets and envelopes of money.

I would like to thank my colleagues in the Official Opposition for their support on this bill and, again, I'm not surprised that the Yukon Party will not be supporting this motion.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Divison

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Disagree.

Mr. Elias: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Moorcroft: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

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

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

Motion for the Production of Papers No. 13 negatived

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 1142

Clerk: Motion No. 1142, standing in the name of Ms. White.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce amendments to the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* to allow domestic violence victims to:

- (1) terminate a lease early and without penalty; and
- (2) remove an abuser's name from a lease.

Ms. White: This is one of those motions that, when you start — and typically you are bringing forward a motion — and you say that it is a pleasure to rise to speak to it — I can honestly say that I wish this was not something we had to discuss and that I would not have to regurgitate the statistics for violence against women and the barriers that they face when they leave violence.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. White: Before I start, I would like acknowledge three people in the gallery. We have Hillary Aitken, Charlotte Hrenchuk and Esther Armstrong. These are three strong advocates who are joining us from the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre. I appreciate everything that you do on a daily basis because I know it never stops.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, often we bring forward motions that we are happy to talk about and we are excited about — and we are trying to bring forward ideas. This is an important idea and it has positive ramifications, but I bring it forward because, despite the fact that it is 2016, life is not good for everyone in the territory. In the Yukon, violent crime against women is four times that of the national average. In the Yukon, intimate partner violence is 3.7 times that of the national average. What that means is that, despite the fact that we are in 2016, Yukon women — and especially Yukon aboriginal women — face a disproportionate risk of violence in their lives. Their stories — you can hear stories if you are willing to listen. They are not glamorous stories and they are not hopeful stories, often, but they have hopeful endings.

When I worked in Corrections, I worked in the women's unit. What I learned when I worked in Corrections was that no one ended up there without a catalyst. No one ended up in Corrections because things were always great. What I often learned was that the women I worked with in Corrections

were trying to deal with just crazy life situations. Whether they turned to an alcohol and drug dependency, whether they defended themselves violently — whatever the case was, women were often there and you could always go back to a root cause.

The thing I really learned while I was there is that one of the biggest things that they faced is that — like I have said before, I got to spend time with them when they were sober and things were going well. But you could see the stress escalate as they got closer to their release date because these women were not sure where they were going to go. Sometimes it was back to the partner that they had left when they came in; sometimes it was back to unsafe housing situations.

Sadly, you won't have the opportunity to go for lunch on a Wednesday at the women's centre, but for those of us who are able, you meet women from all sorts of walks of life and they are all there to support each other. If you go often enough, the stories become familiar. Although the players are different, the situations are similar.

It was a really exciting time in Alberta at the end of 2015, when Bill 204 was brought forward, which was the *Residential Tenancies (Safer Spaces for Victims of Domestic Violence) Amendment Act, 2015*. What we saw in the Alberta Legislature was unanimous support of a bill that gave women just one more tool to get out of a bad situation.

One thing that we know is that a woman fleeing violence — it typically takes multiple times of being abused before she goes and often she will leave more than one time. She will leave and there will be a cooling-off period and then she'll go back. Maybe it will be good for a while and then something will happen and then she'll leave again and then there'll be a cooling-off period and she goes back.

What I want to make sure of is that when a woman gets to that point — when she's done; when she is ready to move on — that we remove all the barriers in her way and we make it as easy as possible for her to take the next steps in her life.

I had some very quick conversations today and I'm grateful for the people I spoke to because I literally gave them four hours' notice. I had a conversation today with the staff at Kaushee's and they said that there was nothing but positive things that could be interpreted from this proposal. They said that all it would do is give women seeking safety one more tool and that, more than anything, it would help those women move forward and there would be more safety measures in place. I think it is important to note that even in the territory with a population as small as ours, in the 2013-14 calendar year, 2,088 women and 171 children were admitted to Kaushee's Place. That is an awful lot of people who needed that security.

In that same calendar year, they received 2,697 requests for support and services. So these are people who are living in situations that are unsafe and staff spent 771 hours helping people who weren't within their system — people who hadn't accessed their shelter.

I think that what this shows us is that despite that we continue to move on in calendar years, we haven't really

moved forward in the rights or in the protection of women. Every year, we have the 12 Days to End Violence Against Women Campaign and we talk about how important it is that we respect women and their choices and that we offer them the support when they go through awful times. Still, in society today, we still have to make sure that we give women a safe place to go.

The motion that I have put forward — my hope is that it just becomes fewer barriers to women to access what they need to take those safer steps forward.

I thank the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate and the Minister of Community Services because we had a conversation this morning; I appreciated that conversation. We'll be seeing a friendly amendment and I appreciate what that amendment is going to say as well. What we talked about briefly were the securities that are already in place and I acknowledge that there are securities in place. I think there was probably, at the time, fairly groundbreaking legislation when the *Family Violence Prevention Act* came forward. When I was speaking to Kaushee's, they actually mentioned the emergency intervention order and they said that this was a good emergency step; it just didn't take it far enough into the future, so it was a temporary reprieve but it didn't help those steps.

I just want to read the preamble because I think it's as relevant today as the day it was brought forward. It says:

"Recognising that family violence continues to be a serious problem in the Yukon;

"Recognising also that one difficulty victims of family violence face is that the abuser often forces them to leave their own home to escape the abuse;

"Recognising also that there must be effective legal procedures that victims of family violence can easily use to get immediate help and relief from the abuse."

That came forward at a time when government recognized that we needed to put more protections in place for people fleeing abuse. It's important that I say right now, Mr. Speaker, that the language is gender neutral because there are definitely men who are victims of spousal or intimate partner abuse and I'm not denying that fact; but what I do bring forward is that women are 3.7 times more likely to suffer at the hands of an intimate partner.

So the *Family Violence Prevention Act* has two securities in place that you can access: one is the emergency intervention order; and the second that I learned about today is admittedly maybe not used as much as it could be — the victim's assistance order. The reason I highlight that is if the ministers who I had the conversation with today acknowledge that one within the department has been recognized as not being used as a tool as often as it could be, then maybe that's something that we need to rectify. If it can help victims of violence take that step forward, then maybe it's a tool we need to use more often.

Mr. Speaker, Yukon Housing Corporation has a policy for victims of violence. What this policy does — there's a priority list and if you are a victim of violence, you actually can get taken from anywhere on that list or not on that list at

all and you can get put to the top. The policy is to provide the consideration for those persons who are able to demonstrate an immediate need for housing because they are at risk of abuse from a perpetrator with whom they have recently lived or currently live. So even within the Yukon Housing Corporation, we recognize that there can be abuse within a family unit and that it's important to make sure that we remove either the abuser or the victim from the situation.

When I was talking to the women's organizations today, they said it's incredibly important that we make sure that the verifier doesn't only have to be RCMP; they said that you can't force someone to only disclose what they're going through to the police in order for it to be accepted. We need to make sure that this barrier also of disclosure is one that isn't hindering that ability. Even within the Yukon Housing policy, they have the definition of "verifier". The verifier means a person who is a recognized, practising professional associated with an agency or organization and who is: (a) a police officer; (b) a medical or mental health professional such as a doctor, nurse, psychologist or psychiatrist; (c) a registered social worker or social service case manager; or (d) a Government of Yukon Victim Services worker, an executive director of a transition home, or other social service provider in the field of family violence prevention and intervention. So even within the current rules and regulations we have, we've already recognized that we need to make sure that the verifier isn't only through the RCMP. That was one thing that was highlighted by one of the women's groups.

Within the justice system, there are some securities, but then when we look at the new *Landlord and Tenant Act* — and it's interesting because the more familiar you become with legislation, the more you can sometimes see where there are gaps where you would like to kind of fill it a bit. This isn't a lot different from understanding that there were gaps for mobile homeowners. When you read it — I am going to reference the handbook as this is something that is really easy for people to access — it talks about changes of tenancy and it says, "Changes or deletions of standard terms in a tenancy agreement are not allowed (once an agreement is entered into)." However, "A landlord and tenant may make a change to a term that is not a standard term if both agree." But even when you go through the entire paragraphs to here, it doesn't lay out the exceptional.

What I'm hoping is that at one point in time in the territory, a woman or a man who has been abused by a partner who is in that cohabitation can go with their verifier to the Residential Tenancies Office. What can happen is that if his name is on the lease, it can be removed and her name can be added; or if you need to break a lease before the agreed-upon time or before the notification amount, there isn't a penalty that follows you for a long time. It is one thing to leave behind your security deposit, but it's another thing to leave behind your good name. We know that housing is not easy to come by in Yukon. One thing that you're always asked for is a person that can be contacted — you're asked for a reference.

One of the concerns in the Alberta legislation that women within shelters said is that they were afraid to put their names

on leases because what if they had to leave, and then that black mark follows them.

The hope is that this opens up a conversation in the community. We're really lucky to live in the community that we do, because we have women's organizations across the territory that are fierce; they've been having these conversations without us. They have been talking to their clients. They've been talking to their friends and they know what we need to do to make things easier for women.

After my conversation with the ministers this morning, my hope is that we take this conversation to the people who know best and we ask them for their suggestions, for their leadership and for their guidance because they already know the answers, so instead of necessarily just copying legislation that was in Alberta — although it is beautiful legislation because of what it does — in Yukon our reality is a bit different. But I think we can still make those changes that will make life substantially easier for someone who is ready to make those changes.

What I want to make sure of is that we are able to remove the barriers that prevent a woman from finally taking those steps forward. I want to make sure that she's safe. I want to make sure that she is in a place where she is comfortable. So if she were living in a house, I don't want her to have to leave it if she doesn't want to.

I look forward to statements from others and I look forward to the time when we take this outside the Chamber and get the advice that we need and make the changes that need to happen.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I would like to begin by thanking the member opposite for bringing this motion forward and engaging constructively with me and my colleagues in discussing it prior to right now.

We had a chance, as the Member for Takhini-Kopper King mentioned, to discuss the motion a little earlier today. I thought we had a productive discussion about what we may do going forward, so I have a few things I would like to say about the act itself, I have a few things I would like to say about what's in place now, and then, as the member indicated, I do have a friendly amendment that we can discuss in a few moments.

First of all, I should provide some context. As Minister of Community Services, I'm responsible for the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* and its subsequent office, the Residential Tenancies Office. That office is relatively new and it is a creature of the new legislation. It's something we feel was a very positive development for managing the relationships between tenants and landlords in the territory.

As we've noted, Mr. Speaker, in bringing forward this legislation — it only came into force early this year, on January 1. We know that, while we went through a fairly comprehensive process to bring the legislation forward — which involved a number of people — there are some things that remain to be considered, whether or not they need to be tweaked.

Obviously the previous legislation that predated the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* was exceptionally dated. I believe it was 50-some odd years old and was in much need of updating, so I think all members were happy to see legislation of that nature come forward a few years ago.

I became minister in January of last year and had the pleasure of working on the regulations that were pursuant to the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*, and was happy to see those brought into force last year as well. We've seen some fairly big changes with regard to the relationships between landlords and tenants through this legislation and through the regulations that are now in place.

As I've noted, we don't always get it 100-percent right the first time. I've acknowledged that previously in discussions with the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, in fact, around mobile homes and the need to perhaps reconsider the law as it pertains specifically to the relationship between a mobile homeowner and a mobile home park owner. We are in the process right now, as we speak, of having a consultation underway to seek input on that matter.

We are considering making changes to the legislation on that front and are looking forward to having input from interested stakeholders through the consultation that's underway currently. This is perhaps another issue, Mr. Speaker, where it's worth having further conversations. I'm not sure of what ultimately we may decide when it comes to whether or not legislative changes are needed to the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* or the *Family Violence Prevention Act*, or any other piece of legislation or regulation that perhaps we might want to consider, but I think there is certainly value in having those conversations. I think that's what this motion is about and I think the topic at hand today is extending that conversation a little bit further.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, let me speak a little bit about the RLTA. As I noted, as of January 1 of this year, the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* came into force. The new act provides a binding dispute resolution process for both landlords and tenants to access. It requires written tenancy agreements, adjusted notice periods and provides more clarity for both landlords and tenants. There are new minimum rental standards that will come into force on January 1, 2017. This will give landlords the opportunity to prepare for the new requirements. The Residential Tenancies Office helps settle disputes by educating landlords and tenants about their rights and responsibilities. It also provides dispute resolution services and issues final and binding decisions in orders.

But today we are speaking about safety in the context of domestic violence. As the member correctly noted, it is not an issue that is very fun to speak about, but it is most certainly a reality for many people. It's a very important issue, and measures to protect vulnerable individuals are necessary throughout the various pieces of legislation.

All tenants are currently able to terminate a tenancy agreement for any reason with a given period of time. In the case of a weekly tenancy agreement, one week's notice is required; in the case of monthly tenancies, one month's notice is required. In many jurisdictions, including Yukon, a landlord

can give 14 days' notice if a leaseholder, or someone permitted by the leaseholder, significantly interferes with or disturbs a tenant or other occupants, and/or seriously jeopardizes the health and/or safety of another occupant. The notice periods for tenants in Yukon are indeed shorter than those required in numerous other jurisdictions in Canada. The one-month termination notice for month-to-month tenancies, which already exists in our RLTA, is largely similar to Alberta's Bill 204, which the Member for Takhini-Kopper King referenced, which requires 28 days' notice to terminate an agreement in the event of domestic violence.

Speaking just a little bit about Bill 204, Mr. Speaker, to listeners who aren't familiar with that — the member provided a bit of an introduction — but it was brought forward last year by an MLA in Alberta after noting her own experience and experiences that she had heard of. When it was brought forward, I think it was only a day or day after that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King put forward a motion urging us to look at Bill 204. I don't remember the exact wording, but it was essentially urging us to look at Bill 204 and consider making changes based on that.

Following that motion, I had department officials conduct a review of Bill 204 and provide me with information about how our current legislation stacked up against Bill 204, and that provides some of the information I brought here today. Mr. Speaker, we're very cognizant of that bill and we appreciate being guided to it by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

That bill — Bill 204 in Alberta, which is not yet in force — requires a certificate confirming there are grounds for termination in order for someone to end a tenancy. In fact, in Alberta, the grounds of proof for the certificate, in order for a tenant to be released from a lease early — 28 days' notice in the case of domestic violence — often must include a restraining order or a peace bond — or something similar to an emergency prevention order that we have here in Yukon — to be issued first. These are all mechanisms that we have in Yukon to seek protection in cases of domestic abuse, and I can discuss those a bit further in a few moments.

Alternatively, Alberta has an option for a designated authority to confirm instances of domestic abuse. It is not clear at this time that there is yet an official listing of who these designated authorities are, so we assume that's something they will be dealing with probably through regulation in the coming months and years — something we will most certainly be following closely here in Yukon.

In a yearly tenancy arrangement in Yukon, tenants are still required to give three months' notice. This can be given at any time. In Alberta's *Residential Tenancies Act*, a notice to end a yearly tenancy agreement can only be served after the tenant has completed 10 months of the tenancy agreement, and then they must give 60 days' notice to the landlord.

Alberta's Bill 204 addresses the issue in Alberta that tenants in a yearly lease could not give immediate notice. In Yukon, any tenant can give their three months' notice to end a yearly tenancy immediately, unlike the case in Alberta. However, any tenants in any lease who are in domestic

violence situations can also seek an emergency intervention order under the *Family Violence Prevention Act*, which is an option for victims of domestic violence to quickly access safe housing in emergency situations.

The *Family Violence Prevention Act* recognizes that a major difficulty faced by victims of family violence is that they are often forced to leave their own homes to get immediate protection or safe accommodation. The act is meant to offer an accessible, legal option that victims of family violence can easily use to get immediate help and relief from the abuse.

This emergency intervention order could allow them to remain in their rented home for a prescribed length of time — a length of time designated by a Justice of the Peace. An emergency intervention order is conducted *ex parte*, meaning the victim does not have to face the alleged abuser in a hearing or other type of fora. This is meant to prevent the abusive person, if they are in a family, spousal or intimate relationship, from contacting the victim and can remove the abuser from the residence, allowing the victim and their dependents to stay in their own home.

Even if the alleged abuser is a joint lease holder, or the only name on the lease, they can be prevented from being at their rented home. The emergency prevention order can include a provision granting to the victim sole occupation of the home they are living in, even if that home is leased by the alleged abuser. An emergency intervention order is typically granted for short periods of time. That was something that was referenced by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King — that the EIO is often a short-term measure that we can use in emergency situations — but the *Family Violence Prevention Act* does not prescribe the length of time an order should last, but the intention is that it is meant to address the needs of a victim in an emergency period, as we've discussed.

While a victim of domestic violence holds an emergency intervention order, there are other avenues of support and enforceable protection that victims can seek for themselves and their dependents. An EIO can allow time to provide notice of termination of a tenancy, to explore options with the landlord and other housing options that may be appropriate. This can include accessing shelters or supportive housing, if necessary. We can return to some of the policies around Yukon Housing Corporation as well. That is often an avenue for these types of situations.

If the tenant chooses to maintain the sole occupation of the rented home for a long period, there are options available through the court like a peace bond, or the victim may choose to seek a no-contact condition for the accused. In addition to these options, a victim's assistance order — a VAO — can also be applied for under the *Family Violence Prevention Act*, which can extend the protection provision and grant the victim and any other family members exclusive occupation of the their home whether the alleged abuser is a joint leaseholder or not. Unlike an EIO, these orders require notice to the other party and take longer to be granted, ideally during the EIO period. The victim's assistance order does require a hearing,

but it can assist over the longer term until the three months' notice is over and the tenancy is terminated.

There are supports in place as well to help a victim proceed with the options available. Victim Services workers can assist a victim to seek an emergency intervention order for an immediate time frame and then can explore options with the victim, such as seeking a victim's assistance order or further help with the legal system. A peace bond, an option under the *Criminal Code*, might be sought by a victim as well, which would prevent an alleged abuser from having contact with the victim. These generally last for a year.

These mechanisms for protection and support are meant to be accessible and responsive in emergency situations when we know victims are particularly vulnerable. Victims can call or walk into Victim Services offices to explore options including emergency intervention orders and victim's assistance orders. A Justice of the Peace can issue an emergency intervention order over the phone without official charges having been laid against the alleged abuser.

I think it is important to note that if the abuser is the sole leaseholder, having that person removed from the lease would mean the victim and their dependents may have to move even if they did not want to. An emergency intervention order or other interim solutions may allow the victim to remain in the rented property, safely removed from the abuser, or allow time to find other safe accommodation.

The Residential Tenancies Office hearing process is meant to assist in resolving tenancy disputes taking into account the unique situation of each case, including those where safety is an immediate or serious concern. The Residential Tenancies Office — the RTO — is a resource for information offered to both tenants and landlords on provisions under the RLTA and other intergovernmental services that may help those affected by domestic abuse. They can lead individuals to appropriate resources and services that can provide immediate help.

As I have reviewed these provisions within Yukon government and other services in Yukon that help people in domestic abuse situations, it seems we have similar options as made available under Bill 204 in Alberta. Between the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* and options like the emergency intervention order, as well as other victim services, we believe at this point Yukon does have responsive solutions for those who need to get out of a lease early while remaining safe and supported.

That being said, while we do have a number of supports and tools in place for these types of situations, we certainly acknowledge that perhaps further conversation is needed as to whether or not they are sufficient and whether or not people are aware of them. I think the Member for Takhini-Kopper King correctly noted that some of the information provided by the RTO through the handbook that she referenced could be one option for that. We have produced single-issue fact sheets that we have made available to the public at the RTO and one of the things that we talked about this morning at a meeting between a few of us was the possibility of having one

specifically for domestic abuse situations so that landlords and tenants can quickly find that information.

I think it's important to acknowledge that landlords themselves need to have access to this information as well so that they understand what their rights, roles and responsibilities with regard to dealing with these situations and they know what is available to themselves and to potential victims of domestic abuse situations.

Noting that those supports are in place and that we are most certainly willing to have a further conversation about this, I do have a friendly amendment that I would like to put forward. I will do that now and look forward to discussion about it.

Amendment proposed

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I move:

THAT Motion No. 1142 be amended by:

(1) removing the phrase “introduce amendments to the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*”; and

(2) replacing it with the phrase “consult with stakeholders about whether the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* and regulations should be amended”.

I have that here Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services

THAT Motion No. 1142 be amended by

(1) removing the phrase “introduce amendments to the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*”; and

(2) replacing it with the phrase “consult with stakeholders about whether the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* and regulations should be amended”.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, I didn't bring a copy of the motion as amended or what it would look like as amended, but I think that the amendment is fairly self-explanatory.

I should note that when we discussed this, we talked about — under the piece where it says, “consult with stakeholders”, we talked about actually listing off some of the stakeholders and we realized that we were better off simply saying the general term “stakeholders” so as not to exclude anyone unintentionally — but I do anticipate that we will have a broad discussion with a number of groups — not the least of which, of course, are relevant women's groups or other advocacy groups and perhaps others from the landlord or tenant communities as well.

We talked also a little bit about what that consultation might look like and I don't think we're binding ourselves to any particular structure in consultation. I think we can be as formal or informal as we need to be for this particular case. I think that the starting point would be a conversation about what is in place now; whether or not what is in place now is sufficient; whether or not what is in place now is well understood by those who need to understand it; or whether or not further things are needed to add to our toolkit or add to our

toolkit or add to our available programs and services. I think it's worthwhile to have that conversation — to continue the conversation that we've had today about this — and to engage with the necessary stakeholders to have a discussion.

Mr. Speaker, I also should note that the motion does still limit itself to the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*, which is fine, but I think that it's impossible to have this conversation without looking at any of the other programs and services and tools that are in place as well, whether they be policies in Yukon Housing Corporation or the *Family Violence Prevention Act*, but any of these overlapping — not necessarily overlapping — variety of tools, programs, policies, legislation and laws that are in place. I think that we can have a much broader discussion than just the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*, but I hope it's well understood by members that we aren't limiting ourselves too much by just noting it here. That was the initial motion put forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King and I was happy to leave it as such, but I am certainly acknowledging that the conversation can be a little bit broader than that and that this motion won't limit that too much.

With that, I will conclude. I think that the motion to begin with was good and that it is improved by allowing us to consult on this, as the amendment suggests. I thank my colleagues — and I know that I won't be able to speak after, Mr. Speaker, so I will just say I look forward to hearing from colleagues from both sides of the floor on the issue, once we pass this amendment.

Mr. Silver: I will be very brief. I just want to speak on the amendment. Of course I will be supporting this amendment and if passed, the amended motion as well. As discussed, this is based on a private member's bill of the same name in the Alberta Legislature and, talking with my colleague from Copperbelt South, there is obviously other legislation that we can look at as well.

The amendment in the original motion could make it easier for the victims of domestic violence to escape that abuse. The amendment that was put forward by the Minister of Community Services is an important due-diligence piece. The motion, as amended, eventually will allow domestic violence victims to break their lease without penalty if they demonstrate that they or their children are in danger. It will also allow victims to take the alleged abuser off that lease altogether.

Mr. Speaker, the bill in Alberta is designed to create a new way to support those who need to leave unsafe environments because of the violence or the threat of that violence and their conversations have to be had, which speaks to the amendment put forth by the Minister of Community Services. By giving the survivor of violence a way to leave and a platform to seek out supports, we will be working to break that cycle of violence and to start a real conversation.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that I will definitely be supporting the amendment and also — hopefully if that gets passed — the amended motion as well.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for bringing this forward. I am just going to say it again — no one in the communities understands the issue of violence against women better than the women's organizations. No one has more experience in the roadblocks that are put up for women leaving situations. No one understands what we need to do better.

I appreciate this is what was brought forward. I would like to be a fly on the wall when these organizations are given the ability to have a direct ear to government about the concerns they see with the legislation and what we can do to make it better.

I thank the minister for that amendment and I look forward to giving the women's organizations and stakeholders a platform to bring forward their concerns.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I would like to thank the member opposite for bringing forth this particular motion. I too would also like to acknowledge our guests in the gallery and acknowledge the very ongoing and important work of the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre. They are an extremely important partner of the Yukon government and have just recently celebrated 40 years. It's a testament to the importance of their work to continue the ongoing efforts to enhance women's equality on many fronts and all fronts.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to reference the motion as per the proposed amendment before us. Again, as was referenced by my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, earlier today, we actually did reach out to the member opposite to discuss the work that has been undertaken by the Residential Tenancies Office and about the legislation that we currently have in place — the *Family Violence Prevention Act* or the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* — and, of course, bringing forth this particular amendment as a friendly amendment.

It really reflects an acknowledgement of this government's work over the last several years to address key barriers that really influence women's vulnerability and certainly speaks to the very issue — the unfortunate issue of violence against women — but also reflects the important work of our organizations that are, as the member opposite would refer to, the ones who are working with these individuals on a daily basis and are very familiar with the process from beginning to end.

The actual amendment that is before us speaks to the need of engaging with those stakeholders to seek clarity to determine what gaps are actually in place and where we can actually strengthen — whether it's regulations or legislation, whether it's other pieces of legislation before us that need to also be tweaked.

We received a somewhat brief briefing, given the time limitation this morning, by our respective departments — from the Women's Directorate, Community Services and, I know, the Department of Justice, through their work in administering the *Family Violence Prevention Act*.

I'm not going to go over what was referenced by the Minister of Community Services other than to say that we're

very much committed to continuing to work on these barriers and work to enhance those very factors that will increase women's independence and a life free of violence.

I will just perhaps leave it at that right now and look forward to the further comments from members opposite and from our side.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the amendment?

Amendment to Motion No. 1142 agreed to

Speaker: Does any other member wish to be heard on the motion, as amended?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I'm certainly pleased to have the opportunity to rise in the Legislature today to provide my response to the member's motion, and I would like to thank her for bringing this motion forward and thank our member for the friendly amendment.

This motion speaks to supporting victims of domestic violence. As a father, as a devoted and supportive partner, and as an MLA — former Minister of Justice and, in my current role, as Minister of Health and Social Services — supporting victims of domestic violence is something that is deeply important to me. Members of this House, members of our great territory, Canadians across this nation and internationally, stand united to support not only victims of domestic violence, but those families and communities that also suffer.

Mr. Speaker, domestic violence can be defined as a pattern of abusive behaviour in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. It can involve a number of different behaviours.

Before I speak about the observable behaviours, I would like to highlight some of the work I've witnessed since taking office in 2011. In January 2015, as former Minister of Justice, I was proud to announce several initiatives designed to support victims of crime. These initiatives were all funded under the crime prevention and victim services trust fund. The fund has supported Yukon community groups since 1998. Proposals are reviewed by the Crime Prevention and Victim Services Trust Board of Trustees. Board members include community members and representatives from Yukon government, First Nations, women's organizations and the RCMP.

Some of the initiatives that were funded include — the Boys and Girls Club of Yukon received \$15,000 for a community stewardship campaign. This project encouraged community stewardship and community understanding by creating opportunities for youth to work with groups such as Mae Bachur Animal Shelter, Whitehorse Food Bank, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, the RCMP, City of Whitehorse and retirement homes. Incentives such as passes to the Canada Games Centre, Takhini Hot Springs, Equinox adventures and Mount Sima were awarded to participants.

Bringing Youth Towards Equality, or BYTE, received \$34,290 for rural violence prevention workshops and an annual Leaders in Training Conference. BYTE's multi-day sessions explore leadership skills, media, healthy relationships, gender stereotypes as well as violence. The project socially engages youth through interactive activities designed to build confidence.

The Town of Faro received \$2,738 for family dinner nights and training. This project brings the community together for family dinners once a month during the winter to increase community pride and safety. Funding also provided skills training for a recreational worker who runs programs for youth.

The Yukon Circle of Change received \$10,000 for restorative community conference projects. This project promotes healing after crime by encouraging conferences between offenders, victims and community members. Yukon Circle of Change coordinates conferencing with trained facilitators at no cost to community organizations or families in Whitehorse. Restorative community conferencing encourages offenders to be responsible and accountable for their crime and to repair the harm caused to victims and the community.

The Yukon Public Legal Education Association received \$27,000 for "It's Not Right". This project aimed to educate and engage bystanders to stop abuse of older adults. Workshops and information sessions in Whitehorse and in the communities taught neighbours, friends and family members to recognize warning signs and provide help in a safe and respectful way.

The Yukon Women's Transition Home Society received \$22,860 for Whitehorse safety protocol communications campaign. This project informed the public and social service providers about the Whitehorse safety protocol. In order to improve services for women, the Whitehorse safety protocol has been developed to build better, responsive relationships between RCMP and service providers. The project also created a third-party reporting program, an opportunity for victims of sexualized offences to report the offence anonymously.

Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Anda Ta Youth Centre received \$18,320 for their winter communications and outdoor skills training program. This program provides youth with access to counselling, skill development training and activities that empower youth to make healthy lifestyle and relationship choices. Youth will participate in sessions that discuss the impacts of drugs and alcohol and teach strategies to address domestic violence. The program also includes trips to Mount Sima and a week-long wilderness camp designed to teach modern and traditional wilderness skills.

Carcross/Tagish First Nation received \$50,000 for their Skills for Building, Skills for Life project. This project provides Carcross/Tagish men, 18 and older, with the training to develop employment and life skills. During the 10-week program, participants build log cabins and complete daily physical and emotional wellness activities.

That list may seem exhaustive; however, I can assure you that it is a drop in the bucket of what this government has been honoured to do as part of their role in preventing domestic violence.

In October 2014, while I served as the Minister of Justice, we presented eight Yukoners with community safety awards in recognition of their important role in building community safety. Many Yukoners continue to work diligently to make our territory a safe and better place to live.

The annual community safety awards are a great way to acknowledge individual contributions, as well as celebrate the collective efforts of the community. Innovative crime prevention initiatives, support services for victims of crime, volunteerism with at-risk youth and achievements in community policing were just some of the highlights among the 27 nominations received in 2014. These awards continue to remind us that we can all make a difference in our community.

I was also pleased as Minister of Justice to thank all of the nominees for their contributions and encourage others to support initiatives that promote community safety. As members in the Legislature are aware, award recipients are selected by the Community Safety Awards Nomination Committee, and I certainly thank the committee for their good work.

The Volunteer Award recipient, Tamara Horsey, told us that, being a victim of crime, she knows first-hand what it is like to feel that your voice is not being heard, but she could also tell us that after two years of diligently working to make changes with all the professionals and the peers she had been working with, that she felt her voice was indeed heard because she chose to speak up. She was very honoured to have received the award for outstanding volunteer in recognition of the hard work she had done. Tamara went on to say that we can all make change if we work together. I am proud of Tamara, Mr. Speaker, and I am proud of her for coming forward to share experience, not only as a victim of crime, but as a victim trying to navigate services to ensure her well-being.

I had the privilege of being part of the establishment of the Community Safety Awards in 2012 in response to a recommendation from the 2010 *Sharing Common Ground* report, which identified a need to recognize the contributions of Yukoners who promote community safety.

As Minister of Health and Social Services, I am thankful to be a part of our Yukon Party team for ensuring that victims of domestic violence have the supports they deserve. The Department of Health and Social Services funds several non-governmental organizations to provide programs and services to victims of domestic violence. I want to take a moment just to highlight some of the proposed 2016-17 financial transfers from the Department of Health and Social Services to various non-governmental organizations, otherwise known as NGOs. These NGOs provide support to Health and Social Services programming and assist many Yukoners, some of whom are victims of domestic violence. In the 2016-17 budget, there is \$2.365 million for transitional homes and second-stage

housing. There is \$1.45 million for emergency shelters and youth shelters and \$558,000 for public information and support. Also, in the 2016-17 proposed operation and maintenance funding, there is \$1.088 million allocated for family support.

As Minister of Health and Social Services, I was happy to announce funding of \$6,000 for the Home Educators Society, Yukon, under the health investment fund to offer the peaceful warrior program. The health investment fund is mandated under the Yukon *Health Act* to provide financial support for short-term projects aimed at promoting well-being in order to strengthen communities and make them and their residents healthier. The peaceful warrior program teaches children and their parents to build self-confidence, physical strength, agility and self-discipline, and to understand conflict. The funding will assist with registration fees for home-schooled students for weekly training and workshops during a six-month period.

In August of 2012, the Yukon Party government provided \$338,000 in annual operation and maintenance funding to the Dawson City Women's Shelter. This funding allowed for enhanced programming and shelter-bed capacity for women and children in abusive relationships. In 2013, the Yukon Party government was proud to help open Betty's Haven. Betty's Haven provides affordable and secure housing for up to 18 months as well as support programs. Currently, the Department of Health and Social Services provides ongoing funding for this important transitional home for women and children fleeing abuse.

This government also supports the Watson Lake shelter, Help and Hope for Families, with funding of \$492,000. The Help and Hope centre serves as emergency transitional housing for women and children in abusive and violent situations.

Domestic violence can be defined as a pattern of abusive behaviour in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. It can involve a number of different behaviours including: emotional abuse, which can involve such things as trying to lower the other person's self-esteem by constantly criticizing them; physical abuse, which not only involves physical violence, but also denying people medical care or getting them to take drugs against their will; psychological abuse, which could include any type of threatening behaviour that is used to instill fear in the other individual; sexual abuse, which involves coercing the other person to perform sexual acts or engage in sexual behaviours; and financial abuse, which occurs by making the other person financially dependent and then controlling their economic resources.

Domestic violence can also include things like using passive-aggressive behaviour to punish the other person. This would refer to a situation where the perpetrator masks their expression of anger and it can include things like deliberately forgetting to do things, unwillingness to be intimate, obstructive behaviour and deliberate lateness. Domestic violence can also include calling the other person insulting names, stalking the other person, intruding into the other

individual's personal life, making threats of violence or neglecting the other person.

Domestic violence has been described as a hidden face of addiction. This is due to the co-morbidity of the two conditions. Addiction and domestic abuse also share a number of characteristics including — they both involve loss of control; the individual continues with the behaviour even though it is leading to negative consequences in their life and the individual becomes preoccupied with their behaviour. Addiction and domestic violence have a negative impact on the family. The partner will usually find it difficult to abandon the person who is an addict or who is abusive.

Both conditions tend to involve a great deal of denial. Both the substance abuser and the domestic violence perpetrator abuse their own powers for personal gain. Addiction and domestic abuse lead to shame and reduced self-esteem for those who are involved. In the beginning the individual may be able to restrict their bad behaviour to the home, but certainly over time it often becomes more noticeable in other areas of their life.

There are a number of reasons why addiction and domestic violence tend to co-exist. Alcohol and drugs lower the individual's inhibitions, which means they are more likely to engage in bad behaviours. Inebriation makes people more impulsive. They will do things with no thought of the future consequences of their behaviour. When people are inebriated, their decision-making capacity is reduced. They are far more likely to make poor decisions as a result. Certain drugs such as stimulants can cause people to become paranoid. This paranoia may motivate extreme behaviours.

Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to announce in November 2015 that our Alcohol and Drug Services community addictions program was operational in Yukon communities. The Yukon Party government has been working on changing the way we approach services in the communities. The community addictions program was developed to address gaps identified by First Nations and highlighted the clinical services plan. I believe this approach will better serve the communities by providing a more diverse range of services.

Five community addiction workers now provide a continuum of services to all Yukon communities. Haines Junction, Watson Lake and Dawson City each have a community addictions worker, while two workers are based in Whitehorse and work with the surrounding communities. The community addictions worker provides prevention activities, community-based support, referrals, counselling services and after-care to those who have completed an inpatient treatment program. They also provide training to service providers and the public on substance abuse, problematic use and addictions.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, the community addictions program uses a collaborative community-approach outreach model and works closely with existing services, including First Nation programs, local service providers, social workers, community health and mental health services. This motion speaks to one of many, many elements of assisting or supporting those fleeing domestic violence.

I again thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for bringing this motion forward to the House this afternoon, again thank the Member for Copperbelt North for his friendly amendment and thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I won't spend too long here this afternoon in recognition of the time in the House and the comments that have already been made by three of my colleagues on this motion.

I would like to thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for bringing forward this idea. It is certainly a very interesting idea although — as my colleague, the Minister of Community Services noted, I believe, in his remarks — we just have finished the process of amending the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*, following public consultation and also had consultation on the regulations. Those have been in force since the beginning of this year — but recognizing that this specific issue and ideas have come up from people who deal with victims of domestic violence regularly, we very much appreciate that and are interested in discussing that with them and with other stakeholders about whether changes should be made to the legislation and/or the regulations to better provide protection for victims of domestic violence, particularly when they are in a time of crisis.

Also, as noted, I believe, by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, she spoke to what she had heard from some people who deal with victims of violence, particularly women fleeing violence on a regular basis, and that some of the provisions under the *Family Violence Protection Act* related to emergency intervention orders were good immediate tools but didn't address some of the issues that would happen within the following weeks and challenges that women fleeing domestic violence might face in that situation.

I would just again welcome this idea. I note that although we've taken a number of steps to work with stakeholders, including Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, on strengthening the support network — both government and NGO — that is available to women, children and others fleeing domestic violence, we also recognize that there's more work that can be done and we are certainly open to good ideas about what can be done to build on the work to date.

Unfortunately, I see that some of the visitors we had here from Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre had to leave for other engagements, but I would like to thank them for coming here this afternoon. I would like to thank them, as well as all who work at Victoria Faulkner women's association and the many other NGOs that provide vital support services to Yukoners sometimes in crisis for the good work that they do.

Along with the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, I was pleased recently to announce the Yukon government's continued funding for the A Safe Place program provided by the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre. I would like to as well acknowledge that so far, although the program is new, it certainly seems to be delivering a very important service, particularly after-hours and on weekends when a number of the normal service providers — or the other service

providers, I should say; the government offices, et cetera — are closed and not available to provide that support to women when they need it during those hours. I would just like to thank them for that work as well as the many other things they do, including the rural pregnant mother's suite provided at the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre.

I would like to thank some of the other key NGO service providers, including Kaushee's place, Help and Hope in Watson Lake and the Dawson City Women's Shelter as well as other organizations like the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, which of course is hosting the women's legal advocate, which was another announcement that, along with the Minister for the Women's Directorate, we made within the past year of increased supports by government in partnership with NGOs for helping women, in that case, to understand their rights within the legal system and better navigate it.

I don't want to miss anybody in recognizing work that's done by NGOs, but a few others that come to mind include the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society and the good work that's done as well by the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council and the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle as well as the work done by the Yukon Status of Women Council.

I have the feeling that I'm forgetting someone in speaking without notes here, Mr. Speaker. I do just want to again thank the many within Yukon's NGO communities for the very vital services that they provide in Whitehorse and throughout the territory and the important role that they play, along with government service providers, in providing for people in times of crisis, including — and especially since it's our topic here with this motion — women who are fleeing domestic violence.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks and again thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for bringing forward this valuable idea and look forward to hearing from stakeholders about whether we should be taking additional steps to strengthen the legislation and regulation in this area.

Mr. Tredger: I would like to thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for bringing forward this motion. She is a champion and her championship is appreciated. I would also like to thank all members for their comments and for their willingness to work with the Member for Takhini-Kopper King on this.

I'll begin by mentioning a few of the statistics about violence against women in the Yukon. Yukon's rate of violent crime against women is four times the national average. In 2014, four percent of Canadians with a current or former spouse or common-law partner reported having been physically or sexually abused by their spouse during the preceding five years. That's compounded by the fact that these are underreported statistics. It's estimated that fewer than one-third of women who have experienced spousal and other forms of violence against women reported the incident. Fewer than one-third report incidents and bring them to the attention of the police.

Fifty-one percent of women reporting spousal violence fear for their lives. In the Yukon, we have the highest rates of police-reported family violence — 911 per 100,000 population. If the actual reporting is happening as estimated, that 911 per 100,000 would be around 2,700 per 100,000, or 900 incidents in the Yukon, roughly.

Those are statistics, Mr. Speaker. Those are statistics, like our words that roll off our tongues as we try to explain and come to grips. The statistics are frightening enough, but my hat goes to the teachers, the people in our women's shelters, and the women who were here today who have to deal with the faces and the reality of the situation.

As a principal and a teacher, I have seen and experienced the effect on families, on children and on our communities. I have seen children unavailable for learning because their basic need for safety is not being met.

I would agree with members that there is a need for a larger discussion. We as a society, we as legislators, we as men and women, we as neighbours need to have a larger discussion. We need to become more human in the way we deal, the way we work together, the way we support each other, the way we educate each other and the way we get our backs.

I'm concerned when we talk, though, of the need for a larger discussion — that in that, we neglect to deal with the immediate.

I thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for bringing forth this motion. It won't solve the larger problem, but it will help some of our neighbours in need, some of the survivors of violence, people — friends, neighbours — who have been beaten up physically. They may have been kicked, punched, sworn at; they could be ridiculed. They have been thrown out of their house. They have been beat up physically and mentally. These are some of the most extremely vulnerable neighbours in our society, as are their families. Yes, long-term, it involves discussion and it involves deep thinking, but mostly it involves compassion and it doesn't negate the need for immediate action to alleviate a daily tragedy for our neighbours.

Our stats show us that this violence is happening at an alarming and unacceptable rate.

I am fully in support of this motion and I would urge fast action on it. Don't wait for the big picture. The time for action is now, today, tonight, tomorrow. Our neighbours are in need of this, and again I thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for bringing this forward and thank you to the members for speaking to this motion and for listening to me.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I was really compelled to say a number of things in addition to the remarks that I stated earlier, which referred to the actual amendment that was proposed. I want to thank all members for their comments here today on this very important topic.

What I said earlier today is that, when it comes to violence against women, our government recognizes that this is indeed a significant issue that continues to be a huge barrier to women's equality here in the territory — and right across

the globe, for that matter. We know that rates of violence, particularly against aboriginal women, are very much higher in the north than the rest of the country. We're very acutely aware that more work on everyone's part is required to bring an end to violence in our communities.

Over the last decade and some, our government has been working to address those key barriers that influence women's vulnerability to this. We have been working on a number of initiatives over the past — really, dating back almost 14 years now. It has already been stated earlier — but working to enhance women's housing security through the creation of policies such as the victims of violence policy through the Yukon Housing Corporation that came about several years ago. It is something that was introduced and it provides victims of violence priority access to affordable housing.

It was already mentioned here today, but I think it's important to again state that our government has been working and continues to work with organizations such as the Yukon Women's Transition Home Society on initiatives such as Betty's Haven, a secure second-stage housing initiative in support of women and children who are fleeing abusive relationships — fleeing abuse, period. I was really proud of that particular initiative — that we were able to help open and to be able to see first-hand, to take a tour that, on the day that it was officially opened with other members of our community — including our Premier — and to see this beautiful facility with bright, spacious rooms with different rooms with two or three bedrooms. Of course this is going a great way as well in terms of assisting women and their families on the way to a life that is safe and free of violence, on a road of independence once again. Indeed, it is helping to reduce the incidence of violence against women.

Likewise, I have been able to work pretty closely with those who help to operate and provide direction to the Dawson City Women's Shelter. Diane Schroeder, for example, is the executive director for that particular facility and a long-standing member of the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues. Her term recently came to an end, and I want to thank Diane and her staff and her crew — the very great board of directors that they have — in working with Yukon Housing Corporation to expand their shelter and to be able to expand the level of programming available for women and children in that community. Likewise, the work of the Watson Lake Help and Hope for Families — I know the MLA for Watson Lake and I have met with them on many occasions in Watson Lake — with the board of directors and the staff. Through the community development fund we were able to see the second-stage housing initiative evolve in Watson Lake in collaboration with the shelter itself. It is another great facility in the community. I thank the board of directors and the staff for their hard work in working with the community, raising dollars, working with the respective departments and really serving the needs of many women and children from Watson Lake and the surrounding communities in the area to address the violence against women in southeast Yukon in particular. They have been able to grow their programs in the community by being creative and by being able to host

workshops to either enhance the skill sets of service providers at the shelter and beyond, but really enhancing the skill sets that are so important to be able to assist women who are fleeing those abusive relationships.

We were also able to work very strategically with a number of different departments in creating the multi-family housing initiative — the family-focused housing initiative in Riverdale. It specifically focuses on single-parent families, the lion's share of which happens to comprise women. There are also men who are there at the facility as well. I certainly want to recognize the great partnership that the Women's Directorate was able to just garner and sign off with the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre as well as the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition in assisting the Yukon government in managing that particular facility in terms of providing that outreach to the tenants — single-parent families — and to being able to work with other agencies throughout the territory in facilitating workshops, arranging information that meets specific needs and requests of those tenants. We took a survey of those tenants not long ago — it was about a year and a half to two years ago.

I went to a barbecue last early summer to hear some of the comments and suggestions that came forward from the tenants. One of those was more communication, but having that support in that facility. That is why we came up with that partnership between the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre and the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition to help facilitate those critical relationships, being able to respond to some of those specific needs that will lead to a life of independence and better years in their lives.

What makes that facility very distinct and very unique to that particular housing initiative is having that support on the ground there in that facility. It has made a huge difference. I know it has been very appreciated by the tenants and by the community itself.

I would again like to reference that facility alone as providing over 30 units with two and three bedrooms — a beautiful space for families.

Through the Women's Directorate over the years, we've worked to develop some creative and culturally relevant violence prevention initiatives in collaboration with the community, working to provide those better supports for women to advance women, whether it's through the workforce, through education and training, or working with each of our women's organizations.

We've worked pretty hard over the years to provide funding available through the women's equality fund, the violence against aboriginal women fund, and also, more recently, providing funding to help implement recommendations made throughout a couple of our Yukon aboriginal women's summits over the years. All of this is to say that we've enhanced those resources significantly. In fact, I think we're just under \$1 million in support of direct transfer payments to organizations in support of advancing work to advance equality on many different fronts.

I want to acknowledge this really important work. The Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre was but one organization

— we had representatives here in the gallery today. Having just celebrated 40 years is a significant accomplishment, and to see the number of programs that have grown in leaps and bounds over the years. A Safe Place — the Minister of Justice referenced that work earlier, work that is so critical in being able to especially reach those marginalized populations in our community — non-barrier, by making available a hot meal, having a warm, comfortable, secure and safe environment such as the facility at Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, and by being able to have those professional, trained counsellors on hand as well, should there be an appetite, willingness or desire to reach out to those resources as well.

It's one of many different programs offered by Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre. In fact they just launched, during their 40th anniversary celebration, a new website — a beautiful website, I might add — which really speaks to all of the many different programs that they deliver on a daily basis on behalf of our territory.

The women's advocate has been a long-standing position in this territory and we were able to help enhance funding available to that position. We were able to also provide Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre — in collaboration with Les EssentiElles and the many different organizations that they partner with every year on developing those very innovative campaigns such as the 12 Days to End Violence Against Women Campaign — an additional \$30,000 in ongoing support. All told, about a \$40,000 increase to that organization to really enhance the very critical work that they do each year — and the amazing partnerships and the leverage resources that they have been able to establish as a result of building that rapport, trust and respect among the different organizations serving our community.

Of course, as Government of Yukon, we have been working to improve our own response as an agent of change in our territory. I know that, through the Department of Justice, we have been working with them through the Women's Directorate and Justice, active members of the Sexual Assault Response Committee — an interagency committee that works to really improve that standard of care, social and justice system responses to victims.

We know that the majority of sexualized assaults are not reported to the police. We know that many victims of assault do not seek police, legal, or even medical supports for that matter. Acknowledging that many victims may not be ready to report an assault to the RCMP or to this committee, I want to acknowledge the importance of third-party reporting — the initiative that was really initiated and established by the Yukon Women's Transition Home Society through Kaushee's and was really supported by that society and it was supported with the Yukon RCMP. It enables those victims to anonymously report information about an assault to Kaushee's Place, which then will be able to share it with the RCMP. It then enables the RCMP to help track and create a profile of offenders in our territory. It's a really innovative approach. We actually supported a representative of Kaushee's Place to attend a TEDx talk and to be able to sit with other women and other organizations around the country in Winnipeg a year ago

during the federal/provincial/territorial status of women ministers meeting to be able to share that best practice and share that very innovative initiative.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention another innovative initiative that came about thanks to the *Sharing Common Ground* report of 2011 and the recommendations. One of the remaining recommendations was to look at examining the importance of a women's legal advocate. So we tasked the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues to do that consultation. They reached out to the communities and organizations on a number of occasions, and came up with a report and recommendations. They recommended that, instead of establishing a position in-house in the Yukon government, we actually work with an organization.

We put that out for a kind of request for proposals, and it was awarded to Skookum Jim Friendship Centre. It makes sense: they already provide a whole suite of different services on behalf of women and the broader public. It's to help women navigate those legal issues, including sexualized assault, and make those options and information available at an early stage so that women are fully informed as to what choices they have in reporting — that there are choices — and understand the full repercussions and outcomes of each individual choice.

Mr. Speaker, my gosh, how time flies in this Assembly — all of which is to say that any time we can speak to this issue, I think it's of great importance. It helps to raise awareness of the issues that are going on in our territory and that there is a lot more work to be done to address violence against women and children.

I also want to recognize the work of Yukon aboriginal women's organizations, our government and Yukon First Nations in addressing murdered and missing indigenous women and girls in this country and in our territory, and the work that we just recently undertook to host a Yukon regional roundtable, comprised of all the respective governments in this territory and organizations and family members. We also had asked the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle to host a family gathering — a number of recommendations made. That is the work of our group, recognizing that violence against women and our response is not just a government issue — it's all of our issues. We all have a very important role to play.

We continue to work through our advisory committee and our working group on those recommendations. We just recently had a meeting on go-forward steps. There is much work to be done, but the critical part of all of this is that we're at the table and we are discussing it; we're taking action; we're looking at the gaps that exist and working to enhance the work that is currently underway, as well as looking to new initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize that my time is up. I do want to thank the member opposite, again, for bringing forward this motion. I want to also thank my colleague from Community Services for the amendment. I think it has been a good afternoon of collaboration and working together to find

potential further solutions to enhance the work, when it comes to addressing violence against women.

Ms. Moorcroft: I rise in support of the motion and I would like to thank my colleague, the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, for all of her diligence on working on the needs of everyone in the Yukon for housing and on her work in support of women's equality.

No one can be equal if they do not have shelter, food and safety in their lives. Those are some of the basic needs that everyone needs. So I thank all members for their remarks today in support of this motion to amend the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* to allow victims of domestic violence to terminate a lease early without penalty and to remove an abuser's name from the lease.

The Minister of Community Services brought forward an amendment, which has been supported, to undertake consultations in the community before bringing forward amendments and we have supported that and we appreciate the goodwill gesture of the ministers opposite meeting with the opposition to discuss the amendment before they brought it forward.

To be clear, this shouldn't be a contentious change to the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* and it isn't to hinder a landlord's ability to rent, but it's designed to address a victim's ability to stay in their home and to be safe. We need to be sure that the steps we are asking victims of domestic violence to take aren't re-victimizing.

Let me start with speaking for a moment about laws. We're talking about amending one law — the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*. Laws belong to the people; laws affect society; laws can draw attention to problems in the community and laws can change attitudes and behaviour. It's a matter of strong debate currently as to whether women have achieved their section 15 Charter rights to equality under the law and to the equal rights and benefit of the law.

In looking at laws that address violence against women, we most often think of the criminal justice system and there has been much written about the failures of the criminal justice system in responding to allegations of violence and responding in the way that the courts and police and other actors in the criminal justice system respond when women have reported a sexual assault or have reported violence.

I want to remind members opposite of what happened many, many years ago when the issue of violence against women in homes, from their partners, was first brought to public attention. Margaret Mitchell, who was a New Democrat Member of Parliament for Vancouver East, really found the spotlight in 1982 when she stood up and told the House of Commons that one in 10 Canadian husbands regularly beat his wife and the Members of Parliament laughed and shouted, and I remember hearing on the radio just how that sounded. Ms. Mitchell responded, "This is no laughing matter".

We saw the issue of violence against women in their homes and from their intimate partners become something on the national stage. We have come a fair ways in continuing to

have debate and in seeing more discussion and more action in the community.

Last night, Equal Voice Yukon hosted a conversation about encouraging more women to be involved in politics and, specifically, to seek political office in the territorial election. There was also discussion about the number of women who have been in leadership in municipal governments and in First Nation governments and about having more events to work on improving the representation of women in political decision-making, because there isn't equality yet.

Other members have spoken about the *Family Violence Prevention Act*, and as the sponsoring minister for that bill in the 1990s, we engaged in a consultation across Yukon about the need. We heard a lot from the members of the community and we put it into law that we recognized that family violence is and continues to be a serious problem in the Yukon. We recognize that one difficulty victims of family violence face is that the abuser often forces them to leave their own home to escape the abuse, and that there must be effective legal procedures victims of family violence can use easily to get immediate help and relief from the abuse. This discussion began because women who had been beaten themselves, women who were their friends and women who were active in community groups said that we have to stop this approach of taking women out of their home and building a safe shelter for women and children to flee to, so let's think about a different approach; let's allow women to stay in their home.

This proposal that is before us is to look at further amendments to *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* so that we can accommodate women being able to stay in their homes. It is based on a law recently introduced in Alberta that would allow domestic violence victims to break their lease without penalty if they demonstrate that they or their children are in danger. It would also allow victims to take the alleged abusers off the lease altogether. It's a civil remedy like the *Family Violence Prevention Act*, which was a civil remedy, because sometimes the criminal justice system does fail women who are abused.

In the present day, there are many campaigns to end violence and it's sad that by and large women still lead the drive for public education campaigns to end violence. However, Mr. Speaker, it is also really encouraging that men are taking leadership and responsibility for ending violence, because violence is a gendered crime.

When we look at the statistics, we know that not only are there much higher rates of violence against women in the Yukon, but much of the violence that is reported in the criminal justice statistics is against women. Half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16. On average, every six days a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner.

In 2011, from 89 police-reported spousal homicides, 76 of the victims — over 85 percent — were women. On any given night in Canada, about 3,300 women, along with their 3,000 children, are forced to sleep in an emergency shelter to escape domestic violence. Every night, about 200 women are turned away because the shelters are full, so shelters aren't the

only answer — having laws and measures in place so women can have safe housing is essential.

It is true that, like all violent crimes in Canada, the rates of domestic violence have fallen in recent years, but this decline is partly due to increased social equality and financial freedom for women, which makes it easier for them to leave abusive relationships at earlier stages.

Women, though, are more likely to be assaulted by someone they know than to be assaulted by a stranger. About half — 49 percent — of all female murder victims in Canada are killed by a former or current intimate partner. In contrast, only seven percent of male murder victims were killed by intimate partners. Men are more likely to initiate violence, while women are more likely to use violence in self-defence.

Eighty-three percent of all police-reported domestic assaults are against women, and that's a pattern that's consistent for every province and territory across Canada. Women are more likely to be physically injured, to get a restraining order and to fear for their lives.

In Yukon, our rate of violent crime is four times the national average. Fifty-one percent of women who report spousal violence fear for their lives and, in 2014, Yukon's rate of police-reported family violence was 3.7 times the national average.

At Kaushee's Place, the shelter in Whitehorse, 288 women and 171 children were admitted in 2013-14. Another 2014 statistic from Statistics Canada is that people self-identifying as aboriginal were more than twice as likely as non-aboriginal people to report experiencing spousal violence in the previous five years.

So we're fortunate, Mr. Speaker, that we have a number of organizations in the Yukon that have been working to resolve this problem and to support women facing violence for many years.

Earlier today Charlotte Hrenchuk from the Yukon Status of Women Council was in the gallery, and I remember speaking with her when she conducted a survey and wrote a report on rural women's voices a number of years ago. When she went out to talk to women in the communities, the problem of violence was so hidden that many wouldn't think to mention it until they were asked. But when women were asked about the violence that they and their friends were exposed to, there was lots of information that they had to offer and lots of suggestions that they had to offer for improvement.

In Watson Lake, the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society has taken a lead, and one of the activities going back over a decade was the Breaking the Silence on Family Violence Conference that was held there in 2004. That conference was held at the order of a judge who had given a suspended sentence to a community leader when he was convicted of abusing his wife. Women with bruised faces came and spoke.

We avert our gaze when we are exposed to that violence. That is the easiest thing to do. That's what many of us do. But women are able now to stand up and say, "We are here. We are people. We deserve safety. We deserve housing." We deserve to have legislators in this Assembly debating motions

like the one my colleague brought forward to improve our laws to help make women safe.

The Minister of Health and Social Services spoke about the *Sharing Common Ground* report that was completed after the review of Yukon's police force in 2010. I think one of the most significant aspects of that review was that a broad coalition of women's groups came together to insist on representation on the advisory committee to the review of Yukon's police force and to insist on there being attention paid to the problems when women report violence and they are not taken seriously by the people they report to. In particular they identified the problem where police didn't give what they felt was a good response.

So the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society, the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle, Kaushee's Place, the Yukon's Status of Women Council, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, the Help and Hope shelter in Watson Lake, the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council, Les EssentiElles, Elizabeth Fry Society Yukon, the regional women's committee of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, the Dawson City shelter — women from all of those groups were part of discussions on how we could put forward our strong expression of the problems women face and our suggestions for improving policing and improving the criminal justice system's response to reports of violence against women.

Violence is deliberate. Violence is something that people can change — people can choose to not be violent — and violence is something that occurs across all aspects of society.

Before I close I want to speak about how important how we use language is when we're speaking about violence. Even the term "domestic violence" doesn't sound as serious as the actual problem is. We're not talking about something domestic — it's in a home; it could be associated with good things that happen in homes. But when you speak directly about violence against women — and it's largely women, but whether it's violence against women or men or children, it's deliberate violence against a person by another person. The choice of language that directly speaks to who does what to whom, and how we can stop the violence that men commit against their wives or partners, is what we need to be clear we're speaking about.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would just like to say that it has typically been women who bring attention to the difficult problems of violence, but I'm pleased that today we have had members from both sides of this Legislative Assembly speak in support of the motion brought forward by my colleague, to look at how our laws can continue to evolve and continue to improve, and how our laws can help make women safe, and how our laws can ensure that women have access to safe housing, even when they are beaten by someone who was close to them.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, she will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Ms. White: I thank my colleagues in the House for their thoughts on the matter and the willingness to kind of take

this forward. I am going to say it again. Yukon women's advocacy organizations are the experts that we have on the ground. I am looking forward to them having a voice to help strengthen the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* — that would empower their clients to be safer and things.

I just want to highlight a couple of things. When the Minister of Community Services was talking about the *Family Violence Prevention Act* and talked about some of the stipulations under the VOA, even that highlighted what some of the concerns were — that even if a woman went through the process and she faced her abuser, she could still be forced to leave the residence where she was staying. My hope is that what this motion does is — it doesn't undermine the ability of a landlord to have a tenant. It doesn't at all. What it does is it empowers the abused to be able to stay in that home and it gives that ability to change the lease or to remove someone from a lease who should not be there because of their actions.

My greatest hope is that this isn't just lip service to the issue; that when government says they will consult with the stakeholders on this issue, their intent is honest, that it is forthright and that it happens sooner than later.

I know that in quick conversations with women's groups they're concerned that when we say there will be a consultation with stakeholders that this will be like other ones, where they've entered into the process honestly and it has gone on and on and on. I really believe these are actions that are important. I believe that these are actions that don't undermine the strength of the legislation, and that they will actually strengthen the legislation.

So my hope is that we take our intentions here, which are good and which are honest, and we actually make them into actions. I thank everyone in the House for their comments and I really look forward to knowing that we've removed more barriers that exist for people fleeing violence, and that we actually give them that ability to move forward toward a safer life.

I look forward to the vote.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the motion, as amended?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Moorcroft: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 14 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion, as amended, carried.

Motion No. 1142, as amended, agreed to

Mr. Elias: I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Do members wish to take a recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

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

Bill No. 23: *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Department of Education

Hon. Mr. Graham: It's a pleasure for me to rise in the House today to present the 2016-17 budget for the Department of Education, but first I would like to introduce my ADM of Finance and Administration, Cyndy Dekuysscher. I know Cyndy doesn't need any introduction, as she has spent some time in the House over the last few years as head of Finance.

I'll start with the department's mission, which is to ensure the success of each student in Yukon and encourage the lifelong learning of Yukoners of all ages.

In 2015, the Premier announced a new vision for education in the Yukon. The new vision, as laid out by the Premier, will support the department's mission and find new ways of working together to support the learning experiences of students of all ages. We are working with our partners to shift our education system to improve learning outcomes for

all Yukoners, from early to adult learners. The new vision is rooted in the collective values and aspirations of the department and all of our partners in education. Our aim is for learners to develop the essential skills, knowledge and personal qualities that they need to succeed and to thrive throughout their education and beyond the classroom.

As we have said before, the new vision process is not about creating another report or strategy document for education. We are instead focused on actions based on the priorities of our partners that they are identifying for us, for our schools and for our programs. For example, our partners are interested in more trades and apprenticeship opportunities. In response, we planned and are running a dual-credit skills exploration pilot in Watson Lake with Yukon College, where secondary school students and adult learners are being introduced to five different trades.

We also heard from our partners that supporting students who pursue course upgrades should be a priority. We are exploring ways to provide more assistance so that students who choose to go this route will not face significant financial hardship. We have formed a steering committee to guide the new vision process and we monitor its progress. It is made up of representatives from many of our partners in education, including Yukon educators, Yukon College, parents and school councils, the Yukon francophone school board, the Catholic Education Association of Yukon, Yukon First Nations and the Department of Health and Social Services. They continue to make recommendations on priorities raised by our partners. For example, they have recommended that Yukon's curriculum include northern and Yukon context and cultures, as well as Yukon First Nations, perspectives at all levels. They have also strongly expressed the need to build capacity and support for Yukon educators to adapt and teach new curriculum, which we will be providing over the coming years. Together we will integrate Yukon and northern context in our kindergarten to grade 9 and in grades 10 to 12 courses. We will also be embedding Yukon First Nation perspectives and knowledge into our curriculum from kindergarten through grade 12.

The steering committee is currently discussing modern teaching and learning practices in other regions of Canada and globally. As learning shifts from what students know to how they learn, from memorizing content to developing competencies and skills, the committee is considering what this should look like in Yukon. The committee is also interested in how our schools and programs could be more holistic in their approach to students and their learning to address the social, cultural, emotional, physical and intellectual elements of learners and learning.

These are the kinds of priorities, actions and discussions underway through the new vision that this year's budget will be investing in for education. Our focus remains on improving outcomes for Yukon learners and giving them the skills and supports they need to thrive in life in and beyond school.

Laying this groundwork and making these changes will not happen in only one year. We expect this work to continue and to unfold over the next three to five years. This is just the

beginning for the new vision for education and we look forward to moving together with our partners. Throughout this budget, you can see the many ways we are investing in education and ensuring that we have the necessary infrastructure, technology and supports in place to enable our students to develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed and thrive.

The total budget for the Department of Education this year is \$173,713,000. With these investments, Yukon students will be ready for great careers and personal success when they eventually move on from school and training.

I'll begin, Madam Chair, with the capital budget estimates for 2016-17. The capital budget is \$13,369,000 and the capital budget is based on the need and the cash flow requirements for each project; therefore, the funding requested each year can vary significantly, as we have seen in the past three years. Our government is focused on ensuring that Yukon has the necessary infrastructure in place to meet the current and future needs of our education system.

As you know, in January of this year, the students of F.H. Collins Secondary School moved into a brand new building. We provided this beautiful, modern learning facility and now the school community is making it a true home for learning, from class art on the walls to Destination Imagination tournaments and extracurricular activities on the weekends. The students and staff of F.H. Collins Secondary are now creating new memories and enjoying the new learning opportunities that are possible in the new home of F.H. Collins Secondary School.

In our 2016-17 capital budget, we will continue other work in the general area. \$2,980,000 is being requested, as we proceed with the demolition of the old school building. That demolition has already begun, Madam Chair, and we expect it to be done this summer. These funds will allow for the hazardous materials remediation of the site, which was scheduled to begin this spring. It did that and the demolition of the old school building will then follow during the summer break.

We're also requesting \$3 million for the renovations of the technical education wing at F.H. Collins Secondary School. Upgrades to the wing are required for the continued use of these facilities. As the technical education wing is currently heated from the old F.H. Collins building, a new heating plant is required to service the wing after the demolition of the old building is complete.

Additional renovations include a new pedestrian entry, with barrier-free access, and upgrading of existing walls to meet current building code requirements, and changes to the washrooms. Classes are ongoing in the tech ed wing as we complete these essential renovations, section by section. The upgrades are expected to be completed by this summer.

In 2016-17, we will also continue to invest in French first language education for Yukon's francophone community. The Department of Education and the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon settlement committee continues to meet regularly to resolve the outstanding issues from the court case. As you know, there is a subcommittee discussing the

construction of a French first language high school in Whitehorse and optimal locations. \$400,000 is requested for the planning phase for the construction of the school, as the pre-designed functional program is nearly completed.

There is still work we have to do before we begin building a future home for French first language high schools in the Yukon; however, we are moving forward to establishing a first-class school that the francophone community can be truly proud of.

Additionally, \$600,000 is requested for the construction of a modular classroom for École Émilie Tremblay School. The modular classroom will be used to address the growth in enrolment at École Émilie Tremblay and will house an elementary classroom. This will allow the l'Académie Parhélie students to be reunited in a wing in the existing École Émilie Tremblay building. CSFY is a valued partner of the Department of Education and together we continue to work to provide high-quality French first language education in Yukon.

We have also been working very hard with Kluane First Nation over the last year. We signed an education agreement together in the fall of 2015. As part of this agreement, we are requesting \$40,000 to explore options for establishing a school in Burwash Landing. This is just one aspect of our agreement, as we work to find ways to improve learning outcomes for not only Kluane First Nation, but for all First Nation students across the territory.

Our government is committed to protecting the health and safety of all Yukoners, especially our children and students. In 2012, a tragedy occurred in our Watson Lake community. A young child was fatally injured by a moveable soccer goal and died. We want to make sure that this does not happen again and that all Yukon students and children can play safely on our soccer fields.

We have introduced a new regulation for the *Movable Soccer Goal Safety Act*, and I believe that it now has been approved and will be coming out. It will be published very soon. It will provide rules to ensure that all movable soccer goals in use in Yukon are secured with proper labelling, are regularly inspected and meet strict manufacturing requirements. These proposed regulations will come into effect on May 1. The manufacturing standards requirements for movable soccer goals in Yukon will come into effect on October 1, 2016. \$150,000 is being requested to replace movable soccer goals owned by the Department of Education because we want to ensure that all Yukoners can safely participate on the soccer fields around this territory.

\$1,123,000 is requested for Yukon College's Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining, otherwise known as CNIM. CNIM is a truly made-in-Yukon initiative to build capacity and expertise in our region. It trains workers with the skills needed for the current and future anticipated labour shortages in the Yukon mining industry. The centre helps Yukoners and Yukon communities to position themselves to gain economic benefits from the mining activities in their areas. It helps us develop local skilled labour forces for the industry.

This is the final year of funding for Yukon College to complete the construction of a new building for this trades centre at the Ayamdigut Campus in Whitehorse. These funds will also support renovations to existing trade shops at the campus. Our government and CanNor are both contributing equally to the development of this facility. It is anticipated that this facility will be ready and operational by August 2016.

We will also be doing some work on Yukon schools this year. \$2,760,000 is requested for capital maintenance repairs at various schools. Capital maintenance is required to proactively replace or repair building components. Some of the larger capital maintenance repair projects planned for 2016-17 include: Watson Lake Secondary School, \$600,000 for roof repairs; Christ the King Elementary School boiler and burner replacement, \$150,000; Teslin School fuel tanks replacement, \$120,000; Tantalus School field rehabilitation and fencing, \$120,000; and Vanier Catholic Secondary School fuel tank replacement, \$120,000.

We are also requesting \$100,000 for the school revitalization plan in order to continue our work on the long-term renovation and replacement schedule for some of our older facilities.

The Department of Education is actively working with the Department of Highways and Public Works to address future renovation needs of our school buildings. This is the first step in ensuring that we anticipate and prepare for future renovation needs.

Part of our plan for the future of Yukon schools has also included supporting information technology upgrades and changes in our schools. \$1,852,000 is being requested for information technology projects in our schools. This includes \$452,000 to complete the implementation of the new student information system, Aspen. Aspen is web-based software that helps Yukon schools to collect and track student data, providing teachers with more reliable access to the data they need to support their students' learning.

We began training for school administrators, counsellors and office staff in the spring of 2015, with teacher training being completed in the fall of 2015. We are now training departmental staff on the system and we expect full implementation to be completed by the end of this school year.

I would also like to highlight the request for \$246,000 for the new one-to-one mobile device leasing program for Yukon teachers. As per the Yukon Teachers' Association collective agreement, we are pleased to offer this optional cost-sharing program between Yukon teachers and the Department of Education. Teachers lease a new Apple product, such as a MacBook or iPad, and share the leasing cost 50/50 with the Department of Education. This program began in 2015 with teachers signing up during the Summer Academy. This helps support teachers in obtaining the technology they need to complete their jobs inside and outside the classroom.

The remaining \$1,154,000 for information technology is for ongoing investments in school-based information technology, including upgrades of computer labs at many of

our schools and various other computer support and maintenance work.

Now I would like to speak to our 2016-17 operation and maintenance budget. The O&M budget for 2016-17 is \$160,344,000 to support the activities of the Public Schools, Advanced Education and Education Support Services branches, as well as Yukon College. A total of \$109,863,000 is requested for the O&M of Public Schools. As I mentioned earlier, we're working extensively with our partners on a new vision for Education. This year, there are four focus areas for the new vision: kindergarten to 12 curriculum, mental health and career counselling, flexible pathways for secondary students, and early learning.

\$190,000 is requested this year to support the ongoing development of the vision. It will go to the work of a new vision steering committee and the engagement of our partners across Yukon to further guide the direction of the new vision. With this funding, we'll develop and begin to implement the new vision throughout our education system in the territory, including building the capacity of our teachers. It will support in-service training for staff and collaboration for Yukon educators to work on curriculum, counselling and more.

We will also be aligning the work of our consultants with the vision as they support and coach leaders.

The funding will be an initial step in not only addressing the educational challenges we currently face, but also seizing the opportunity to enhance the learning experience of Yukon students.

Madam Chair, because I'm running out of time rapidly, I'll end there, and perhaps give the Member for Mayo-Tatchun a little time, and then I can continue on and complete the rest of my speaking notes later.

Mr. Tredger: Madam Chair, I thank the minister for his introduction to Education. I would also like to thank Cyndy Dekuysscher for sticking around this afternoon and taking part in the briefing. It is much appreciated.

I would like to recognize the importance of all of the partners in education: First Nation governments, parents, teachers and the Department of Education. Our *Education Act*, when brought forth, envisioned all partners working together in partnership with cooperation and respect. Research has shown us that the student-teacher relationship is of paramount importance. This is where the education occurs and where we must direct our support, our resources and our energies. For each budget item we discuss, we must ask how this will make a difference for our students. How will it improve their ability to learn successfully? Research has also shown that the closer to the teacher-student interaction in the classroom decisions are made the more effective and relevant those decisions are. We must ensure that decision-making relies on, and is informed by and in response to teachers, school and community input. School and community-based decision making is key to our success.

Studies have shown — research has shown — that First Nation and rural students consistently underperform when compared to the students in Whitehorse. I was encouraged to

see more First Nation involvement in the planning and production of our curriculum going forward, and I thank the minister for that. I would also thank the minister for his involvement in the schools and in the school communities and the time he has spent there.

As well, a special thank you to the minister and his deputy minister. The deputy minister has taken the time to visit every school in the territory. I'm not sure if she has made it to them all yet, but I know that's her goal and I think that's quite commendable.

Education, as I said, is an important aspect. It's good to see the communities getting involved. I will leave my questions for another time and I'll turn the floor back over to the minister so he can finish his introductions. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, as part of the Yukon Teachers' Association new collective agreement, \$450,000 is requested in this budget for the positive behaviour intervention support pilot project. This is a partnership with Yukon government and the YTA to address the development of behaviour supports in our schools. This proactive approach seeks to address behavioural issues and involves the collection of behaviour data to assess where and when behaviours occur. We have hired a positive behaviour intervention support coach to work with the 14 schools that are in the project for this year. A four-day training session will be provided in May for the 14 schools. The rest of the schools will be involved in the project next school year.

Another project related to the collective agreement is an early intervention literacy project. This pilot project began last fall and offers targeted literacy and school readiness supports to students over a three-year period from kindergarten to grade 2. I know I've spoken about this in the past, Madam Chair, but I believe it bears repeating. The pilot is being held in seven Yukon kindergarten classes in four different schools: Takhini Elementary School, Jack Hulland Elementary School, Elijah Smith Elementary School and Tantalus School.

Extra educational assistants are in each kindergarten classroom and will follow the students each year from kindergarten to grade 2. The pilot will strengthen the literacy-readiness skills of early learners in Yukon and work to improve oral language, self-regulation and the social and emotional skills of the students involved in the pilot project.

There is a request for \$368,000 to support the operations of Aurora Virtual School. The Aurora Virtual School was established to offer an inclusive and flexible learning community to support the learning styles of individual students. This school offers access to distance learning courses from approved schools, blended learning opportunities with other Yukon schools and course material and support for home education students. In its second year of operation, Aurora Virtual School is seeing an increase in interest from the students and home-schoolers who avail themselves of the school's services. This funding will help meet this increased demand for distributed learning and will go toward the purchase of more courses to offer to Yukon students. I follow the Aurora Virtual School particularly

closely, and I was very surprised to see that, over the two-week spring break, not only was the school open, but it was almost packed with students every single day. The students there consider themselves almost as a big family and they consider the instructors as part of that family. It's truly a great thing to see.

We also continue to invest in paraprofessionals, including educational assistants for all Yukon schools. For 2016-17, \$11,356,596 is being requested to continue to support the positive contributions of paraprofessionals in our schools. Since the 2011-12 school year, the number of paraprofessionals in the school system increased from 159 FTEs to 220 FTEs. This means we have added 59,780 extra hours of support for students in our school system. Overall, since 2011-12, we have increased funding for paraprofessionals by just over \$3 million. These investments allow for students who need more attention to get the support they need and help them reach their full potential in the classroom.

\$50,000 is also being requested to expand apprenticeship trades in our schools. Programs like the Watson Lake skills exploration project show that students are interested in learning more about trades and in more flexible pathways to learning. By providing more options for hands-on experience with trades, we can give our students exposure to areas that can lead to future careers in high-demand fields.

Madam Chair, I would also like to talk about the joint education action plan. JEAP is a blueprint to strengthen roots and close the education gap for Yukon First Nation students. This plan addresses the four priority areas for First Nation kindergarten-to-12 education in Yukon: recognizing the diversity of Yukon First Nation people and including the culture and linguistic heritage of Yukon First Nations in the kindergarten-to-grade-12 curriculum; sharing with Yukon First Nations authority, control and responsibility over the education delivered to First Nation students; ensuring that adequate funding is in place to sustainably support educational initiatives for First Nation students; and closing the academic achievement gap between Yukon First Nation and non-First Nation students.

This 10-year plan is a result of over 40 years of reports, studies and recommendations and is now being implemented to support the educational achievement of First Nation students. The Council of Yukon First Nations, along with Yukon First Nation governments, the Department of Education and other partners, plays an instrumental role in the implementation of the joint education action plan. \$210,000 is requested to support CYFN education initiatives under the JEAP, which represents an increase of \$40,000. This increase will ensure that CYFN's Education department, which is a critical component of JEAP, has the necessary funding in place to provide ongoing support and allow for the continued success of the joint education action plan.

Under CYFN, \$450,000 is also requested for the Yukon Native Language Centre, which represents an increase of some \$45,000. The work of the centre is essential to the JEAP as it increases opportunities and supports for First Nation

language fluency and the rejuvenation of First Nation language and cultural values. The funding will support First Nation language resources and the development of a process to share resources as First Nations look at the revitalization of their languages. The funding will ensure that the essential work of the Yukon Native Language Centre continues.

The First Nations Education Commission, FNEC, is another important component of the joint education action plan. It is the body for sharing information, addressing common issues and advancing First Nation education interests in a unified manner. \$160,000 is requested to provide the necessary support for a technical assistant researcher position and other associated costs to work on identified initiatives. This funding will support the important work they do in contributing to Yukon First Nation student success and is an important part of one of our main objectives of building First Nation partnerships.

Lastly, \$520,000 is requested to help families with the cost of school supplies next school year. This represents approximately \$100 in supplies for every student in the territory. It will alleviate some of the financial strain of the back-to-school season for families to afford school supplies and it will also ensure that students are well-positioned at the start of the school year with the supplies they need to learn.

This is a natural break in my notes and seeing the time, Madam Chair, I move that you report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

Mr. Elias: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Elias that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

The House adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

The following documents were filed April 20, 2016:

33-1-125

Yukon Resource Gateway Project — Application for National Infrastructure Component Funding, and summary document (dated January 2016) (Kent)

33-1-126

Canada-Yukon NBCF Applications Tracker — National and Regional Projects Fund (NRP) – Projects Submitted for Approval (dated April 19, 2016) (Dixon)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 258

1st Session

33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, April 21, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER — Hon. David Laxton, MLA, Porter Creek Centre

DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake

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Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Justice; Yukon Development Corporation/ Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Doug Graham	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Education
Hon. Scott Kent	Riverdale North	Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources; Highways and Public Works
Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Community Services; Public Service Commission
Hon. Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Minister responsible for Environment
Hon. Mike Nixon	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, April 21, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.**

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Before proceeding to the Order Paper, and in lieu of a prayer, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's 90th birthday.

Princess Elizabeth Alexandra Mary was born in London on April 21, 1926. She ascended the throne on February 6, 1952 after the death of her father, King George VI. She was crowned on June 2, 1953 in the first televised royal event. Queen Elizabeth II is the longest reigning monarch — now for 64 years, surpassing Queen Victoria's 60-year mark. Her Majesty has worked with 12 United Kingdom prime ministers, 12 Canadian prime ministers and 12 United States presidents. That proves her longevity, stamina and dedication in her role of Queen of the Commonwealth.

An interesting fact: Queen Victoria never visited Canada; whereas Queen Elizabeth II has visited Canada 22 times and has been to every province and territory. On one of her visits, it was noted that she said, "I am going home to Canada." Her last official visit was in 2010.

As the head of state, the Queen is kept fully briefed on all matters affecting the realm. She is very interested and aware of what is happening around the world. As her public appearances slow down, other royals take over her duties, but she still remains very active.

Please rise.

Members rise

Speaker: On behalf of all Yukoners and the Legislative Assembly, I wish Her Royal Highness a very happy 90th birthday and may she continue to reign in good health. God save the Queen.

All Hon. Members: God save the Queen.

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will now proceed with the Order Paper. Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of Patrick William Van Bibber

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Patrick William Van Bibber who passed away on March 4, 2016. I would like to thank Mr. Van Bibber's family for giving me the honour the delivering this tribute on behalf of all members of this Legislative Assembly.

Pat was born at Pelly Crossing on March 17, 1922, and was the eighth of Ira and Eliza Van Bibber's 14 children. Letters sent by Ira to his family back in West Virginia were kept and copies of the letters were given to his Yukon family during one of their visits to Virginia Beach. Ira wrote — and I quote: "Mother and child doing well, and we are calling him John James. When the next one comes and it is a boy, we will

call him Patrick William." So it was, and as luck would have it, baby Patrick was born on St. Patrick's Day.

He was a true gentleman and was the quiet one. Pat and his siblings were part of the famous raft story of shoving off the banks of the Pelly River heading to Dawson City for St. Paul's Hostel and school. The oldest, Alex, was 13 and their dad hollered, "Alex is the captain." Ira said, "Why pay for steamboat tickets when the river runs that way?"

Also, they were instructed that, should the raft logs get waterlogged, they should pull over and add a few more logs, which they often did. They were able to sell the raft when they arrived in Dawson. I believe each got 50 cents.

Most of us have a difficult time letting our 13-year-olds go for a walk alone, let alone sending your children down the river on a raft. How times have changed, Mr. Speaker.

Life on the land was tough, but their way of life gave each the strength to be healthy and have prosperous lives. Pat may not have had a lot of formal education, but one could not put a grade on the intelligence gained by their lifestyle. Their work ethic was outstanding and there was never a shortage of work or adventures. Ira sent his boys out two by two to trap and hunt, while the girls had traplines and snares nearer to home. JJ and Pat were closest in age, so they were a team. As well, they all tended huge gardens during the growing season and learned how to preserve and keep their food. As with any large family, the older ones helped with the younger ones.

His sisters remember that Pat was always the kind one. If the other kids were cold, he would give them his mitts and go without. Father Ira would say to them, "Why can't you all be more like Paddy? He is always so good." Each of the Van Bibber kids had cameras and they had a love of taking pictures, which has captured a great synopsis of Yukon life by depicting their adventures and family life. They loved to share their pictures and the Archives has a very large Van Bibber collection.

As Yukon began to open up with mines and roads, Pat and his brothers were involved in the development of the territory, whether building those roads, captaining the ferries, freighting on the riverboats or sharing their local knowledge.

Pat met a beautiful young woman from Hell's Gate near Fort Selkirk, Ada Blanchard, and asked for her hand in marriage. Married in Whitehorse with Alex and Sue Van Bibber as their witnesses, Pat and Ada celebrated their 66th anniversary on April 9, 2015. Ada passed away on August 29 of that year at Copper Ridge Place, but Pat took care of her as long as he was able to before she moved there. They had a strong bond and a very strong commitment to each other.

Pat and Ada had five children and instilled in them the love of hunting, fishing and trapping. To this day the kids and grandkids continue to live on country food. Both enjoyed telling of their adventures growing up and how things changed as Yukon developed.

Pat operated the ferries at Stewart Crossing and Carmacks. Then he worked on building parts of the highway for United Keno Hill Mines. When the government took over the highways, Pat was encouraged to become a road foreman

for the Mayo district. He witnessed many changes in structure and personalities through his years at the department of highways. He retired in 1987 at age 65. This is certainly one case where the government pension plan paid out as he was retired and receiving a pension for about as long as he was employed with the department.

Pat loved retirement and did not slow down. His energy, strength and stamina lasted his whole life. The Van Bibber families stayed close and gathered whenever they could at the Pelly big house. Many years later, Pat Sr. took on the legal task of making sure that the Pelly Van Bibber property was equally divided between the brothers and sisters to ensure the future generations had a legacy to the homestead.

With the passing of time and, as with any large family, Pat lost many, but he was aware that, except for a couple, most had lived good, long lives. His sister, May, lived to 100, and his brother, Alex, lived to 98; others into their late 80s and 90s.

At age 75, Pat, along with his daughters, Carol and Karen, granddaughter Sherri and grandson Craig, followed in his father's footsteps over the Chilkoot Trail. Along the way, they camped along with other trekkers at specified camp spots. One group said they heard a really old guy was climbing, and Pat was looking around for that really old guy — never thinking it was him, of course.

He did not look his age and he loved to tell that story. To JJ's end in 2012, Pat and he would talk every day on the phone, chewing over bits of history and stories and what was happening in their lives. When JJ's book, *I was born under a spruce tree*, was released, JJ's granddaughter, Shannon, asked Pat and Alex to help her sell books and they so enjoyed their time doing that, speaking about their family's story and signing books for their brother.

Pat even had a couple of copies in his hospital room in case someone wanted to buy one. They enjoyed and applauded each other's successes. Hunting and river trips with Pat were so special. He knew bends and elbows, what happened at each spot on the waterways, who lived where, where people cut wood for the steamboats and where you can still see the odd artifact linked to our river history.

Pat Jr. has lost his main hunting partner.

In 2011, at age 89, Pat had quadruple bypass surgery and, with his daughter-in-law, Geraldine, along as escort, he pulled through that. The St. Paul's Hospital nurses were coming to see the old heart patient. Even with a few complications on returning to Whitehorse, he was always upbeat. He said that when he had his appendix out in the old Whitehorse Hospital in 1949, it was the only other time he had ever been in hospital.

He was interested in seeing and trying new things. He loved to travel. When he took a trip in 2014 with his daughters to Nashville, New Orleans and West Virginia, he was extremely excited, but getting medical travel insurance proved a challenge as many companies will not insure people over the age of 80. He was very upset and said, "You mean when you reach 90 you can't travel anymore?" He was told, "No, but most folks in their 90s don't or can't." They did find a

company that would cover him, and weddings in the Dominican Republic or Tofino, graduations in Victoria or Whitehorse, and other celebrations he was invited to, he was able to attend.

In January 2016 when Pat was told he needed surgery again, he said, "Well, let's get it done." During a few trying days, family tried to limit visitors but he quickly stopped that nonsense. He wanted to see his friends, his family, and everyone who wanted to come. He loved to hear what was happening. He gave his best fight, but his body finally said, "enough". But he had walked into the hospital and, right to the last morning, he was cognizant and clear. To the end, just 13 days shy of his 94th birthday, Patrick William Van Bibber was the most kind, most gentle and most patient man. He will be missed.

On behalf of the members of the House, I extend our deepest sympathy and give our condolences to the family. Mr. Speaker, so many of Pat's friends and family have joined us here in the gallery today — too many to mention — but I do want to single out Pat's children who are here with us today: Pat Jr., Carol, Deb and Karen. Unfortunately, Pat's daughter Shirley is in Spruce Grove, Alberta and unable to attend today. I would ask members to join me in welcoming his friends and family.

Applause

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I rise and invite all members of the Assembly to help me in welcoming a couple of people. First is my incredible wife, Tammie, who is here and also wanted to witness the tribute to Pat Van Bibber Sr. I would also like to recognize the Grand Chief — Ruth Massie is here and her partner, Fred — and the Chief of Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, Eric Fairclough; and a couple of constituents of mine, Mr. Speaker, if I can — Stuart Van Bibber and his wife, Nicole. I invite all members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in welcoming them today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Hassard: One member in the gallery in particular I would like to mention today is Evan James Clark.

Applause

Mr. Barr: I would like all to join me in welcoming a friend and business owner in Teslin, Mr. Steve Kramer.

Applause

Mr. Silver: I would like everybody to help me in welcoming an ex-constituent of mine and good friend, Shannon Van Bibber.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I ask all members to join me in welcoming a couple of folks I know from my past:

Joyce Van Bibber, a former Watson Laker, and Trevor Ellis, a former colleague of mine from the great town of Mayo.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join me in welcoming a constituent of Porter Creek South, Michelle Kolla, to the gallery today. Welcome.

Applause

Mr. Elias: With your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the Assembly to please join me in welcoming Ms. Tina Dickson to the Assembly.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Seeing as we're up introducing folks, Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce Frances Chambers. She's in charge of the hubcaps in Champagne — and also Donna Chambers and Curt Campbell, Sherry Wabisca, Kelly and Heather Hougen, Denise Beattie, Sandy Wabisca, and a few other friends.

Applause

Speaker: I have to mention my very dear friends, Geraldine Van Bibber and her husband Pat, who was introduced earlier.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petitions No. 24 and No. 25 — received

Clerk: Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly: I have had the honour to review two petitions, the first being Petition No. 24 of the First Session of the 33rd Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Leader of the Official Opposition on April 20, 2016.

Petition No. 24 meets the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

I have also had the honour to review Petition No. 25 of the First Session of the 33rd Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun on April 20, 2016.

Petition No. 25 also meets the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare Petition No. 24 and Petition No. 25 are deemed to be read and received. Pursuant to Standing Order 67, the Executive Council shall provide a response to a petition which has been read and received within eight sitting days of its presentation. Therefore, the Executive Council responses to Petition No. 24 and Petition No. 25 shall be provided on or before Wednesday, May 4, 2016.

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Petition No. 26

Ms. White: I have for presentation the following petition, which reads:

THAT the establishment of a government liquor store would not be a good thing for Teslin

THEREFORE, the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Yukon to reconsider opening a government liquor store in Teslin; and to conduct public consultation in Teslin regarding the proposed government liquor store; and instead consider investing in projects that would better develop and strengthen the community of Teslin in a more positive manner.

Speaker: Are there any further petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to use the 2016-17 budget to invest \$487,000 to support the operations of the new 10-bed St. Elias group home, which provides supportive housing for adults with cognitive disabilities.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to use the 2016-17 budget to invest an additional \$365,000 to enhance social worker support services in rural communities.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to use the 2016-17 budget to support the development of 11 recreational lots at Dutch Harbour on Kluane Lake in cooperation with Kluane First Nation.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to immediately undertake initial consultation with community stakeholders on Motion No. 1142, unanimously passed in this House, with a view to implementing necessary regulatory changes before the next election.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Whistle Bend continuing care facility

Ms. Moorcroft: In an April 8, 2016 letter about the value-for-money benefits of the Partnerships BC procurement services contract for the Whistle Bend continuing care facility, the Minister of Highways and Public Works said — and I quote: “Partnerships BC is a one stop shop for procurement and... expertise and a bridge to help deliver large capital projects...” I quote again, Partnerships BC has enabled Yukon

government to deliver this project in a way that "... ensures costs and schedule certainty for Yukon taxpayers".

Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works explain what kind of cost certainty there is in building a \$150-million facility without knowing how much it will cost to operate?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I certainly thank the member opposite for bringing this to the floor of the Legislature again today. Yesterday she asked a similar question and although I didn't have the numbers right at my fingertips, I have followed up immediately with the department officials to attain the best estimates that we have at this time.

Certainly this government recognizes that it is expensive to care for seniors when they are at that point in time in their life that they need to move to a continuing care facility. Even so, we're committed to providing our seniors with the care that they need. Currently when this care is provided at the Whitehorse General Hospital, we pay \$2,462 per day. By comparison at the Whistle Bend continuing care facility, we will pay roughly \$500 per bed per day or approximately \$28 million per year. We have included these O&M costs in our long-term fiscal plan.

Providing this level of care to seniors at that point in time of their life is extremely important to this government and we will continue to make those investments.

Ms. Moorcroft: Let's go back to the basics here. The fact is that this government approved building a \$150-million facility without having a clue of how much it would cost to operate it. It defies all sense and flies in the face of the Auditor General's criticisms of this government. Yukoners who buy a phone will consider how much their monthly plan will cost them before they purchase. I am sure that they expect the same due diligence when their government spends \$150 million.

How can the Premier pretend to have any credibility on fiscal management when his government has failed to meet the most basic due diligence by not knowing the O&M costs of a \$150-million facility before they commit to build it?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for this question. The member will be well aware that this government currently operates continuing care facilities here in the territory and, by comparison, we expect the costs at the Whistle Bend continuing care facility to be very similar to that of the Copper Ridge facility.

For the member opposite to make assertions that this government was not aware or did not have an idea of what the costs would be at the Whistle Bend continuing care facility, the member should be well aware that we currently do provide that service here in the territory.

If there is a need to expand this facility in the future, we actually estimate that the costs per bed to go down. On the one hand, the opposition want to build a facility in every single community, but they do not seem to understand the costs. So I ask, Mr. Speaker, if the opposition is critical of these costs and feels that it is too expensive, then where exactly do they draw the line? At what point in time would the members opposite not provide that care to Yukon seniors?

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister finally admitted that he doesn't know how much the annual continuing care facility operation and maintenance costs will be. Today, they have magically found a couple of numbers: some beds are \$2,462 a day; other beds are \$500 a day; and this new facility will cost less, they think — less than \$500, less than \$2,400. We are elected to represent Yukoners' interests. As public servants, it is our duty and responsibility to make sure that public finances are properly managed. This government has the duty to conduct comprehensive, long-term fiscal planning, not just say that all is fine because there is money in the bank.

Will this government provide the estimates they are using for the operation and maintenance costs of the continuing care facility so that Yukoners have an idea of what the impact will be on future health care budgets?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the member's concern in this area. The member is right. Yesterday I didn't have the budget at my fingertips. Perhaps they have the budget on their desk across the floor, but this is forecasted in the 2018-19 fiscal year.

As I mentioned in my first response when the member opposite asked if I had that information yesterday — I did not have it at my fingertips — certainly we recognize that it is expensive to care for seniors when they are at a point in time in their lives when they can no longer care for themselves. Even so, we are committed to providing our seniors with that care that they need at that point in time. In comparison, a hospital stay for an individual waiting for long-term care is \$2,462, and we estimate that the average daily cost for a senior staying at the Whistle Bend facility will be very similar to that of the Copper Ridge continuing care facility at approximately \$500 per day.

For the member opposite to assert that we didn't have that information and that we don't that information is incorrect. I just didn't have it at my fingertips yesterday. This government is committed to providing that level of care to those seniors when they most need it. I don't know where the members opposite draw that line, but we will continue to make those investments in Yukon seniors.

Question re: Community nursing

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, last week I asked the Minister for Health and Social Services what was being done to ensure the safety of nurses and patients in communities. The minister assured this House and Yukoners that his government was doing good things and good work on community nursing. Yesterday, the CBC aired an interview describing the big problems in community nursing. Yukon is facing a critical shortage of community nurses. Nurses continue to work alone, often with no relief. Despite their good work and their dedication, nurses are overworked and fatigued.

Mr. Speaker how does the minister respond to community nurses who are telling them loudly and clearly that this government is not doing enough?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, again I thank the member opposite for asking this question. It certainly provides

me an opportunity to highlight the good work that is being done in the territory around community nursing. In fact, the Department of Health and Social Services receives a number of calls each and every day from nurses across this country making inquiries about the possibility of employment opportunities here the Territory. The department has offers pending for nurses with additional interviews that just wrapped up yesterday.

The 11 primary health care centers currently have three out of 24 community-based positions vacant. Three auxiliary-on-call nurses provide coverage throughout rural Yukon for current vacancies and for leaves. We expect to be fully staffed for the summer, so Mr. Speaker, this government continues to support our community nurses, and continues to support health care in the territory. We're very proud of those investments.

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister for Health and Social Services told us that there were 36 auxiliary-on-call nurses providing coverage throughout rural Yukon for current vacancies and leaves. This is true. In fact, three nursing stations in Yukon are staffed entirely by auxiliary-on-call staff. These nurses often come from outside of the territory for a week, two weeks, and a month. Despite their best efforts, these nurses are new to the community and new to the patients. Patients in the communities do not have the opportunity to build a relationship with their nurse. Every time they receive care or need care, they're retelling their health story to somebody new.

Mr. Speaker, what action is this government taking to recruit and retain permanent nursing staff in the communities — not just auxiliaries on call?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Again, I thank the member opposite for bringing this question forward to the floor of the Legislature. Certainly nursing shortages are not something that is exclusive to Yukon; in fact, all across Canada and many northern parts of the provinces see this same issue. We are competing with all jurisdictions across Canada in that regard; but as I mentioned to the member opposite, work is certainly in progress. We've been working through some of the issues. We've been working with our partners on this issue and we will continue to work with our partners in the area of recruitment.

Recruitment is pursued in a variety of ways, including targeted local- and national-level advertising, collaboration with other local recruitment efforts and attendance at national job fairs. Health and Social Services attended three job fairs across Canada in the last seven months. Mr. Speaker, on the floor of this House I've said before that word of mouth continues to be one of our best ways of recruitment. I know a number of nurses and doctors have reached out to their colleagues across the country and they report that they're still having success with that.

This government will continue its investments in nursing. It will continue its investments in health care, one of which I would argue that Yukon's health care is one of the best in Canada. We'll continue to support those professionals on the ground.

Ms. Stick: There's no question that these nurses are working hard. The Minister for Health and Social Services tells us that word-of-mouth advertising is probably one of our strongest advertising models to recruit and retain nurses; but Mr. Speaker, we know we have a community nursing system in crisis. Permanent nurses are leaving for other jurisdictions. This kind of word of mouth will not help recruit permanent nurses for Yukon communities.

Community nurses are working alone in isolated communities, often without backup or support from the RCMP — rarely with the benefit of a physician. Many are on call 24/7. They do not feel supported by this government.

Mr. Speaker, will this minister recognize this government is not doing enough to support nurses that we have now in our community health centres?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Again, I thank the member opposite for asking this question. They continually provide me with opportunities to highlight some of the great work that is being done in the territory. In fact, it wasn't just this minister who had indicated to the members opposite about word-of-mouth advertising; that's coming from the grassroots, from the professionals on the ground that reiterate how important that messaging is for the territory.

We do recognize that there are challenges recruiting health care professionals to Yukon communities and this is a reflection of the same challenges across the country where we are facing nursing shortages, and I've said that before on the floor of this Legislature. Certainly to meet these challenges, we've been executing our plan to deliver health care across Yukon and to keep Yukoners in their homes as long as possible. Health and Social Services works extensively with the nurses association and Yukon communities to attract and retain nurses long term. We've also invested significant resources to that same goal.

This government will continue to make those investments. This government will continue to ensure that health care is one of the best in Canada here in Yukon — something that Yukoners certainly deserve and expect and we're very proud of those investments, Mr. Speaker.

Question re: Film industry

Mr. Silver: I have a question for the Minister of Economic Development about a letter that he received this week from the president of the Screen Production Yukon Association. It was regarding a review of the Yukon government's film funding programs. According to the letter, these programs are in desperate need of revision and reflection of the recent evolution in the industry. Digital media, in particular, is in dire need of incorporation into the Yukon film funding programs. The government has identified the requirement to review and update the current funding programs to address digital media, as well as other funding gaps, but it has not delivered on providing any solid process, timelines, road maps or otherwise to have such a task completed on time soon.

The government began its review a year ago and said programming will be updated in January of 2016.

Mr. Speaker, why has the government missed its own deadline?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: The Department of Economic Development is undertaking a review of the funding programs offered by the Film and Sound Commission. There have been significant changes in technology and the possible distribution mechanisms in the film industry in recent years. The department is currently meeting with stakeholders who have an interest in Yukon's film industry in order to obtain input on how they see these changes impacting our film programs.

Currently, the department has met with 10 groups and individuals representing over 100 members who have an interest in an economically viable film and sound industry here in the Yukon.

Mr. Silver: I appreciate the update from the minister, but preliminary input was requested over 12 months ago but, to date, there has been no follow-up and the members of the Yukon industry are completely in the dark as to what the next steps, if any, are and when they will take place.

It is crucial for Yukon government to address the current issue of film funding program inadequacies and deliver a firm plan for the revision in an expedient manner. Given the past year of limited progress in the film funding review process, it is even more imperative for the Yukon government to take a leadership role to review the film funding programs and to gather information from those stakeholders.

We heard an update today on the floor, but when does the minister anticipate this will happen and when will it actually be completed?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Of course it's important that we take the time to do the good work and to talk to all the people involved, so we don't have to go through this process again next year or the year after. It's important to try to do it once and do it right.

Mr. Speaker, industry meetings are showing that there are a multitude of different funding models that people are interested in, and department officials are meeting with officials from the Arts branch of Tourism and Culture to discuss funding opportunities for film and sound within the Yukon government. Film and Sound Commission officials have completed face-to-face stakeholder consultation meetings within the territory and provided each group with the meeting minutes for their approval.

We do realize this is an important issue and we will continue to do the good work to try and move forward in the best way possible.

Mr. Silver: I do appreciate from the minister that he and his department want to get it done right. The general tone of the letter is to get on with it. It speaks to the lack of urgency that the government has taken in its approach to this funding review. There's a great deal of interest in the Yukon right now, Mr. Speaker. We need to be ready to meet that demand.

Instead, the government is stuck in a review that is now months past its deadline for reporting. When your GDP drops for three years in a row, the government should be working to grow new industries and to diversify our economy. Why has completing this review not become a priority?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: I think it's important to realize that we have \$710,000 in the budget this year for film and sound incentive programs. That does show that we are interested in diversifying the economy and helping this film and sound sector of our economy.

We heard just the other day an official from film and sound talking about how Dawson had so much interest in it this year — the Yukon in general. There are great things happening in the film and sound industry here in the Yukon, and we're very happy to see that. The work that the department is doing helps that work continue, helps those film production crews come to the Yukon, helps those productions take place, and in turn puts Yukoners to work.

Question re: Teslin liquor store

Mr. Barr: This question is directed to the minister responsible for Yukon Liquor Corporation and MLA for Pelly-Nisutlin. I am asking this question on behalf of Teslin community members.

We have tabled their petition asking the Government of Yukon to reconsider opening a government liquor store in Teslin. Nearly 200 community members have signed.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Elias: It is my understanding that in the rules of Question Period, the opposition cannot direct a question directly to an MLA in a riding in the territory. It has to be to a minister.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: He directed it to the minister who is actually the same person. Your point is well taken. I would advise the members to direct their questions to the minister alone and not to include the riding.

Complete your question please.

Mr. Barr: Nearly 200 community members have signed. These community members have been vocal in their opposition to a government liquor store opening in their community. They have written letters to their MLA as well as the Premier himself.

What is the Minister of Economic Development's response to his constituents who oppose the proposed government liquor store in Teslin?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Of course, as an MLA when a group or organization comes forward and asks their MLA to look into something, I believe that, to do our job properly — and I would like to believe that every member in here would have done exactly as I have done. I said, "Look, I can look into this question for you." That's exactly what I have done. I have approached the department. I said, "Look, I have had the..." — and actually it was the chief and some of the executive council — ask about the possibility of a liquor store in the community of Teslin.

Doing my job, I approached the department and asked how we would proceed if such a thing were to happen. The department went to do the work that they do. In the meantime I had two public community meetings. At both meetings this subject came up on more than one occasion. At the end of the day, after those two meetings, the one thing that was asked in particular was that I do more community consultation.

I am happy to say that over the past two weeks, I have gone door to door, to individuals' houses, and talked to them about this item as well as many other subjects. Mr. Speaker, I continue to do that consultation, and when I am done, we will see where we are.

Mr. Barr: A government liquor store would make a wider selection of alcoholic beverages cheaper and more readily accessible in Teslin. Many community members are concerned about the social problems and impact on the social fabric of their community that this could have.

Signatories of the petition include community nurses, social workers and religious, municipal and First Nation leaders. Residents of Teslin want the opportunity to discuss the proposed liquor store with this government.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation commit to conducting a public consultation in Teslin regarding the proposed government liquor store, where all can come together?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: As I said in my first response, I have had two public meetings. People get very passionate about this issue, of course. Some people are very opposed and some people are very in favour, so it is rather difficult to host those types of meetings — public meetings — in a community, but I have done that. What I got out of those two public meetings was that they wanted some more community consultation.

Mr. Speaker, I felt that the best way possible for that to happen was to go to individuals' homes in the evenings and on weekends and talk to the individuals. I don't want to talk to people at work. I don't want to be in office situations where people have peer pressures or other people giving input that may influence their decisions.

It's interesting. Even though I have never seen this petition that was tabled today, I have spoken to numerous people who said, "Look, I signed that petition, not understanding all of the implications that this project could have in the community." I have never been in favour of or opposed to the project. I'm simply doing what I believe an MLA should do, and that is, when you're brought forward a question, to do the due diligence and do the consultation that is required, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Barr: The residents of Teslin have many ideas for projects that would develop and strengthen their community. A new library in the town square, an artifact conservation building for the George Johnston Museum, a new post office, a safe house for women or a swimming pool would provide employment and contribute positively to the community.

Mr. Speaker, will the government instead consider investing in projects that will develop and strengthen their community of Teslin in a positive manner?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: I guess it's a matter of opinion when you say something is going to contribute to the community. I would like to believe that creating jobs in a community is contributing in a good way.

The member opposite has spoken about a swimming pool, and that has been discussed at numerous meetings in the community of Teslin, but unfortunately, when the First Nation or the local municipal government is approached with the idea of a swimming pool, they say, "No, absolutely not. We can't afford to run it. We're not interested. Please don't approach your government about building us a swimming pool."

Mr. Speaker, I can simply do what the people ask me to do, and that's what I will continue to do as long as I am the MLA for Pelly-Nisutlin.

Question re: Oil and gas development

Mr. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that this Yukon Party government would like to open Yukon to fracking. They are spending millions in public money to subsidize this industry. This year they have allocated over \$360,000 for two water quality monitoring wells in the Kotaneelee, an area they have stated they intend to open to fracking. The Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing made recommendations for establishing baseline water quality data to — and I quote: "... to ensure that comprehensive data is available." Two wells do not strike me as comprehensive.

Does the minister truly believe that two groundwater wells in the Kotaneelee will actually satisfy the high standard contained in the recommendations of the select committee?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I should again thank the Member for Mayo-Tatchun for being a member of the select committee along with two of his colleagues from the opposite side of the House and three colleagues from this side of the House. As we mentioned last year in our response to the select committee recommendations, we accepted all of them and we are acting on all of them. I think Yukoners should be very proud. When we are down in Calgary with Yukon Geological Survey staff, we are told that we are one of the first jurisdictions — if not the first — to collect this type of baseline information before industry activity happens. That is something to be proud of, not only on water monitoring, but also on seismic collection and on all of the other aspects that were recommended by the select committee.

I will remind the Member for Mayo-Tatchun that he was a member of the select committee and that he did travel to Yukon communities — I believe he travelled to Alberta to talk to industry leaders and other individuals who were active in this industry. I thank the select committee for the report. We agreed to accept and act on all of the recommendations, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Mr. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, these ad hoc expenditures are not a plan. We are still waiting for the oil and gas action plan. In a November 2 letter to the minister, three northern First Nation chiefs said that the Yukon government has — and I quote: "... distorted the recommendations of the Select Committee..." Distorting committee recommendations before

responding to them isn't the same as meeting them. We know water is not a priority for this government. Their water strategy fails to deal with the important issues and the only new groundwater monitoring wells they are doing are to facilitate fracking.

Why isn't it a priority for this government to invest in groundwater monitoring wells throughout the Yukon for all Yukon citizens, rather than just focusing on fracking needs?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we are doing. We are responding to the recommendations made in the final report by the select committee, which the member opposite is more than aware of. We are improving baseline knowledge of the Liard River Basin and expanding groundwater and surface water monitoring activities. We have a better understanding of the impacts of natural gas extraction fluids on groundwater, and we are researching the integrity of wells in the prevention of long-term mitigation for fluids and gases.

Starting this year, the Yukon government is collaborating with the University of Calgary on a three-year Natural Science and Engineering Research Council of Canada project. It will develop baseline monitoring techniques to assess potential impacts of oil and gas extraction on groundwater and surface water. Like the member opposite said, we are investing in two multi-level deep wells and surface water quality monitoring stations, but what we are doing is expanding the long-term water monitoring networks. We are gathering baseline data, targeting research projects and that is what this government is committed to do.

Mr. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Kaminak Gold Corporation has spent years monitoring water quality on their Coffee gold project with local involvement and, like other mines, they have done this with their own money. The select committee had not contemplated that the government would bear the costs of conducting baseline water quality data; nor do the recommendations prescribe who should bear these costs. The government has chosen to pick up a tab that should rightly be paid by oil and gas companies. The minister says they aren't picking winners and losers, but paying costs that should be borne by industry is the very definition of picking a winner.

Mr. Speaker, how does this government justify spending public money to subsidize oil and gas fracking in the Liard Basin?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I'll expand a little bit more, Mr. Speaker, about how the Yukon government monitors groundwater and surface water quality and quantity through, like I said, long-term trend networks, baseline study programs and targeting research projects. Over the next year, the Yukon government will expand its long-term network by adding 10 hydrometric stations, five to 10 groundwater stations and two water quality stations.

Once installed, Mr. Speaker, the Yukon government will share the operation — or operate directly — 95 hydrometric stations and 29 to 34 groundwater stations and 13 water quality stations across the Yukon. It wouldn't be good if

government did not gather baseline data and collect stuff, and that's exactly what this government is doing.

I might remind the members opposite — I sure hope they vote for this budget because that's where that money is going.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, I rise to invite members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in introducing, before she walks out of the Assembly today, a constituent of mine — Amy Campbell — welcome; and another member from ECO as well. I welcome both of you to the House today.

Applause

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Mr. Elias: I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education in Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

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

Bill No. 23: *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Mr. Graham, you have 11 minutes.

Department of Education — *continued*

Hon. Mr. Graham: Once again, it's a pleasure for me to welcome a couple members of my staff here — Cyndy Dekuysscher, who was with us here yesterday and

joining her is my deputy minister — Judy Arnold is here with us today as well.

Yesterday, I ended with the Advanced Education branch and I will just do a quick overview of Advanced Education, because a total of \$16,750,000 is requested for O&M for the Advanced Education branch. Our government is investing in supporting Yukon post-secondary students to help them achieve their career goals. As part of this investment, \$5,034,000 is requested to support our students and the proposed changes to the Yukon Student Financial Assistance and Awards program — the Yukon grant. This represents a change of a little less than \$400,000 in funding.

The Yukon grant provides financial support to Yukon residents who are taking full-time post-secondary classes at a designated institution. The government is committed to providing access to financial assistance that makes it affordable to attend post-secondary studies and ensure that funding is distributed in a fair and equitable manner for current and future Yukon residents.

The changes in the grant system will allow more students to qualify for the Yukon grant, it will increase funding for students studying at Yukon College, and it will maintain a cost-of-living increase for post-secondary financial assistance. Students who currently qualify for funding from the Government of Canada will now be eligible for the Yukon grant as well. Specifically, this will open the Yukon grant to more First Nation students than previously. Additionally, eligibility requirements for the Yukon grant will now allow students who were Yukon residents during their high-school years and completed high-school equivalency to be eligible for the Yukon grant.

The travel amount for a student studying outside the territory will be reduced from \$1,800 a year to \$1,500 per year, and we believe that this more accurately reflects the actual cost that students face for travel. However, to offset the reduction in travel costs, the annual student grant will be increased by \$800 per year for all eligible students. We believe that this will more adequately reflect the importance we put on students attending Yukon College as well, and it will give a fairer break to those students in accessing the Yukon grant. The Yukon grant will be subject to regular cost-of-living changes as well.

Students who were eligible under the Yukon grant as it currently exists will be able to continue receiving the Yukon grant until September 2017, even if they don't meet the current requirements.

Currently, First Nation students who receive post-secondary financial assistance from the Government of Canada are not eligible for the Yukon grant, and we want to support those First Nation citizens to achieve their educational and career goals and we want to be able to more adequately address the achievement gap between indigenous and non-indigenous students. With these amendments, we will ensure that all First Nation students who meet the eligibility requirements receive the same financial assistance for their post-secondary education.

Changes will also be made, Madam Chair, to the student training allowance. Previously, post-secondary students would be eligible for five years of funding in total through the student training allowance and then the grant. We will be changing the student training allowance eligibility — and the training allowance is primarily used to upgrade courses at the college — but those students who use the training allowance to upgrade will be eligible for up to two years of the student training allowance and they will continue thereafter to be eligible for the full five years of the Yukon grant. This is a substantial change from what previously occurred.

All of the changes to our post-secondary financial assistance programs are the result of extensive public consultation, which included students, parents and First Nations. I would like to take the opportunity to thank all of those who participated in the consultation process, because we believe that the changes to the *Students Financial Assistance Act* will make financial assistance available to more Yukon post-secondary students.

An additional \$230,000 is also requested to develop the degree-granting capabilities of the future Yukon university. The department will continue to work with Yukon College and the governments of both Saskatchewan and Alberta to ensure that the degrees granted by the college are recognized by and transferrable to other institutions, both within Canada and internationally.

\$1,510,000 is requested for the community training fund, and that is a \$75,000 increase to meet the additional demands on the fund.

We are also increasing the amount of funding that is available to Yukon College, as it works toward its transition to become a Yukon university. This year we'll be adding \$500,000 to enable the transition to a Yukon university, and this is a three-year funding agreement — \$500,000 a year in each of the three years — and it's included to develop its research capability and evaluate and work toward achieving the academic standards necessary. It will help to move a Yukon university forward to meet the strict requirements needed to achieve that status. It's a multi-stage process that will require significant effort over a number of years. I have said in this Legislature time and time again that this is not something that we're rushing into — creating a Yukon university. We want to be sure that it's done correctly and done so that we will be widely recognized as a high-quality institution because we believe that the transition will bring considerable benefits to both higher education in our territory as well as to the economy.

We've seen university towns throughout this country where the primary source of economy was the university. I can think of several back east that are in that category. While Yukon College perhaps won't meet that status in the short term, we believe that high-quality programs with a northern focus will definitely bring students to the territory.

We've also requested an additional \$175,000 to support Yukon College as part of their base funding to improve their information technology and records management, and another bit of funding that is very important to us is \$593,000 to

extend funding for the practical nursing program at Yukon College for an additional four years in order to meet the demand for licensed practical nurses.

The commitment will see two intakes of 16 students into the program — the first is this year in September, and the second in September 2018. The Department of Health and Social Services has already indicated that they're in a position — or they will be in a position — to hire all of the graduates of the program, as they have done for the last two graduating classes. I believe this reflects our government's commitment to the health and well-being of Yukon by taking this step to address this shortage of nurses in the territory.

I'll end there. The only part I haven't gone through is Education Support Services, and we can do that later on in the debate. I'm open to questions now from members across and look forward to providing answers.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for his comments. I too would like to welcome back Cyndy Dekuysscher and Judy Arnold. Thank you for coming. Yesterday, they weren't here, but I did mention that I appreciated — and staff in many of the schools appreciate — the fact that they've taken time out of their schedule to visit most, if not all, of the schools in the Yukon. I understand they intend to get to them all, which I must commend them for.

In 2009, the Auditor General referred to the need for a long-term plan for the upkeep and maintenance. The Department of Education agreed that they will incorporate the results of building audits into a risk management plan as the department develops it.

I know recently, or over the last few years, the department has been conducting seismic audits on our schools, as studies confirmed that several buildings were in need of modifications in order to ensure long-term safety. There were issues identified.

Which capital projects have been identified in this year's budget for upgrades to the seismic studies? Do school councils and staff have access to the reports on their schools and have they been informed of the seismic studies on their schools — and back to which capital projects are identified for this year?

Hon. Mr. Graham: The Department of Education works closely with the Department of Highways and Public Works to ensure that all of our schools are safe. We are in the process of developing a school revitalization plan to address future new construction and what renovations we can do to existing school buildings. We have a preliminary draft plan now that I am discussing with the department but, as for the 2009 Auditor General's report — I believe it was recommendation 99 and that we work with Property Management Division to develop a long-term facility plan. That is the reason we are working on the plan. Recommendation 108 — that Yukon Education work with Highways and Public Works to conduct regular and comprehensive facility audits to ensure that major building deficiencies are identified. As a result of that, many of the schools' building-related audits have been completed. Most of the urgent issues as far as roofs had been completed by late

2008. The education facility assessment report was completed in 2011 and dealt mainly with electrical, heating and ventilation systems. All of the urgent, safety-related issues have been addressed.

The seismic assessment, which was asked about, was completed over the winter of 2013-14, and we don't believe that the report was distributed to the various schools in the territory. We have completed a number of renovations due to the seismic reports and, as part of the overall plan — the draft revitalization plan — we are trying to determine if it is worthwhile to make the changes necessary to upgrade some of the older schools especially, or whether it's less expensive in the long run and over the life cycle of these schools to simply replace the school. We are trying to make that decision right now with Christ the King Elementary School and Selkirk Elementary School because that assessment hasn't been completed.

We are looking at a number of issues in a number of other schools too. Watson Lake elementary school — Johnson Elementary School — J.V. Clark School, Teslin School and Robert Service School have been completed. Whitehorse Elementary School has not; several renovations were done. The more urgent requirements were carried out, and now Whitehorse Elementary will fall in with Christ the King Elementary and Selkirk Elementary schools and we will try to determine whether it is worthwhile to upgrade those schools or to completely replace them. As you know, it's a fairly large capital layout to replace those schools, so we are attempting to make the choices. That is part of what the draft revitalization plan is all about — making choices and trying to determine what we are doing with a number of different programs such as all of the programs we are running in high school — MAD and the experiential programs.

We have to consider where we're headed with French immersion. As you know, last year we started French immersion at Selkirk Elementary School. We've committed to continuing French immersion in that school from kindergarten through grade 7 as those children progress, but we're trying to determine if this is something we should be doing in other schools — such as Porter Creek and other schools — rather than centralizing it in one place. Those are some of the things that have been done.

The eight schools in the medium- to high-risk categories of the seismic screening were Takhini Elementary, Whitehorse Elementary, Christ the King, Wood Street, Kluane Lake, St. Elias, Nelna Bessie John and Selkirk. As I said, some of the renovations have been completed in those schools. Those were all non-structural mitigations that included doing things like securing furniture and shelving, making sure filing cabinets wouldn't collapse in the event of seismic difficulty, and things like that.

I think I have answered most of the questions. I'm not sure if we have distributed, as I said, those reports to the various school councils but it's something that we will find out for sure.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for his answer. I thank him for his commitment to distribute those forms to

both the existing school councils and the new ones. Hopefully that passes on.

Are there any capital funds from this year that would address some of the deficiencies in a seismic audit?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Yes, there are. In the current budget we have placed \$100,000 for various schools in this school revitalization plan. That's part of the total of \$2.9 million that we have put aside for work being done — renovations being done in the schools over the 2016-17 year.

Mr. Tredger: Just to go on to housing for a minute — housing continues to be a problem for many rural teachers. This is especially evident in the fall when new teachers arrive in communities. In some of our communities, they haven't been able to find a place to stay. They have often bunked in with someone. I was talking to a teacher who started in somebody's living room and moved to the bedroom; they got company and had to move again. It makes it very difficult to retain teachers — but difficult for teachers to continue to teach.

This seems to be an ongoing problem. It has been a problem for many years. It's worsening as long-time teachers who own their own houses retire and new teachers moving in don't have that housing.

I understand that there are somewhere between 800 and 900 YTG employees in rural Yukon and there are 170 houses. That creates a bottleneck. It's hard on rural communities because they can't attract and keep staff in any of the fields — but particularly in education. I know of schools that have had to hire married couples to fit the housing.

Obviously the minister is aware of the housing problems. What steps is the minister taking and has he lobbied the minister of housing for additional educational housing units? What is being done to meet these needs?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, we work with the Yukon Housing Corporation but, in addition, we work with the Health department, which also has a number of employees looking for housing in the various communities — so it's an ongoing battle. I know Ross River was one of our problems and we have a great young teaching staff there in Ross River now. Consequently, I know the Housing Corporation is now constructing a facility in Ross River, I believe, that was just announced in the last week or so. That will alleviate, we hope, the pressure there.

It's a problem that we face; there's no doubt about it. I know what we would prefer is that people build or purchase housing in these small communities and live there. I know my kid sister, when she first came back to teach in the Yukon, taught in a rural community and we actually spent a summer building her a home in that community so that she and her kids would have someplace to live. We would love to see everybody do this, but we realize they don't have that opportunity.

We'll continue to work with the Yukon Housing Corporation; we'll continue to plan with Health and Social Services as well as Highways and Public Works to better house our teachers all over the territory, but it's a big territory.

There are a lot of spaces and a lot of priorities so we'll continue to do it. I don't know what else I can say.

Mr. Tredger: I know it is a concern of the Yukon Teachers' Association and many of their meetings are filled with concerns that are brought forward to them as well as to the rural communities when they're trying to attract professional staff, whether it's in Education or in Health and Social Services. This is an issue and it's an ongoing issue. It's important from an education perspective that, once hiring is done, Yukon Housing Corporation is made aware of the needs of incoming staff so that they can act on it in the spring and over the summer so that when teachers arrive — often from out-of-territory into a small community — they have a place to stay. I just want to highlight that it's an ongoing situation and it's a government-wide situation. Part of it has to do with land availability. Part of it has to do with — for a long time, people weren't able, and still aren't able in many communities, to get a house — to build the house he talked about. I assume when his sister was moving to the community, there were lots available. Many of our communities don't have lots available, even if people did have the wherewithal and a big brother to help them build the house.

This fall, a lot of rural schools had great difficulty getting their teachers on call into the schools because the teachers on call — and this applies also to temporary teachers and temporary educational assistants, which the majority of them are — need a criminal record check every year. The format changed — something changed this fall and it was very difficult. I talked to schools where they weren't able to get a substitute teacher because teachers weren't able to get their criminal record checks in a timely fashion.

I have talked to people who were potentially teachers on call and who just gave up and said, "Look, I'm doing this to help out the school. I don't need the drive into Whitehorse three times to get my criminal record check." Is the department addressing this? Have they taken steps? It has created a real situation in our rural schools and I assume in Whitehorse itself, although many of the people in Whitehorse are qualified teachers and are more able to handle the system and the bureaucracy around filling out forms, filling them out right and filling them out this way and that way. It is a concern. Has the department addressed this so that we don't have this problem next fall?

Hon. Mr. Graham: We are working with the RCMP, but it's a delicate balance that we have to reach here. We have to ensure that people who are teaching in our schools have their criminal record checks done because we're concerned about the safety of our children, but those teachers who teach year over year don't need it every year, as I understand.

The other part of that equation is that if they're not alone in the classroom with children, they can work without a criminal record check until it is done. I know we have had the same difficulty this year and we put an EA with a person who hadn't had a criminal record check report done, so that carried the person over until such time as a criminal record check was done.

I can't remember what the rest of the question is right now, but I can assure the member opposite that we are working with the RCMP. Just today I heard that the RCMP are now putting CPIC online for customs officers, so we're hoping that this indicates some speed-up in their criminal record check process, because I know from personal experience that it can be a real chore.

I hope that we have answered your question. I cannot provide anything new, other than that we're working with the RCMP. We have made these changes to the system so that as long as they don't work alone, we will wait for the criminal record check to come in — and if they work on a year-to-year basis, as I understand, we don't need a criminal record check every year.

Mr. Tredger: Just for a little bit of clarification on that — when you say, “when you work year-to-year for a temporary teacher”, do they have to stay in the same job? They're temporary year-to-year — they don't need an additional criminal record check? Does that apply to teachers on call who remain on the callout list? Does it apply to education assistants who may be on a temporary basis but in the same school year after year?

Hon. Mr. Graham: With ongoing positions, it's year over year; it's not required. If they're on call or temporary and don't have a continuing record with the territory, then they will need them every year — yes.

Mr. Tredger: I did have a question on temporary teachers, but I can't find it right now so I'll come back to that.

For a couple of years now, the schools in Whitehorse have used a centralized callout system. How many schools are on that system? How many have been on it and dropped it? What have the results been?

I know there was some concern expressed by administrators and school staff that, when they don't have the opportunity to call teachers on call, they may get ones who are not familiar with the school. They like to get ones who maybe have continuity in terms of presenting programming and stuff.

Hon. Mr. Graham: The automated system to call in substitutes is a system called EasyConnect. It was first tested in Robert Service School in 2013-14, and the results at that time indicated that it may not be the best thing for small rural communities. As a result of that test, the decision was made to implement the system in Whitehorse area schools and to not implement it in the rural schools.

The system was supposed to allow school staff to enter a description of the assignment they're filling and then add preferences related to the skill set required for the assignment. The system was then supposed to automatically call, text or e-mail substitute people who were in the system until the assignment was filled.

My staff indicated to me that it hasn't worked as well as many of us had hoped, despite the fact that, when this system was first implemented back in 2013, school principals were consulted and they seemed to believe the same as the department; that the implementation of EasyConnect would make it much simpler to contact substitute personnel.

Finding substitute personnel to fill in for a teacher is always challenging. It's challenging everywhere in the Yukon, even in Whitehorse. We can't always find substitute teachers with education degrees. Consequently, the department has provided substitute teachers with educational credentials from time to time in the rural communities as well as for specialized areas, such as intensive French literacy and numeracy.

It continues to be a priority — finding substitute teachers — as I said, not only in the rural communities but in Whitehorse. It continues to be a priority for the department.

In October of last year, the department reached out to administrators throughout the territory for their input on recruitment and they did a recruitment campaign as well to encourage applications for substitute personnel, not only in Whitehorse but in many communities as well.

We've posted advertisements on job banks. We've posted advertisements at the college campus and outreach centres. We've posted these advertisements at First Nation organizations and at all territorial libraries and other territorial agents, but it is difficult.

We're also reaching out to retired teachers. Hopefully we'll have something for you when your career here is finished, you see — but perhaps not. We realize that retired teachers are a real boon to the territory, the people who stay here know the system, work well with students, and it would be an excellent addition to the system.

I am glad to see that both members opposite can take a joke.

As members opposite know, it is a problem and we're working as hard as we can to create opportunities, shall we say, for substitutes.

Mr. Tredger: This retired teacher has found something to do in his retirement, and I hope to do it for some time longer.

One of the things that we, as a society and territory, have been working for is that the number of First Nation teachers is reflective of the population. That would be somewhere around 23 percent. However, the number of Yukon First Nation teachers has been around 10 percent for a number of years. There was initial flush when YNTEP first graduated a few, but it hasn't been able to get up much past 10 percent.

Does the minister have the latest numbers on the number of First Nation teachers teaching in our schools? Are there any specific initiatives to ensure — the hiring protocol I know is in place and has given some preference to First Nation teachers, but it hasn't increased the number in our schools proportionately. I'm wondering if there are initiatives — if there are ways the department is going about trying to increase that number.

I know a number of teachers have graduated from YNTEP and have chosen other professions. Is there any initiative to keep them in teaching or to encourage them to teach? Are there any types of programs that would assist them as they move into the schools and ensure that their schools are a success?

I know that nationally, many teachers — I think it's around 30 percent — drop out within the first five years of their career. When we're dealing with smaller numbers in the Yukon, some type of supportive program so that we don't have that dropout of our First Nation teachers into other fields — I'm not suggesting they're dropping out, but that they move into other fields.

Are there any initiatives the government is taking to increase the numbers?

Hon. Mr. Graham: The percentage of First Nation people in teaching positions — and that includes both aboriginal language teachers and certified teachers — is 20.3 percent. The percentage of First Nation persons in remedial tutor and educational assistant positions is 18.9 percent. The overall percentage of First Nation people in teaching aboriginal languages, educational assistants and remedial tutor positions is 19.9 percent. The overall percentage of First Nation people working in the Department of Education as a whole is 17.7 percent.

Madam Chair, what we try to do with First Nation teachers — especially those coming out of the YNTEP program — is provide coaching and mentoring within the schools. Our First Nation program planning department at the Department of Education provides support on an ongoing basis. But I can only go back to when I worked at the college and watched, year after year after year, graduates from the Yukon Native Teacher Education Program graduate and immediately go to a job other than a teaching job.

I know I had a niece who is a First Nation person and has a teaching certificate, and she said that, too often when you go back to your home community with a degree, there are a huge number of options that are available to you, and so you take the option that best suits your style of life. In many cases, she said, we don't find that teaching, once we get into the job, is what really suits our way of life.

Consequently we've lost a lot of people — great First Nation teachers — who could have taught in the Yukon, anywhere, and we've lost them to other jobs. First Nations around the territory are always looking for smart, educated people such as YNTEP graduates, and a number of them work for the First Nations themselves. It's a problem. We realize that we have 20.3-percent First Nation people in teaching positions but we would like to see that increase, and we make a concerted effort to do that. I should also make sure that you're aware that these numbers are as of March 31, 2015.

Mr. Tredger: I must commend the department and the minister. Those numbers are higher than I had expected and than I had heard. I believe my numbers did not include native language teachers and I stand corrected; they are teachers in our system and should be counted as such.

I also commend the department for the efforts they are making to incorporate First Nation teachers into our system.

Violence in our schools has been a long-standing issue. In 2007, the YTA released a report called *How Safe are Our Schools?* They commissioned a survey that found almost one in three Yukon educators sustained some form of workplace

injury; 59 percent had some level of psychological injury. Our educators deserve better.

Just this winter — for a bit of history, many incidents in schools are underreported. I know that the department and YTA have been working — it has been part of the negotiated settlements that the tracking of the incidents happens and that incidents are reported. YTA has been working on it. It has been out there for many years, and I would just read from the YTA notes of February 2016: “Thank you to everyone who filled out school safety forms and sent them in last year. In total, we got 135 forms in 2015. Since these forms are optional, 135 is likely just a fraction of the incidents that actually happened last year, but they give us an idea of the issues faced by our members at their workplaces. The issues reported most often had to do with being physically attacked, followed closely by being sworn at by students. Threats of harm with or without the use of weapons (rocks, scissors, chairs mostly) were also of concern.

“We have been requesting that Student Support Services address the processes around violence at school and clarify them in terms of timelines, accountability, resources, and communication/follow through since October 2015.”

I know I have raised it in the House, and I raised it when I was with YTA. We are looking for a tracking system so that we know — before we can deal with it. As the Member for Riverdale South says, if you don't measure it, you can't manage it.

In other words, we want to know and want you to know: Who gets the forms that you fill out? Who decides what is to be done and makes sure that resources are in place to deal with the issue? How long will it take for someone to react to the issue with help of some kind? When will you know what happened about the issue, and who will tell you?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, it was a multi-pronged question and I will try to do as much as I can. If I miss something, I apologize and hopefully we will get back to it.

The Positive Behaviour Intervention Support and Classroom Diversity Committee is mandated under the collective agreement, as the member opposite stated, to work with teachers and the department, dealing with incidents of violence.

Due to the scope of the committee, it was decided that they had to have subcommittees and working groups and they would report back to the steering committee. Two committees were formed: a working committee to establish timelines for the PBIS rollout — that's the positive behaviour intervention support — and a committee to review existing policies and codes on conduct in Yukon schools. In February 2016, 14 schools attended a two-day introductory workshop, which was very well-received with lots of school planning time. The next workshop for schools is in May with coach training to follow. The remainder of the schools will begin their training in the 2016-17 school year.

The department continues to work with the YTA, especially to deal with incidents of violence in the workplace. Just recently we began monthly meetings with the YTA where

the topic of discussion is violence in the workplace. We're also meeting with the WCB to try to take advantage of their expertise and their experience dealing with workplace safety to see if they can provide us with advice and ideas that will lower the risk of violence in the workplace.

We also have a violence and risk threat assessment protocol, which is designed to ensure that violent behaviour — a threat by a student — can be responded to in a manner consistent with the best interests of the student as well as the employee. The protocol enables partners to share appropriate information about youth to support prevention or enable early intervention in risk situations in a school setting. The protocol, which has been in place for a number of years, has been signed by the departments of Justice, Health and Social Services, Education, and the RCMP, as well as Yukon College. Training to support an updated protocol takes place annually and I believe the last time the training took place was in January 2015. Personnel from all of the departments that I talked about attended the training and there'll be additional training as we go forward into 2016.

The protocol sets out a number of questions to guide in the identification. It also sets the levels of concern; whether a risk is active or imminent. It also includes considerations for a comprehensive intervention plan to help ensure safety and well-being for everybody. Behaviours contemplated in activating a threat assessment are: serious violence with intent to harm; verbal or written threats; Internet or text messaging threats to kill others; possession of weapons, including replicas; bomb threats; fire-setting; sexual intimidation and assault; and gang-related intimidation and violence. All of those behaviours are contemplated prior to a threat assessment being activated.

Madam Chair, we have also begun a number of other programs. The early intervention pilot project, as I said, started this year to support students over a three-year period from kindergarten to grade 2 in seven classrooms at Takhini, Jack Hulland, Elijah Smith and Tantalus schools.

There are a number of programs that we're working on to lower the risk to teachers and to students in the classroom.

I'm not sure I answered everything but, if not, I'll be happy to provide more comprehensive answers as we go along.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for the answers he did give me. I still wonder: Do we have a comprehensive or formal tracking system in place that would collect data on incidents in schools? Is there a way to analyze that data and a way to try to deal with the under-reporting that often accompanies violent incidents in schools and in our lives?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Yes, we're working with the health and safety committees at the schools and we are tracking incidents; we're compiling the incidents here. As I said at one time this session, I know the number of reported incidents had gone up, I think, by 180 percent from one year to the next, and we knew that it wasn't due to the fact that there were that many additional incidents, but instructors were taking the time and making sure they filled out the reports promptly when the

incidents occurred, instead of forgetting them, passing them off and then eventually forgetting to do it.

So we know that we're getting better reporting. As I said, we will be compiling those statistics and the data will be all part of the PBIS system, so we'll be able to extrapolate and we'll be able to — the early intervention system is the one that I think we hope will prove to be the most beneficial, because it will be able to identify potential incidents before they occur. We hope that will be something that will really assist us in the future to prevent these incidents before they ever happen.

Mr. Tredger: Those are some positive first steps. They will take some follow-through. I know there's a huge discrepancy between the number of incidents reported to the department and to YTA. That remains a concern. I'm glad to hear you're working with them on a regular basis to address this, because this is a serious situation. It has implications in the classroom for all our students and staff.

A year or two ago, there was a ruling about temporary teachers. At the time, we had in excess of 60 temporary teachers who had been on contract for more than three years. I know the YTA and the department have been working on it, and that the YTA is pushing to get the number of temporary teachers who have been employed for three or more years in the same or similar position down to a smaller number.

What has the department done to achieve that and how successful has it been?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I think we first of all just have to back up a little bit and define the fact that temporary teachers are hired for defined periods to meet temporary programming needs in Yukon schools, and these can be any number of things.

When you consider how many teachers we have — teaching professionals we have in this territory — working in the school system at any one time, you only have to extrapolate from that how many will be on maternity leave or paternity leave, or on leaves where they have taken a year off, or they go to temporary positions either at the department or in another department for a year or more — all of those positions have to be filled.

The way we do it is by hiring temporary teachers. When we find a good temporary teacher, the department likes to keep them so they will move from one assignment to the other, possibly on an annual or even semi-annual basis. We have a huge number of temporary teachers at any one time.

In 2014, we had an adjudicator's report, a decision, ordering that a temporary teacher who had been employed for more than two consecutive years be given the status of a permanent employee. That adjudicator's decision was appealed to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court refused to overturn that adjudicator's decision. As a consequence, the YTA has filed grievances because it believes, as the member opposite said, that temporary employees employed for more than two consecutive years should be converted to permanent.

I believe that, at the present time, we have approximately 100 temporary teachers in place around the territory, 19 of whom have been employed for more than two continuous years. We also have 156 temporary paraprofessionals, 53 of

whom have been employed for more than two continuous school years. Those temporary teachers include educational assistants and aboriginal language teachers because they're all members of the YTA. They're all covered by the agreement and have the same benefits as if their jobs were permanent.

We believe that it's almost going to be impossible to convert all of those teachers or all of those persons to permanent status. What it could force the department to do is enact layoff provisions or something like that on an annual basis or begin doing other things.

At the present time, a number of teachers are able to take deferred-salary leave, they take personal leave without pay, and in all those cases as well we hire temporary teachers. We believe that this enhances the job of a teacher in this territory.

If we have to now start saying that we won't be able to give educational leave — under the collective agreement there are provisions for educational leave, but every other kind of leave that we do is on an optional basis now. If we have to start eliminating some of that, I think it would only make the job worse for all teachers.

We're looking at options. We're negotiating with the YTA at the present time to come to a common understanding of what is deemed exceptional circumstances by the deputy minister. In order to continue a temporary employee's status as a temporary employee, the deputy minister must declare exceptional circumstances for a temporary teacher.

Once we agree on a common understanding with the YTA, I believe that the outstanding individual group grievances will be assessed against that criteria and the decision will be made at that time on a permanent status. We believe that will resolve the outstanding grievances and we believe it will substantially reduce or eliminate future grievances in this area.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for his comments. My question would be: When do exceptional circumstances not become exceptional? How many before they're not exceptional?

Many of the leaves are contractual obligations. Deferred salary is actually paid for by the teachers. They spread their salary out over five or six years and go on what we call a "six and five" or "five and four" plan, but those are paid for by the teachers. They are a benefit and a boon, and I highly recommend them for anybody in the profession.

The minister is right that there is a need for leaves within the system, but there are ways around that. A temporary teacher — and he talks of good teachers, of successful teachers — these are teachers we want to keep in the system. What a temporary teacher means is that you don't know, come June, whether you'll have a job in September, which means that you can't get a mortgage because the banks want to know if you're going to have a job come September.

If we're encouraging these teachers to come and live in our communities or in our towns, we want them to be able to settle down and get roots, but if they're on a temporary contract, it makes it very difficult. It makes it difficult to retain good, successful teachers. I know a number who were here for three or four years on temporary contracts, gave up

and went back to Edmonton or back to Vancouver or back out east. That's not the answer.

I think that there are ways around it without cancelling leaves. Perhaps a way around it — if we have successful teachers who have been in the system for three or four years, or in excess of two years, that's longer than a probationary period — or that's as long as a probationary period — perhaps we can get a pool of teachers who are floating. In other words, we put them on regular contracts with the understanding they may be at this school or that school. Every year, we have a number of leaves, so that wouldn't be too onerous on the department.

The other thing it does is — in many communities, there are people who have moved into other positions or into Whitehorse. They leave behind their permanent position as a temporary position, and it makes it doubly difficult for the communities to be able to bring in people we want to keep in our communities when we can only hire into temporary and backfill. Perhaps the department can look at situations where, after three or four years, rather than guaranteeing a position back in that community, they can guarantee the person on leave a similar position, but not necessarily that one. These are just some suggestions.

I was a little concerned when the minister said that an alternative was to cut back the number of leaves, because they are important in our system and I did want to throw out some ideas that may or may not work. Certainly there would be negotiations with YTA, with the teachers involved and with the people involved, but I would urge the minister to not see it as an either/or situation. There are creative ways to deal with the situation without making a case for cutting back leaves, which are important to our system.

I would like to talk a little bit about school-based teams right now. School-based teams function as a unit that helps to resolve a student's individual needs. I will read from a document from the Department of Education dated December 3, 2015. "The School Based Team functions as a collaborative problem solving team to address student's needs. The School Based Team does this in two ways: 1. To address student's needs at a school level and 2. To work with parents and other support personnel to respond to individual need(s)."

School-based teams are very effective and have proven to be very effective in our schools. However, I have heard reports from a number of parents that they haven't been involved in the school-based teams. I know the department is working on it, according to this memo, and I know it's legally required that they be on the school-based teams.

This memo goes on to say, "Parents shall be invited members of the School Based Team that has been established for their child... The School Based Team should also schedule review of student progress in regards to identified needs at School Based Team meetings as a way to evaluate student success and to prioritize services and resources... The School Based Team Meeting Notes/Minutes template may be used to record the School Based Team (SBT) meeting minutes. School Based Team referrals for individual students should be filed in the School Based Team binder."

My question is: Have parents been aware and how are parents being made aware that they have access to the minutes of the meetings? Do they need to request that or is it automatic? Are they informed of meetings? I know that in some situations, schools go out of their way to include parents and sometimes they even meet after school hours, or have individual meetings with those parents, to inform them what happened during the meetings.

The question from parents is: How do they get involved? How are they informed? Is that becoming standard practice or do they have to ask for it?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I just first of all would like to get back to temporary teachers just for a moment.

As I said, the department is currently working to define temporary exceptional circumstances and temporary, which are not exceptional circumstances and which should lead to permanent. They are looking at those issues with the YTA and I look forward to seeing what is eventually negotiated.

I know from my past experience working at the college where the exact same issues came up on a monthly, if not daily basis — of the difficulties experienced with temporary employees. Because as soon as you make those people permanent, if you only require 480 teachers in the system and you have 500 or 550 permanent employees, you have a problem. We all know that. There is a problem. So we have to work out a solution with the YTA and, as I've said, it would be a shame to see anything deleted from the current benefits that we all enjoyed.

I know speaking of four-fives — I often said I only work four years at a time at the college and learned to be a big game guide and other things during the years off, so I know what a wonderful thing that is and we have no intention of attempting to cut those back, but it's really important that the employer's part is understood too. For 489 teachers — which is roughly what we need, give or take — we don't need to have 520 permanent employees who we are paying. It's simply unworkable.

I know the YTA is working very diligently with the department and I wish them all the best in those negotiations. I know I have some very clear guidelines in my own head of what the department can and cannot agree to, but we will work out a solution. We always do.

As far as the school-based teams go, if there are parents who aren't involved, all we can say is those parents should let the department know immediately. The member opposite read the policy. That's our policy and we believe in that policy. I have already told the deputy minister that she should be sure and severely castigate the director of Student Support Services and make sure that she knows all of her employees — or make sure that her employees are following that policy — because it's something that we believe in.

We expect parents to be involved in the system because without parents it simply doesn't work. So we agree with you. We'll take this back and as I said, my comments should be taken, as the member opposite knows, with a grain of salt there, but we do agree. Parents have to be involved in this system and if we know of any who haven't been involved, we

will encourage them to, first of all, let the school know and then let the department know and we'll follow up with Student Support Services.

Mr. Tredger: I guess that, just from a parent's perspective, quite often when their child is in need of extra service, it's a difficult situation for them and it's hard to advocate. The more that can become standard procedure when a child is going before the school-based team and the parents are automatically notified — the more those options become standard procedure, I think the better it is.

I'll move on to another situation. Two years ago, the Premier announced that he wanted to make financial literacy a pillar of the Yukon school curriculum. How many schools have introduced the Premier's financial literacy agenda and at what grade level?

Hon. Mr. Graham: As part of the new BC curriculum, financial literacy went all the way through in every grade from kindergarten through grade 12. As part of our own work on curriculum, we're trying to decide exactly how that will be implemented into our curriculum here in the territory, but we have every intention of doing it as quickly as possible. We believe, as obviously they do in BC, that it's very important that financial literacy be taught in our school system.

Mr. Tredger: I assume that will be coming. I thank the minister for that.

All students used to get preventive dental therapy. Most schools had, or still have, dental rooms. At this time, I know a number of schools have had difficulty getting therapists or regular service. Which students at which schools still get that dental therapy? How much of it is preventive and how much of it is actual dental work? Which schools don't and why aren't they now receiving that preventive dental care? It was a very successful program and served the children of Yukon very well.

Hon. Mr. Graham: I know that, as former Minister of Health and Social Services, we dealt with the dental program in the Health and Social Services department, so I'll leave that one to my colleague to answer at the time that Health and Social Services comes up.

It was a difficulty in some schools, I know, looking back at my years there, but I'm sure he'll be able to answer that question more adequately at that time.

Mr. Tredger: They will probably thank me for the question.

Last year, the Individual Learning Centre ran two community pilots. What were the outcomes of those pilots and can the minister give us an update on how the Individual Learning Centre is working this year? Are numbers up or down? How successful have the pilots been?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I can speak anecdotally about the ILC, and I think I did in my opening remarks as well. ILC attendance is up dramatically this year over last. We'll get those numbers — I had them, but I've lost them, I'm sorry. We'll get those numbers and provide them as quickly as possible.

I will have to get back to the member opposite as far as the rest of his question as well. I apologize for not having the

answers, but we will get back to him as quickly as we can with ILC numbers.

Mr. Tredger: Madam Chair, over the summer, the ILC moved. Can the minister inform us how much the new space is costing? Is it effective as a school space?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, once again, I don't have those exact numbers, but the idea behind the move was that we would combine the Aurora Virtual School with the ILC and thereby save some resources, or at least make better use of our resources. We will get those numbers as well. I have to tell you, the kids like it. As I said the other day, they were attending school throughout the two-week spring break. In talking to some of them, it is as if they consider this a second home.

Mr. Tredger: Madam Chair, can the minister confirm that the planned residential school curriculum has been implemented? At what grade levels? Has it been implemented in all schools? Is there a plan to evaluate its effectiveness or to get some feedback from the First Nations on that?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, probably the member opposite knew already, but the residential school curriculum was introduced as a social studies credit in grade 10. It has been introduced in all grade 10 classes throughout the territory, except, I believe, in one school where there were insufficient numbers of students to introduce the program. I think there was only one student in one particular school who the member opposite is probably aware of. It was decided not to do it unless they did grades 10, 11 and 12 altogether to get an adequate number of students to have some interaction at the same time. It has been introduced as part of the social studies curriculum for grade 10 in all schools in the territory.

Mr. Tredger: Madam Chair, a few years ago the Department of Education — this was quite a few years ago — shifted responsibility for janitorial services from the school administration to Property Management, a division of Highways and Public Works. I have been hearing an increasing number of concerns from administrators that the janitors, who used to belong to the schools — and I say that in a good sense because they were other adults in the community and in the school. They formed relationships with the kids.

I can remember that Mike, the janitor at my school, would arrive early with me and we would walk around the school every morning and do a safety check, and he was able to do a number of things and it was under the purview of the administrator. This is no longer the case. I hear that janitors are being moved from one school to the others and they don't — what that means is they don't belong to the school, so they don't get the satisfaction from doing a good job at that school and from being part of the school community. That's a real concern.

When I was at École Émilie Tremblay, the janitor didn't speak French. That startled me because it just didn't seem to make sense. That's just an example of how that isn't working and I'm wondering is the minister aware of that? What steps have been taken to try — I'm not sure we want to return to the old system — to get the janitors so that they belong in the school? The second part is that I heard — and I need

confirmation — that a number of schools don't get janitorial services until the afternoon. As a former principal, that sounds like a mess to me, because often students will be sick and they will appear in the office. So you have a building with 150 young students, more or less, and if there are no janitorial services, that doesn't work. You end up with your administrator or teachers who are supposed to be doing something else cleaning up in bathrooms or cleaning in the hallways or cleaning in the office, which happens. I'm wondering if the minister is aware of that situation and if he can tell us whether or not he is looking at full-time janitorial services for buildings through the day, which is when people are there. I look at the number of people who work in this building and there are janitorial services from the morning until the night and it should be no different for our children in our schools.

Hon. Mr. Graham: We've just been discussing here between the three of us and we want the member opposite to come and sit on our negotiating team with the Department of Highways and Public Works, because we agree with him 100 percent. We believe that this service has declined in the schools somewhat — not the actual service in the schools, but the associated things, like opening the school in the morning for students who come early, like cleaning up in the evenings after community residents have utilized the school and like the scheduling of custodians. We agree with him.

We are currently in discussions with Property Management Division and as soon as that darn Minister of Highways and Public Works sees it our way, we will begin setting up the program and transferring that system back to Education.

Mr. Tredger: When I visited — I will just go back to the Aurora school for a minute. When I visited this school, some of the rural schools' concerns were raised by the communities that we visited that teacher-led classes were being cancelled in favour of the Aurora school. There were concerns that students who require more time and more one-on-one are getting left behind.

On the Aurora school, are there attendance statistics for rural Aurora classes? Have students been asked in the rural communities how well it's working? I guess a final question for the minister: Is the Aurora school replacing teacher-led classes in rural schools? Do you have stats on the number of students who are receiving Aurora instruction in the schools?

Hon. Mr. Graham: We have no intentions of replacing teachers in the school system with virtual schools. It's part of our blended learning program and that blended learning means that teachers in the school are such a vital part of the learning process, they will be included in the instruction, even when that instruction is online.

Madam Chair, I don't have any statistics with me right now about the numbers of rural students taking courses through Aurora, but we'll have those numbers for him as quickly as possible.

The least cost annually for the ILC and AVS combined is \$211,000, and that budget does reside with Highways and Public Works because they do leases on our behalf. It's

probably up a little bit because this space is actually larger than the previous space, but I can't confirm that right now. It is with Highways and Public Works and it did cost us \$211,000 a year.

Mr. Tredger: Has the minister heard those concerns from the communities about attendance at Aurora classes?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Yes, Madam Chair, I heard from one community in particular. As part of that, it was a written exchange with that school council member and a school council. We will be establishing a rural advisory committee that will have people on it from school councils all around the territory, and that advisory committee will be working with the department to enable us to deal with concerns, such as those raised by the Watson Lake high school recently. We've heard what they had to say; we didn't have anything within the department process that could deal with rural concerns at the present time, so we felt that their request to establish a rural advisory committee was a good one and we're in the process of setting that up at the present time.

Mr. Tredger: Are there steps being taken or has any time been assigned to staff to make sure that these students enrolled now in the Aurora program don't get left behind? There are concerns about it, and while we can take a long-term view around that, has the minister considered assigning extra staff time to ensure that the students who are struggling — correspondence or virtual classes have some definite advantages, but they have some definite disadvantages.

I know that I have struggled through a few university courses that were offered online and had a very difficult time finishing them. I guess my concern is for the kids who are new to the program.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, our projected enrolment this year, through Aurora Virtual School, is 74, but that is the total number. Those could be home-schooled students, rural students or students in Whitehorse. The cross-enrolled students are not in that number, so that number will increase somewhat when those numbers are added, but I thought I would give you that just up-front.

I know what the member opposite is talking about when he talks about doing courses. We used to call them correspondence courses. In fact, the reason that I'm here today instead of being an accountant somewhere is that I couldn't do accounting courses by correspondence. I couldn't do it. My wife, by the other token, can sit and do online courses all day. So I envy people who can do that. I didn't have the ability. We will get some statistics on the AVS students. We also have 165 students registered through the ILC and that is substantially more than last year. It's a substantial increase over last year and I know, as I said anecdotally, that the students are enjoying it. They are learning and they consider it — like I said — as a second home almost, and some of them seem to just be so happy to be attending school that it's amazing to me.

Mr. Tredger: I believe these are last year's numbers, but I think three teachers at the ILC — with that number, are we considering adding more staff? That is quite a number of students.

The thing about online courses or virtual courses — they are easy to sign up for but they're hard to finish. It may take a bit of coaching and guidance from staff. Is there extra staff there?

That just reminds me — the ILC has a very difficult-to-reach clientele. I have often wondered whether that would be a good place to have some social counselling. Is the minister considering — I know I have asked about it in the past — putting a counsellor into the ILC, where they could work and help the students who are hard-to-reach clientele. They are there. The sooner we can reach them, the more cost-effective it is.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, I will just go back to the Aurora Virtual School students. It is a difficult number to really get a handle on because there are a number of students who are also taking courses through BC. They are taking courses online through BC. We will get some additional numbers as we progress through the budget.

With the ILC, we have added one PY — person-year — this year, so we now have four teachers at the ILC. We also have a First Nation advisor who is there. We have also had a recent request that we are considering — to have a native elder-in-residence program at the ILC. We are looking at it and seeing if we can fund that position as well, because many of the students who attend the ILC are First Nation students. We are leaning toward it, but we have to find the money within the budget.

Mr. Tredger: Madam Chair, I am jumping around a little bit and I apologize for not staying in one department. I have heard from a number of schools and a number of teachers that there seems to be more workplace absences due to stress. I am wondering if the minister has data on the number of sick days taken and whether he has noticed any trends? Is there an increasing number of leaves due to stress or mental illness?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, we do have stats for persons on sick leave or absent from the job, but we cannot break it down for you because the privacy concerns would be that we would have to ask each individual why they are absent from the office or from the school on that day. We simply do not compile stats on that basis. What we can give you is if the rate of absenteeism in the school system is higher or lower. We will see if we can get that together. I am not 100-percent sure that we can, but if we can, we will provide that information as well.

Mr. Tredger: Madam Chair, I guess I would be looking for trends. I am not sure what you can read from just absence data — but if there are trends, then what measures can we take to go with it.

I know a number of schools in the past have identified air-quality issues, and the minister mentioned some of the schools that have received heating and ventilation upgrades over the past while. Are there any schools now that are continuing to raise concerns about air quality? Is there a process for staff or parents to alert the department when they have concerns, be it headaches or watery eyes, or when concerns are raised?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Once again, the information that we have at the present time is that only one school has indicated they had concerns with air quality. We're working with Highways and Public Works right now to see if, in fact, there is a problem at the school and, if there is, what we can do to fix the problem.

As part of the health and public safety committees at the school, we work very diligently with school personnel to make sure that any concerns with health or safety are reported immediately to the department. Those things are taken very seriously and we take the opportunity at all times to work as quickly as we can.

I would just bring up the fact that there was recently a fuel spill in the member's community and, as soon as we heard about it, we notified HPW and they had people on the ground working. In the Destruction Bay school, there was fear over fumes permeating the school at one time there, so we moved all the students out to Burwash while we did the repairs in the school and made sure it was clean and safe for their return.

We take it very seriously and we act on them as quickly as we possibly can.

Mr. Tredger: This is an issue I raised in Question Period, but I do need to come back to it. The \$100 that every parent gets to alleviate their supplies — and I realize that the minister has clarified that it's going to school councils. But that impression is still out there from the budget speech — that parents are going to get \$100 in September.

In talking to school councils, they have said that they were unaware that they would be responsible for dispersing the \$100-per-student school supply grants. We're talking about substantial amount of monies to a volunteer council. Some schools will receive \$45,000 to \$70,000 — if there are 450 kids and they each get \$100, that's \$45,000 — to spend.

School councils, I believe, used to have a \$1,000 spending limit without the minister's consent. The school council elections, as we know, are right now, which means there will be a changeover in school councils in September. Which school council will be responsible for distributing the money? The first school council or the second school council, or will they do it collaboratively?

These are the questions that I'm hearing from school councils. How do you plan to oversee the spending of those large sums of money at 27 different institutions by volunteer boards? They are volunteers and they have limited resources. How is the minister going to counter the impression that is out there that parents are going to get \$100 to take down to the local store and spend on their books — or is it going to be up to the school councils to handle that?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I thought it was fairly clear in the Finance minister's Budget Address when he said where the money will be going — that it will be going to the schools. There has been no doubt in my mind, as I answered the member opposite when he asked the question. I have been on radio and mentioned the same thing on CBC the other morning. More importantly this was a topic of discussion at the annual association of community — AYSCBC — the

Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees and there was absolutely no doubt then that they would be involved in the disbursement of this money. More importantly, they're involved with the department in setting the parameters over how this money will be spent because we believe that it's important that they let us know what they consider priorities as well.

I have been approached by parents even at the hockey rink where they have said that they think it's a wonderful idea — not so much the money, I think one person said, but the hassle of going with their three kids and picking out three different sets of school equipment for their children. They thought that this would probably be the biggest benefit of all. I was approached on Tuesday night by a single parent who said, "Is this program retroactive because I had three kids last year who I could have used this money for?"

Anyway, we're getting out the word as quickly as we possibly can. We're also working with school councils. There will be memos going home with children and we will continue our public campaign to ensure that everybody understands that parents don't have to go out and buy school supplies this year.

My ADM of Finance has also made it very clear that we expect this money to be well spent and it will be accounted for in the normal run of things. At the end of this process, we'll be able to evaluate the program and determine if this is something that should be carried through year after year, and we'll also be able to evaluate and see if \$100 per student is too much or too little.

It's really important too that people understand why school councils made this recommendation and why we accepted it. It was very interesting to me to hear one parent say, "Well, I'm glad that everybody's getting it because if a needs assessment was done and only certain kids got it, you can see the child accepting a care basket from the school and that child would be stigmatized by the rest of the school because they had to get something that they couldn't afford." So they felt that it was really important that it be universal and that everyone receive the benefit.

I already said that it won't be necessary — or we don't see it as essential — that school councils spend all of this money immediately. This money is available for the full year process. Those schools that are on a semester basis may wish to hold some back and spend it during the second semester. Once we get those parameters set in cooperation with our partners, we will be more adequately prepared to proceed with the program, but I think it's a wonderful program. It's going to be really well-accepted by school councils around the territory and I look forward to an evaluation of the program when it's finished.

Chair: Is it the wish of members to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

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

We are continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education.

Mr. Tredger: I would like to thank the minister for putting that money in the hands of the school councils. I have no problem with school councils receiving money. They are closest to the students and the classroom situations, and they are in a good place to ensure that the money is well spent. It was a good move. My concern is with the way it was announced and the management of it, but I believe it has the potential to be a very good program and to reach the very people it was intended to reach, so thank you for that.

I do have one question. Will this money be spent locally? Will there be directives given to the councils to spend the money within the territory? I'm sure what the answer will be to that, so I will go on to my next question.

The department had invested in self-regulation over the past number of years to help children cope, handle stress and take control of their lives — calm, alert and learning. It was beneficial for all the students, but was particularly effective for students with autism. This required the training of staff at the department and school-based staff, as well as considerable school time to involve students.

By all reports, it was very successful. However, I was concerned to hear that some schools believe that it is optional and they're moving to other programs.

My question for the minister is: How is the program being supported? What schools are benefiting from it? Can the minister give us an update on the program?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, the self-regulation is a huge part of the early intervention program that I mentioned earlier that we will be working into four schools. For students with social, emotional or behavioural issues, we believe self-regulation is key to these students reaching their personal academic goals. The department is working with the Canadian Self-Regulation Initiative. The budget this school year is \$36,000, and it is being funded from within the department. Eight schools were engaged in the first and second wave of the initiative: Takhini Elementary School, Ghùch Tlà, Teslin School, Hidden Valley School, Ross River School, Johnson Elementary School, Robert Service School and École Whitehorse Elementary School.

As part of the new collective agreement with the YTA, the Department of Education will be working with the YTA through the Positive Behaviour Intervention Support and Classroom Diversity Committee — that is the PBIS that I talked about earlier. Self-regulation is part of the PBIS, but the PBIS system, the positive behaviour intervention supports, will be introduced throughout the territory. Because it is part of the collective agreement, there will be no alternatives. Every school will be involved with PBIS. That is the only way we are going to be able to compile the data that is required. It is the only way that we will live up to our agreement with the YTA. Yes, PBIS, of which self-regulation is a major part, will be introduced to all schools throughout the territory.

It is interesting to me to note that Dr. Stuart Shanker and Mike McKay presented a keynote address to all Department of Education staff on self-regulation practices in schools, and it was really well-received. He also provided in-depth support in February of last year in the area of anxiety and self-regulation to schools involved in the initiative. I think he also provided some information to school counsellors at the same time. We are moving ahead with PBIS, of which self-regulation is a major part.

I have just been informed by my deputy that we now have an internal trainer in the Department of Education, so we are definitely moving ahead as quickly as we can.

Mr. Tredger: Madam, Chair, I thank the minister for his answer and the department for their work on that initiative. I know a number of teachers and parents who, having seen its effectiveness, are looking forward to working with it.

Wilson Reading training involves training teachers and staff at considerable department expense, yet it seems that despite the successes, the department has not adequately funded it and is instead letting it dwindle to the point where it's no longer offered in many of our schools.

Will the minister agree to restore adequate funding to the Wilson reading program to ensure that there is a trainer available and that schools are made aware of this opportunity and given the resources and time to implement Wilson programming?

Hon. Mr. Graham: The Wilson Reading System is only one of the systems that are available in the department at the present time. As everyone knows, we're working to improve literacy rates. That is one of the reasons we started the new intervention system in four pilot schools — because a significant number of children do not demonstrate reading skills or reading success at an early age. It's a complex task, and no single solution seems to work for all students. Our primary reading support system has been Reading Recovery and early literacy intervention as a central aspect to a balanced literacy instructional approach. However, we also realize that Reading Recovery is not the only system that truly works.

In 2014-15, 156 students received Reading Recovery; 26 students will continue their lessons in 2015. Of the 130 children completing lessons in 2014-15, 62 percent made accelerated progress, according to the program parameters; 14 were recommended substantial progress and will be able to benefit from classroom instruction with some extra attention — and it goes down from there.

\$115,000 is allocated for Reading Recovery. Six teachers will be trained to address the needs of students. However, as I said, we also realize that the Wilson Reading System is a good system. The Wilson intervention program suggests that it is effective for addressing the individual needs of some students with clearly identified learning challenges. Therefore, the program, which is typically provided by a trained learning assistance teacher or educational assistant, will continue. The department will be providing training as it expands the number of interventions available to support vulnerable readers with the Wilson system. We realize that the two systems serve different populations, and we will be

reintroducing the Wilson Reading System, providing some training, and will expand the number of interventions available.

Mr. Tredger: Yes, Wilson Reading can be in conjunction with Reading Recovery and, at one point when we were looking at it, the later one goes in terms of teaching reading, the more expensive it becomes because you're reaching children who haven't been reached at an earlier age, so your early childhood intervention is probably the best bang — reaches the most students — for the dollar. Reading Recovery is an excellent and very well-researched program and has served a fabulous — we're very, very fortunate in the Yukon to have Reading Recovery the way it is.

A side benefit to that is teachers who go through the Reading Recovery program and teach Reading Recovery sometimes go back into the classroom and they have a significant training in literacy that helps all of the their students, but Wilson Reading and the Foundations part of it does serve another need. It is expensive, but it's reaching children who are harder to reach and who weren't caught in the first few waves of interventions. But it's critical, because if we don't catch them there, we end up with students in high school — or out of high school which is even worse — who are struggling with their reading.

I thank the department and the minister for keeping Wilson Reading and for putting money into a trainer because it's one of those things that, unless we keep at it, like Reading Recovery — if we don't keep training new people, very shortly we won't have the numbers to keep a program going.

I have a question on Yukon College. The Minister of Education spoke about his government's direction to Yukon College to transition to a university. He noted that this won't be a quick process. The minister said the work has been done on an economic impact study and a business case for the university. Will the minister provide the Legislature or the opposition with any studies that have been completed related to university development — a program and service review; a university transition budget; an economic impact study; and a business case for the university?

I guess a concern that I have heard is, "How will we get the numbers?" When we looked at the YNTEP program, it was initially full and now they went through a period where they struggled to maintain the numbers. I believe it's the same in other courses. There's a pent up demand for a course or a program and, once that demand is through, it's hard to keep the numbers up when we have such a small population. I'm wondering, if we're hiring professors for a particular program and tenuring them, what happens when the demand switches from, say, education to health and social services or to nursing or to any other of the fields? The same applies in the science fields as well, I would assume.

I guess I'm looking for any completed reports as well as a comment on the numbers and if any studies have been done on whether or not the population of Yukon is enough to sustain courses over time.

Hon. Mr. Graham: I just want to make one point first, though, that the government didn't give direction to the

college that they shall become a university. This was a choice made by the Yukon College Board of Governors. The college was the impetus behind this move. The Premier and I actually attended a meeting at the college before the last election and at that time made a commitment that we would work with them to establish a university over the term of our office.

We have been doing that, Madam Chair, but, as I've said numerous times in this House, this is not a fast process. I think the college felt that they would be much further along in the process than we are right now, and part of that evidence, I think, is that, beginning in 2017, the college had already planned to offer a made-in-Yukon three-year bachelor of policy studies in indigenous governance and a one-year post-graduate certificate in climate change public policy and public policy.

I'm not sure — in fact, I don't believe that we will be finished all the processes — including quality assurance and the rest of the process that needs to be done — before a university can be in place, so I believe, in just my talks with the college lately, that they will probably partner with another university to offer, in 2017, the bachelor of policy studies in indigenous governance.

I do have a draft report. It's not the cost-benefit analysis, but it is a report on the need for a university in the north. I'm not sure if this is a draft report or a final report that I received from the college, but I will check. I'm meeting with the college next week and, if this is something that they don't mind making public, I would be only too happy to make it public.

The college has been working since 2010-11 — they have been exploring the development of a post-secondary model. I know they've travelled extensively in the north in an attempt to target, to see what would best suit the needs of Yukoners and the north. As I've said before, there are six phases to become a university in the north. The first of that is that they have to complete a report that outlines options and what would be required to expand degree partnerships in the territory — that has been done.

We have asked for an economic impact study and a business case to be provided to the government. We've committed, once those are received and they show a positive outcome, that we will develop legislation, but the other thing that is exceedingly important is the quality assurance part. We have discussed with Saskatchewan — beginning with Alberta, because we have very close ties to Alberta — so we discussed the possibility of the Alberta quality assurance for universities acting on our behalf as well. We found that this would require a change in legislation, and therefore it would have taken quite a bit of time. With the change in government in Alberta, they have indicated to us that they are still interested and they are looking at possibilities, but we have also gone to Saskatchewan to look at an interim process that would evolve over time and we would enact the appropriate legislation to have an independent body, namely the Saskatchewan body, oversee the quality assurance process for Yukon College.

We haven't set which province we're going to work with yet. We're kind of exploring our options there, but we think

that is probably one of the most important parameters to be met before this government introduces legislation to turn them into a university.

The college is working — and has been, I know, for a number of years — on their own internal quality assurance, but as far back as when I was registrar at the college, we had an academic council that was independent and would evaluate courses. Then, once we evaluated courses, we would evaluate certificates and diploma programs themselves. So the college is fairly advanced in quality assurance for courses for certificates and diplomas. It won't take them much time to work up to being a degree-granting institution, but it's the external evaluation that is so important because, unless our degrees are accepted by universities across this country and internationally, there is no point in establishing a university here at all.

I know our courses are very, very well accepted. During my time as registrar, I was a member of the BC admissions and transfer association. We then became a member of the Alberta admissions and transfer association, and all of the courses offered in our arts and sciences program were accepted by universities across this country — as far away as Western University, McGill and universities in the Atlantic provinces. Individual courses had been accepted on equivalent values in all of those places. We were very proud at the time of courses being offered at the college, and I think that will continue on. It is essential that our degrees are acceptable before we establish this university.

Mr. Tredger: I have one last set of questions for the minister and then I'll turn it over to my colleague for Klondike. I'm sorry to jump back to public schools from Yukon College, but there is an emphasis on more experiential courses and students being out of the school more. A couple of years ago the department developed a field-trip format. What I've noticed about the format is that people who use it all the time — specialists — don't seem to have a lot of trouble with it because they sort of know it and are familiar with it. For a new teacher, or for somebody who doesn't go on field trips regularly, it can be rather daunting. It's a problem mainly because they're not familiar with it.

The problem is that teachers then become reluctant to go on short trips or go out of the class, and trips become a big event rather than integrated into the regular classroom routines. I know the department has purchased new vans for many of the schools, and that is a welcome aspect but I'm wondering: Do we have any stats? Do we have any feedback from teachers on how the new field-trip format is working, whether or not there's a reluctance to go on trips because of it, and stats on the new vans, the use we're getting out of them? Are they used five percent of the time, 20 percent of the time? Are they out on a daily basis? I assume it varies from school to school, but does the minister have stats on that? Has he noticed any trends on either the field-trip forms or the vans?

I thank the minister and his staff for their attention today and appreciate the exchanges that we've had.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Because the safety of our students and staff is always an important issue and it's always at the

top of our list, that's one of the reasons the form was designed in the first place. We're continuing to refine that form because we have heard some discussion with respect to the usefulness of it, so we'll continue to refine the form. We think it's absolutely necessary that we protect, first of all, student safety.

As far as both staff here are aware of today, there has been no decline in field trips. In fact, if anything, there has been an increase, especially among the various experiential programs that are being offered throughout the territory. We make a commitment to continue to refine that form and try to make it simple, without deleting any of its usefulness.

We don't have stats on the usage of the vehicles — the new vans — but, just anecdotally, the department seems to have all of the vans out all of the time, so they must be getting used. We have sign-out sheets, and I guess, if we went through each of them on a manual basis, we would be able to compile something, but I don't think that's something that we want to get into right now. We know they're being well-used, and there has been no decline in the number of field trips.

Mr. Tredger: Does that apply to the schools as well? I know that central signs them out — but rural schools?

Hon. Mr. Graham: There doesn't appear to be any reduction in use in any of the schools that we're aware of at this time.

Mr. Silver: Madam Chair, I would like to thank the department officials for their time here today. I would also like to thank the Department of Education for Bill Bennett. That man filled some big shoes as the superintendent for the district that includes Dawson and Robert Service School. Greg Storey is another fantastic part of the educational team. He has done it very well, by all accounts. It is a wonderful time to be involved in education in Dawson with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in drawing on 17.7 as well. It is nice to have great partners like Bill.

I would like to start with questions on the new vision. This year's budget has outlined \$190,000 to be spent on four key areas under the new vision program, and those areas are mental health, career counselling, flexible pathways for secondary students, and early learning. I will start with asking questions on that. How will the money be divided among those four priority areas? Will any of that \$190,000 go to anything outside of those four key areas?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, those are the four key areas that we are working on at the present time. The funding will go toward building capacity in the schools to some extent. We also have the ability to reallocate funding within the budget itself. Even though we have earmarked that money as new funding specifically for this project, we have the ability to work within the school's budget, especially when it comes time for staff training and working with building capacity in the school system. Those are the things that we are working on for the short term.

Mr. Silver: I am to assume that the specific number isn't necessarily divided equally among those four and that they could go to other areas outside of those windows. I am getting a nod from across the way here so I will move on.

A steering committee made up of educational partners and stakeholders, we were told, will be looking across Canada at changes and innovations to curriculum. Quebec was mentioned — Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia, which are Canadian leaders in curriculum. Have recommendations by the steering committee been made from these jurisdictions? What changes will be made in terms of partnerships with these particular stakeholders?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I guess maybe I did not clearly understand the question — but on the steering committee, we have laid out certain guiding principles. The guiding principles are: (1) to meet the diverse needs of all learners and foster development of the essential skills and competencies; (2) identify the strengths and needs of each learner without prejudgement or bias; (3) integrate northern perspectives and Yukon contexts at all levels; (4) embed Yukon First Nation culture and world views in the curriculum at all grades; (5) implement the education-relevant recommendations of the truth and reconciliation commission; (6) celebrate Canadian diversity and use culturally relevant approaches, engage students in learning by providing a wide-range of choices, value and support our educators, build the capacity of educators to work with learners and communities and be accountable.

When we looked internally at curriculums across the country, we decided the BC skills and competencies provided us the best bet on an ongoing basis for basic curriculum. As my deputy just reminded me, it will be the most flexible because the BC curriculum already has embedded within their curriculum, the new curriculum coming out — some First Nation values and contexts — and we need that. We just need a Yukon context instead of a BC context.

Those are the things that we will be working on with our partners and that's why we need all of the members of that steering committee. They're so important to us because we need them to integrate the northern perspectives to embed Yukon First Nation cultures. Those are the things that we look to our steering committee for, but we'll still be using a basic BC curriculum and competency with changes to make it more of a Yukon context.

What we don't need to do is work with a straight BC curriculum and have native cultures and contexts from BC taught in our Yukon schools, which just won't work for us. We need these Yukon-developed values and these Yukon-developed strengths and identities.

We will be putting our framework out. I just have a very preliminary draft framework and we will be putting it out for input for next week, so next week we'll provide you with the basic framework with all of these things like guiding principles. It will also outline the goals of each of the individual principles and the indicators to be monitored and actions coming in the short term and long term. Hopefully we will have that next week and we'll be able to discuss it again with our partners and we will be able to release that publicly.

Mr. Silver: Yes, the minister did understand the question right because he answered it exactly. It is based upon concerns that had I guess a year and a half ago, maybe where

we were hearing from the minister about K-to-12 made-in-Yukon curriculum changes and teachers were in stakeholder conversations with BC at that time because there were changes to the BC curriculum and it was a lot more flexible and allowed for that local content piece. When we heard of this new steering committee — that is where these questions are coming from. Then we hear namely that the stakeholders are working, not only with British Columbia, but also with Quebec, Ontario and Alberta as well as BC. We then wonder: Are we going to mimic a particular jurisdiction outside of BC — BC being the obvious choice because that's the curriculum that we have been using?

This is an important question: Have the Yukon-specific curriculum additions already been developed? I guess the answer is that we're going to have a draft on that next week, so I don't have to necessarily ask that question. If the minister wants to comment on that, we do want to know where in the process we are. Maybe the minister can give us a sneak peek or some kind of indication as to where we are, as far as when to expect implementation.

My last question on the new vision would be: Have apprenticeship programs been implemented into the high school curriculum?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I perhaps wasn't really clear about the new vision process. We'll have a draft of the new vision steering committee report to date. Hopefully it will be approved for release next week, but the changes to the curriculum will take place — those are the ones we were talking about that will take place over the next year or two, or possibly even longer, but we really don't think so.

We hope to have an implementation plan in June of this year of where we're going and what the next steps are. We already have action plans in all the various different areas that we're talking about, such as government responsibility and learning environments, so we already have developed a plan in those areas and that's the plan that we will hopefully release next week.

As far as apprenticeships, we do have in this budget \$50,000 of new money for applied skills and trades in schools. The \$50,000 will be in this budget for applied skills and trades.

Madam Chair, before I sit down, I would just like to take a moment to thank a member in the gallery here. Davina Harker rescued me when I was looking for some sustenance this afternoon and my money didn't work in the chocolate bar machine. Davina came up and lent me money for my sustenance, and I just wanted to thank her.

Mr. Silver: The teacher in me is going to have to ask Davina if she brought enough for the whole class, but I'll let that go. Maybe the minister ate all of our chocolate. Sorry, Hansard.

Madam Chair, I'm going to move on and thank the minister for answering the questions on the new vision. I'm going to be all over the place, kind of asking questions after the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, so I apologize in advance for that.

I'm going to move on to busing. I do understand that the new busing contract has been running and there have been fewer issues presented by parents and staff of the schools, but we were also told that the bid did not necessarily go to the top bidder. Can the minister confirm that? Can the minister confirm how the contract was actually awarded, because we were told that it didn't necessarily go to the top bidder?

Hon. Mr. Graham: The initial busing contract went to the low bidder initially. Takhini Transport was the low bidder. They received the initial contract from Yukon government for busing in the territory. When Takhini ran into some difficulties in a number of areas, they finally gave up the contract and we were forced to go to the second-lowest bidder, so the next-lowest bidder then moved in relatively quickly and took over the busing contract and proceeded with providing busing for us for the upcoming few years. We are only doing it for the length of the contract, so the only thing that happened was that the second bidder came in and picked up the contract. It is more expensive because we had to pay the contractor to bring new buses into the territory, which wasn't part of the original deal with them, so we paid them to bring their buses into the territory. I believe that, over the term, the busing contract will be about \$175,000 more for the next year's contract — roughly, in that order of magnitude.

Mr. Silver: I will move on to Aurora Virtual School programming. This was an interesting question that was asked in Dawson. We want to know how many students are partaking in the Aurora Virtual program. We did get an update from minister on the program itself, but also, it's an interesting question. Are we seeing that most of these numbers are registered students who were already outside of the school, or are we seeing an increase in students moving outside of the classroom and then in to the Aurora Virtual program?

Hon. Mr. Graham: We just had a short conversation here and we agree that it's a little bit of both. Some of the increase is in home-schoolers taking courses with Aurora, but in many of the schools, if a specific course that a student is interested in isn't available, they will take that course through Aurora Virtual School, so that has been an increase too. On a course-by-course basis, it's a little bit of both. We're attracting new students, but also students who are currently in the school system are taking one-offs in addition to the courses they're taking at the real school.

Mr. Silver: It's an interesting phenomenon. Talking to teachers and talking to parents who have their kids in home-schooling, a lot of time students are being taken out. There might be a conflict with a particular teacher or you have somebody who has now got time off from — like you say, a lot of teachers have their four years on and take one year off and can actually go home and teach. We're wondering if the schools are giving incentives to try to get students back to the classroom, or is that even something that's being contemplated by the school system? Are we trying to build Aurora as an alternative to education, or is this more of a circumstantial thing? I guess that is the question.

Hon. Mr. Graham: We're not promoting Aurora as something that we're holding up here as an alternative. What

we want to do is promote it in parallel with the school system. If you're taking a program of studies and you need a specific course, then that course would be available to you. I guess we're looking at it from an expense point of view. It's cheaper for us to have all the kids go to school because we're paying for it anyway.

We see this as more of a companion to the regular school program. It's to make more options available to students in the school system.

Mr. Silver: I don't have a theme on this. I've seen certain situations where there is after-school programming or physical education opportunities, and kids being home-schooled want to come into the classroom. They want to come in and visit the kids. I've seen situations where certain schools aren't as — and for good reason. I mean, they're not as likely to be open to that because the funding is going to the parents and they're using our facilities, so it is a catch-22. I just wanted to put that out there. I was just wondering if the minister saw this as a problem, I guess. It definitely is something that the schools are fighting with.

I will move on to the college here for a second, Madam Chair. The education assistant program at the Yukon College — the program funding for this particular program, the education assistant program at Yukon College, has been unchanged at \$50,000, yet the number of education assistants is up significantly. What is the government's plan to train these additional EAs?

Hon. Mr. Graham: We're currently evaluating the college's program and if it's meeting our needs, but we're also, in the department on a parallel course, developing competencies for these positions and determining whether or not the product being turned out by the college meets our needs.

This is probably where the question is coming from, but we have placed the college on notice that we may withdraw our funding from the college and utilize it in a manner we determine to be more effective. We haven't made that decision yet, but we have notified the college that there is the possibility.

Mr. Silver: Can the minister just elaborate a bit on the numbers? We do know that the numbers are up, but can he maybe expand a bit on what the numbers are and how much they've increased?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I probably said this in my response to the budget speech, but I'm not sure anybody was listening.

The overall allocation of paraprofessionals in the school system has increased from 182 in 2014-15 to 223 — and we are talking FTEs — in just one year. In the one year it has gone up by 41. In the year before that, in 2011-12, the number of professionals in the school system was 159. It has gone from 159 to 223 in three years. As I said the other day, it is an additional 60,000 hours of additional support for students.

Madam Chair, some of that is our pilot project in those four schools, and we have dedicated seven FTEs for those four schools for the early intervention project. I'm sorry, it's seven, because it is in four schools but there are seven kindergarten classes. Those seven EAs will move through the

school process with these classes. They are with the kindergarten class this year and they will move into grade 1 with that same group and then into grades 2 and 3 as well. The plan is to keep that same EA with those students as they move through the grades system. We will evaluate it at the end of that period of time and determine if this is something that we really should be doing throughout all schools. The possibility is that EAs could substantially increase at the end of that project if it works as well as we think it will.

Mr. Silver: I have seen lots of success with EAs following students up through the ranks — that is for sure.

I think I am about to ask a question that has been already asked. Unlike the Clerk, I may not have been paying attention at that time.

This is about the funding for the school supplies. There is lots of talk in the communities about the funding. I will ask the questions, and if the minister has already answered the questions, then I will definitely check Hansard for those answers. It is not a big deal.

The promised \$100 per school-aged child for school supplies will be allotted to the school councils, as we know, and the school boards. Are there regulations or limits for what this money can be spent on? I believe that was answered. Has there been a baseline of supplies set per child? How will the government keep councils or boards accountable for the money? Are we expecting any unused money to be coming back to the department?

Hon. Mr. Graham: As I probably said before, we are working out the parameters right now. The department will have, in the next few weeks, a list of required supplies for elementary schools, intermediate schools and high schools. Those are the things that we say will have to be included in whatever package goes to each individual student.

We then see a higher level — that these are optional items. As long as they go to every student, those optional items could be included in the package. Then we see a third tier, and these are things that — if the money was not all spent on the others, then we want to be able to have some other options that are available to school councils to spend that money on that would benefit the students and provide supplies to those students.

One of the reasons that the \$100-limit was set was because we had a variety of different opinions of how much money would be needed. We think that the \$100 will cover everything that a student needs on the bottom tier and probably even the optional items. We can see some school councils getting innovative and using the money for something else. They have the ability at the present time to keep surpluses and they can use that money for student support, but the department will be doing a real evaluation once this first year is over.

I think the other important thing that we've already determined with school councils is that the money doesn't all have to be spent in September. If they want to buy a basic set of school supplies for their students and not spend all their money, that's perfectly okay too as long as they have a plan to spend the rest of it during the school year. As I said, they have

the ability to keep surpluses as long as they use that money for student support.

Some school councils that have kept their regular funding for a number of years are now coming back and I know I have to sign the letter that says, yes, it's okay for you to use that funding for a special event. We have had just two, I believe, in the last few months. Some of the school councils that have been frugal over the years have come up with some really innovative ways to spend their money and that's fine with us.

We think school councils — as I've said before, they were the ones that asked for this in the first place. They didn't set a number, but they asked for this. We think that they'll do a really good job of using this money in the best interests of their school and of the students.

Mr. Silver: Thanks to the minister for that answer. I know the minister is working out the details now, which is great. It would be nice to know what those three tiers are, because I know the schools can spend it. I know that they can be very creative in determining what meets the first threshold, the second and the third. I watch as Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and other First Nations partner in education and share a lot as well. It is kind of an Athapaskan way — things like first hunt and first fish. It would be great to see that some of that money can go toward even shared initiatives in education as well. I'm looking forward to seeing how that money is going to get spent.

I just have one more question — well, a series of questions on the school revitalization plan. I would like to thank the officials for their time here today. It is much appreciated.

This year's budget includes \$100,000 for a school revitalization program. The Auditor General, in a report on schools, required a program like this years ago. There are eight schools that have passed their useful life and have been identified as needing an upgrade to ensure life safety in the event of seismic events. The question — we are interested in the \$100,000. What is that \$100,000 going toward? Also, where is the plan to replace or upgrade these schools and also, when do we expect this plan to be rolled out?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, the \$100,000 in 2016-17 will see us do a lifecycle costing exercise for both Christ the King Elementary and Selkirk Elementary School. The department and Highways and Public Works are working cooperatively on the school revitalization plan. I do have a preliminary draft copy of that school revitalization plan. In there, we talk about a huge number of options for virtually every school in the territory and what we would like to see happen 10, 20 — I think it went out to as far as 2030, so it goes out a long ways.

As I said, this is a preliminary draft. We have to make some choices and then we will have some kind of a revitalization plan that we can release. Some of the recommendations in this plan are significant. What we're trying to do, as I said before, is decide what we need to do with French immersion. French immersion elementary school has outgrown Whitehorse Elementary, so do we now, as we did last year, start French immersion not only in Selkirk, but

perhaps the Porter Creek elementary school, or somewhere else that has space? Or do we build a new school at Whitehorse Elementary and dedicate it strictly to French immersion?

We haven't made those decisions, but those are the kinds of things that are discussed. Christ the King Elementary School in downtown Whitehorse is currently being used for experiential programs as well as MAD. I still think of it as Christ the King Elementary School — it's now called the Wood Street school. It's being used for those — does that age me, or what? Those are the kinds of decisions we have to make, because Wood Street has significant seismic issues. We've addressed the urgent ones, but should we keep it or should we tear it down and put a school somewhere else, because that space is pretty small?

Those are the kinds of decisions. I know in Burwash, the First Nation there has asked for a school in their community, and we have several different alternatives. They've said they would like to partner with us and the possibility is they could even give us the land. So are we going to work — we are working with them, of course, but are we going to do that and, at the same time, build a community centre on one side of that school? I'm just talking now of the things that I remember from the draft report, but those are the alternatives we're looking at.

So over the next little while, some of those will be whittled down to smaller chunks. We'll have to talk it over with school councils before we release it publicly, but I'll have to talk with the Minister of HPW. If you want a confidential look at it, just to see where we are, I don't have a problem with that either. It's interesting reading, all right, and the number of options that are available to us — all expensive, by the way — are phenomenal.

Mr. Silver: Just a clarifier — but before the clarifier — the minister describes buildings like my father gives directions — “turn left where the church burned down 20 years ago.”

Just a clarification, the \$100,000 — the minister specifically mentioned Christ the King and Selkirk. Just to clarify, that money specifically is going just to those two schools for now. He is nodding yes, in approval. Thank you to the minister and thank you to his representatives from the department.

Chair: Does any other member wish to speak in general debate?

We're going to move on then to line-by-line debate.

On Education Support Services

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

On Administration

Hon. Mr. Graham: If I can just run through a quick synopsis of changes here. The \$374,000 is personnel allotment. This is the deputy minister's office and support functions. The salary and benefits are for two FTEs and the deputy minister, and the other allotment is \$27,000 to cover such things as communications costs, travel to national meetings, advertising and printing.

*Administration in the amount of \$374,000 agreed to
On Corporate Services*

Hon. Mr. Graham: This line provides for corporate support to the department and schools in the areas of human resources, records, finance, environmental, policy and planning, and evaluation and communications. The salary and benefits are for 32.2 FTEs and they are distributed throughout Human Resources, finance, records, policy department, health and safety, environmental stewardship, and communications. The other allotments — so that's \$3.309 million — are for personnel, and the other allotment is \$400,000 — \$120,000 for advertising, and that includes: Education Week as well as miscellaneous advertising; \$75,000 for the waste diversion program in the schools; \$60,000 for departmental supplies; \$60,000 for travel and communication costs; \$50,000 for corporate initiatives; and \$35,000 for staff training, printing and other miscellaneous items.

Mr. Tredger: Can the minister tell us how many PYs are allocated to communications?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Three.

Corporate Services in the amount of \$3,709,000 agreed to

On School Support Services

Mr. Tredger: Is this where superintendents would be paid from?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Tredger: I get a no. Thank you.

School Support Services in the amount of \$4,139,000 agreed to

Education Support Services Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$8,222,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

On Information and Technology Equipment and Systems

Information and Technology Equipment and Systems in the amount of \$39,000 agreed to

On Prior Years' Projects

Prior Years' Projects in the amount of nil cleared

Education Support Services Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$39,000 agreed to

Education Support Services Total Expenditures in the amount of \$8,261,000 agreed to

On Public Schools

Mr. Tredger: One of the things is that a deputy minister travelled to every school this year, and that is commendable. However, for a long time, we were hoping that superintendents would be able to spend more time in the schools and serve as a window from the schools into the department and from the department into the schools.

I know there has been some talk about reasserting some of their prominence both in the school communities as well as in the department and giving them a bit more authority to act on what they see in the schools. This is sort of two-pronged for the minister.

Has there been any consideration to changing the role of a superintendent or to increasing the number of superintendents so that they do have the time to get to the schools on a regular basis so they are aware of what's going on into the schools and so they can be advocates for the schools as well as

increasing their authority within the department so that when they do have information or things in the school — projects that they think are acceptable — they then have the authority to bring them forward? I guess that is one of the things that the administrators were asking for and continue to ask for.

I know how hard it is, once you're in a department or in a position, to get away from your desk. That's why the deputy minister's role is so commendable — because I'm sure she left things undone. I shouldn't say it like that — I'm sure there were things she would rather not have been doing. A slip of the tongue there — I'm sure everything got done while on the road.

I think the minister understands what I'm trying to say. Has there been an attempt to reassign superintendent time and give them a little more authority?

Hon. Mr. Graham: What has happened in the department is that we have added one superintendent — a rural superintendent — so that we now have a smaller, slightly reduced, number of schools for each superintendent, but also we have a really client-focused attitude in the department. So not only do we expect the superintendents to get out to the schools, but when we talk about Student Support Services and other separate sections within our department, we expect those people to be in the schools as much as humanly possible.

It's actually working. I think we have seen more of our department staff in schools around the territory in the last six months than we have for a long time. I think that's partially due to the change in leadership. The deputy minister agrees that service to the schools is the single most important thing that we can do as a department.

Just to give an idea, every Monday morning, I meet with senior management staff at the Department of Education. I think there are eight or nine of us there. The assistant deputy minister who is in charge of superintendents is there, and he communicates very clearly on a weekly basis what the concerns in each school are and what the concerns of the superintendents in those schools are. So I hear it in addition to the rest of senior management every Monday morning. I think it's a really valuable experience for me and it's valuable for the other people who are working in the building to hear what's going on in the communities as well.

My opinion is, anyway, that we have a very solid senior staff in the Department of Education. We have a common goal, which is that it's all about the kids, and you don't accomplish that sitting in your office in the department. You have to get out there where the kids are, and that's the schools.

Ms. White: The Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon — the francophone school board — hosted a meeting recently, explaining their position and what they hope for. Can the minister tell us more about the ongoing process with the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon and kind of what this budget amount is for and what his thoughts and aspirations are for the francophone school?

Hon. Mr. Graham: One of the first things we did after the recent court decisions were handed down is negotiate with the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon a budget. We set into play a formula that meets the outline — or meets the

needs — to address the issues raised during the court case, including the annual operation and maintenance costs of a school board. It takes into account the specific needs from section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. We believe there is a top-up for cultural inclusion, so we negotiated that agreement.

I think the funding formula has worked well for the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon. The funding formula is a hybrid model. Certain expenses are retained under the responsibility of the department. The teachers remain members of the YTA and employees of the department. I don't know what else I can say about that. There is a francophone funding component. There is funding from Canadian Heritage and it is all based on the action plan that was given to us by CSFY.

There were a number of other issues that were brought up during the whole court case, and the committee that we established is working very hard to examine the other areas: construction of a French first language school has been in the news lately and we are working on that; the clarification of admission policies and responsibilities of non-rights holders, and we are working on that as well at the present time; and the clarification of policies and procedures for French first language distance education. The reason we are working on that is because there was a court case in place and, with the cooperation of all members of this Legislature, we passed that legislation last year that ensured that there was no doubt that the French school board is in charge of French distance education.

Some of the things have been resolved. We also have a number of other areas that probably aren't as high a priority, but that we're working on as well, and that's management of staff, an education policy framework, and the forecast of growth of École Émilie Tremblay. As probably everyone is aware, we're moving another portable in there in the interim until a French first language high school is built, so we need to expand slightly. The other issue that came to us was the French school board's participation in collective bargaining and how that can be worked out. We also talk about the management of the building and the property, including, as we discussed earlier, things like custodians.

Those are all issues we're working on at the present time. I have to tell you that my staff believe that negotiations are going very well. We expect to see an agreement in place fairly quickly, as far as non-rights holders' admission to the schools and a number of other areas. Hopefully those things will all be settled in the near future.

Ms. White: I'm going to leave this question on the paper right now. What I really wanted to know was partially how the planning for the new francophone high school was going and what kind of timelines we talk to and, most importantly, their relationship with the City of Whitehorse, because that had been flagged as a concern. As for the location, what kind of consultation is going on there?

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

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

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Cathers that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:24 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 259

1st Session

33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, April 25, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER — Hon. David Laxton, MLA, Porter Creek Centre

DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Darrell Pasloski	Mountainview	Premier Minister responsible for Finance; Executive Council Office
Hon. Elaine Taylor	Whitehorse West	Deputy Premier Minister responsible for Tourism and Culture; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Justice; Yukon Development Corporation/ Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Doug Graham	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Education
Hon. Scott Kent	Riverdale North	Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources; Highways and Public Works
Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Community Services; Public Service Commission
Hon. Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Minister responsible for Environment
Hon. Mike Nixon	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin	Minister responsible for Economic Development; Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Party

Darius Elias	Government House Leader Vuntut Gwitchin
Hon. David Laxton	Porter Creek Centre
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Jan Stick	Official Opposition House Leader Riverdale South
Kevin Barr	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes
Lois Moorcroft	Copperbelt South
Jim Tredger	Mayo-Tatchun
Kate White	Takhini-Kopper King

Liberal Party

Sandy Silver	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Doris McLean
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, April 25, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed with the Order Paper. Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Earth Day

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I rise today to pay tribute to what is an important annual event, Earth Day, which was last Friday, April 22. The theme of this year's Earth Day was "Trees for the Earth". Thankfully, there is no shortage of trees here in the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, I am continually learning more about the environment. The other day, I was reading on our Environment website on Earth Day that the Yukon is known to be home to 1,242 species of plants from 84 families. The number jumps to 1,348 when we include subspecies and varieties. That's a lot, Mr. Speaker.

Earth Day is more than a single day where we worry about our environmental actions. It's an opportunity for us to reflect on our own habits and consider the positive changes we can make over the long term as individuals and as a government. Of course the north is uniquely vulnerable to human-caused environmental impact — most notably, perhaps, by the impacts caused by climate change. In the Yukon, Mr. Speaker, we are already experiencing significant impacts on infrastructure, of traditional ways of living and ecological systems.

The Yukon government's *Climate Change Action Plan* commits to several goals to mitigate these adverse effects, including enhancing knowledge and understanding of climate change, improving our ability to adapt to climate change, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and leading Yukon action in response to climate change. Our government released an updated climate change action plan progress report in 2015. It gives me great pride to say that we are making real progress on implementing the climate change action plan, as reflected in the report.

I would like to recognize those who have helped the Yukon make great strides toward these goals. We are fortunate today to have Kirsten Burrows and Stephen Roddick join us in the gallery today. Ms. Burrows and Mr. Roddick are Department of Environment staff who work with our Climate Change Secretariat. As we know, Mr. Speaker, there is a lot going on on the federal scene when it comes to that. Their team works hard with other departments, with the Outside partners and with industry to coordinate Yukon government's response to climate change on a daily basis, and I want to thank them.

The Yukon government's Climate Change Secretariat does excellent work in coordinating this response, while also forming climate partnerships with various organizations and developing climate change policies and strategies. The Yukon government sends delegates each year to the UN Climate Change Conference. This past year the Yukon government, with the Council of Yukon First Nations' participation, at COP21 ensured that distinct Yukon values, circumstances, cultures and ideas were factored into the national and international decision on climate change.

Our government also sent a Yukon climate change youth ambassador to the COP21 in recognition of the importance of our youth involvement in climate change issues. When almost 150 countries gathered on Earth Day in New York last Friday to sign the Paris accord, Yukoners could be proud that they were part of the process that created this historic global climate agreement. This demonstrates our commitment to enhance the knowledge and skills in Yukon youth to effectively solve the problems of the future linked to the changing climate.

This government's commitment to a healthy environment goes beyond climate change; more broadly, our aim is to serve as a recognized leader and a trusted partner in environmental stewardship. Recently, the government has embarked on a number of initiatives to improve Yukon's environment now and for future generations. This year, we will be allocating \$3.9 million to clean up contaminated sites. We have also earmarked \$1.5 million to be invested in Yukon's water monitoring network in 2016-17 so that Yukoners can be confident that we will always have water for nature and people for generations to come.

Just recently, the Yukon government and the City of Whitehorse launched the rideshare program to offer greener commuting options for city residents. I should note that the launch of this initiative coincided with a jointly organized transportation showcase called "shift", which highlighted alternate methods of travel for Yukoners. I did see other members of this House at this event, and I would like to thank them for supporting this positive initiative, which will benefit our environment.

As an avid outdoorsman, Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to be the Minister of Environment. I have a great respect for environmental stewardship, and I appreciate the efforts of those dedicating their time to maintaining and advocating for a healthy, sustainable and prosperous Yukon now and into the future.

I encourage everybody — I was glad to see everybody out there celebrating Earth Day and I would just like members to please provide a warm welcome to Kirsten Burrows and Stephen Roddick who are in here today.

Applause

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the NDP Official Opposition to pay tribute to this past Earth Day.

Mr. Speaker, as time progresses it seems to me that we are moving further and further into an age of consumer culture. It's often hard to remove ourselves from the rush of

feeling that we need to “have” in order to be successful. We are constantly romanced by advertising that tells us bigger is better, more is better, shiny is best and whatever it is that we bought last year or last month, well, it’s no longer current and in order not to be left behind we should probably replace it. I’m not here to tell anyone how to spend their money or what to do with their energy, but I am here to offer a different perspective; one that was reintroduced to me at the Working Towards Zero Waste Conference this past March. This conference was a roller coaster ride of fascination, frustration and inspiration.

The way society looks at objects and possessions has changed so much since the advent of plastic that topics like waste diversion and extended producer responsibility are at the top of mind for the folks who have to deal with our collective garbage, because never before has humankind generated as much needless waste as we do now. Everything we purchase not only has a financial cost, but it also has an environmental cost. As consumers, how we choose to spend our hard-earned money has power and how we choose to use that power is up to us.

When we shop we can ask ourselves basic questions like: Does this product need to be wrapped in so much plastic? If it doesn’t, then by choosing to purchase the same item without that extra packaging we’re sending a message to the companies that produce it. We can also ask ourselves: Will the product we are about to purchase stand the test of time? If it won’t, by looking for something similar that is of better quality makes sense because we won’t need to replace it so soon, saving ourselves money in the long run and being a little more kind to the environment.

By changing our purchasing habits, our consumer dollars will ultimately change the way products are either manufactured or packaged by companies because, believe it or not, they are paying close attention to purchasing trends. Lawrence Alvarez was the final speaker of the event and he brought with him the concept of a sharing economy. Mr. Speaker, he wasn’t referring to companies like Uber or Airbnb; he was talking about an economy based not on money, but one based on the peer-to-peer base sharing of goods and services. Lawrence explained that, in a society that has so much, pooling our resources to share for the benefit of many just makes sense.

He introduced conference-goers to the Toronto Tool Library — a concept, he explained, that isn’t new as there are 40 tool libraries in North America and the first one opened in 1979. Tool libraries greatly reduce the cost of pruning and greening neighbourhoods, allowing the transformation of homes and community spaces into vibrant places that reflect a commitment to sustainability and environmental concern. At the Toronto Tool Library, anyone with a membership can sign out tools for both their home and community initiatives. The library offers a wide range of equipment for a low cost, a resource-sharing and space-saving alternative to purchasing and owning tools. A yearly membership is \$50. Imagine being able to borrow nearly any tool for one payment of \$50 a year. It’s an incredible concept.

I live in a neighbourhood that often shares resources, whether it’s lawn mowers or table saws, air compressors to meat thermometers. The small-scale, sharing economy in action is a beautiful thing. Many people in the territory believe and live by the concept that we need to make decisions and live with intent. We can choose to continue like nothing is wrong, or we can choose to acknowledge that we all have a role to play as stewards of our planet.

There are examples clear across the Yukon of people making intentional choices — from the Dawson City recycling centre that offers a range of bulk liquid soap for the community to purchase to the boutique-style free stores in Mayo or in the Mount Lorne transfer station and, right here today, would be the example set by the staff who have joined us from the Climate Change Secretariat. As consumers, we have power to influence the industries that serve us and with that power comes the responsibility that I know we can handle.

So Mr. Speaker, I know that deep down inside each of us is an eco-warrior, ready to make positive change for the planet and today, like each and every day, I salute them.

Mr. Silver: I also rise today on behalf of the Liberal caucus to pay tribute to Earth Day. Canada is celebrating its 25th Earth Day by promoting a Rooting 4 Trees campaign with the goal of planting 25,000 trees in the month of April.

Now, Earth Day was originally intended to be a one-time environmental awareness event, but we can all agree that it has gone long past that scope by now, with many campaign ideas like hour-of-no-power use or Rooting 4 Trees. There is a broad vision for Earth Day celebrators but with a common value to preserve our environment.

Mr. Speaker, one person can make a difference. By turning down the heat while at home or in the Legislative Assembly, biking to work once a week, eating less processed meat, not running the water while you are brushing your teeth, or whatever other contribution we may make to lessen our effect on the environment, it all adds up. Actions taken by Earth Day participants across the globe have a significant effect on the world around us.

The Yukon has an environment unlike many others — beautiful scenery, fresh air, clean water. We are very fortunate and must be sure not to take for granted what many countries do not possess. The conscious actions that we take to ensure a smaller footprint don’t have to be grand, but day to day. If we as individuals make small lifestyle changes to protect our environment, the changes will gradually become grand. The opposite is also true, Mr. Speaker. If individuals do not make the effort and choose to simply stand aside, the Earth as we know it will no longer exist.

Earth Day is an environmental movement that spans across the world with over one billion participants. This is a movement in the global village and we need to stand up and to commit to being part of that global village.

In recognition of National Immunization Awareness Week

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I rise on behalf of this House today to acknowledge April 23 to 30 as National Immunization Awareness Week.

Here in North America, we sometimes take immunization for granted, forgetting that not so long ago, childhood diseases and influenza killed thousands of people every year. The predominant influenza strains — unlike many childhood diseases — change from year to year. This is why it's important to get your flu shot every year; and yet during this last flu season, about 8,100 Yukoners got their flu shot, which was down about 1,500 from 2013-14.

In the world of childhood diseases, we have taken amazing strides in the reduction and eradication of some diseases, but there is still a lot left to do. We have the means to eradicate all of the vaccine-preventable diseases. In Canada, even though we see high rates of coverage in general, some diseases like measles and pertussis only need a small percentage of unimmunized people to gain a foothold and cause an outbreak.

We have seen measles and pertussis break out in different areas of the country over the last few years because of under-immunization. That's why the Yukon's chief medical officer of health emphasizes the importance of remaining vigilant and why he encourages parents to keep their children's immunizations up to date.

According to the 2013 Yukon childhood national immunization survey, 95 percent of Yukoners agree that childhood vaccines are important to a child's health and yet many Yukon children remain under-immunized. We all understand why. Life is busy and some details get lost in the shuffle of day-to-day living.

Maybe National Immunization Awareness Week is a good time to take a look at our records to see if our children have any outstanding immunizations and, while we're at it, we can check on our own immunization status. Is our tetanus immunization up to date? Have we had our pertussis booster in adulthood? You can call your local health centre and they'll certainly let you know.

I would like to acknowledge here that some parents have misgivings about immunizing their children. While I respect every parent's right to decide for himself or herself what is best for their child, I urge all parents to obtain the best scientifically vetted information before making their decision. The site www.yukonimmunization.ca is an excellent place to start this research, and you can check with your health care provider. They are an excellent resource when trying to decide what is best for your child.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the staff at the vaccine program and the staff at every one of Yukon's community health centres. Their tireless efforts on behalf of Yukoners certainly go a long way in keeping us healthy.

In recognition of Yukon Education Week

Hon. Mr. Graham: I rise in the House today to pay tribute to Yukon Education Week, which runs from April 25

to 29. During Education Week this year, we are celebrating the important contributions of our partners in education to the success of all Yukon learners, from early to adult learning with the theme of "A strong team builds bright futures". The theme celebrates the significant role our partners play in our education system. It includes First Nations, Yukon educators, parents, school councils and the French school board, Yukon College, education service providers, and the many others that are integral to the learning process or experience of all Yukoners. From early to adult learners, our partners play an important role, supporting the success of all of our learners and preparing them for life beyond the school.

This week is also a time for us to remember the many public benefits that our education system makes to society. It prepares informed and engaged youth who are ready for a career of their choice and ensures the ongoing development of knowledge for individuals of all ages that enriches our whole society. Public education plays an important role in the lives of all Yukoners, no matter what their age.

Our education system is made richer through the act of engagement and participation of our partners in education. As part of this year's theme, I would like to thank them for their important work. To our First Nation partners, Yukon First Nation governments, citizens and communities are essential partners in the success of First Nation students, and their work offers all Yukon students the opportunity to learn more about First Nation cultures and traditional knowledge.

The dedicated educators within our territory are probably the most important factor in student success in class. Teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, guidance counsellors and instructors are all integral to the development of our students. Throughout the school year, they are encouraging students to be at their best and ensuring that they know there are few limits to what they can all achieve. The parents, families and school councils, including the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees and the Catholic Education Association of Yukon, are all essential partners in the Yukon school community. Their engagement in and dedication to the school community builds the capacity for delivering a high-quality education for students in our territory.

Merci beaucoup to the French community and the Yukon francophone school board. Whether French first language or French second language, they play an important role in engaging students in the learning of the French language and promoting a bilingual Canada. The educators and staff at the future Yukon university provide essential knowledge and career-ready skills training for Yukon post-secondary students. As we progress toward the future Yukon university, we look forward to even greater contributions that they will make both to our economy and to the future careers of Yukon's post-secondary students.

The service providers we work with for Advanced Education — with their work, we are able to provide diverse learning pathways and training opportunities to post-secondary and adult learners as well as job seekers. To the many other individuals, groups and organizations that help

shape minds from young to old in our territory, thank you for the time and dedication you contribute to making our school system what it is today.

Throughout this week, the department is celebrating our partners and the many benefits of our education system with events hosted by schools and community organizations. The department will also be at the Lake Laberge Lion's Club Yukon Trade Show from April 29 to May 1 talking about the educational services and programs that are offered here in the territory. I encourage my fellow members here in the Legislature and the public to attend many of the events that will be taking place during the week and visit the department during the trade show to see the many ways the department is working toward enhancing the learning experience of all Yukon students. More information and a full calendar of events for Education Week are available on the Department of Education website.

Mr. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the NDP Official Opposition in this Yukon Education Week to pay tribute to education in the Yukon.

This year's theme, "A strong team builds bright futures", strikes to the core. We have much to celebrate and I would like to acknowledge some of the team — the many people in our territory who are involved in the education of our children. We are most fortunate to have a very skilled, dedicated and dynamic group of educators. In this special week, we extend our gratitude to professionals involved in a wide range of education, from early childhood and elementary, to high school teachers and to our college, education assistants, remedial tutors, Yukon Teachers' Association — the commitment, dedication and creativity of those serving Yukon children and their lifelong commitment to lifelong education and training have a lasting effect on the future of our children and on our grandchildren.

But, Mr. Speaker, these professionals don't stand alone. They and our children are supported by secretaries, custodians, office administrators, bus drivers, college instructors, public servants, early childhood educators; they are the first greeters and the pick-me-uppers and they are making a difference.

I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of non-governmental organizations such as Yukon Learn, Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, Yukon Literacy Coalition, the Child Development Centre and Skills Canada, as well as many contributions from the departments within Yukon government.

Many of our local businesses and industries play an integral part in our education — miners, professional engineers, scientists, tradespeople — all sharing their skills and knowledge while supporting our children.

The remarkable contributions of parents and volunteers who sit on school councils and boards and who assist teachers in public schools with extracurricular activity, who work with children and adults with special needs through various non-governmental organizations are recognized this week. We

extend our heartfelt thanks to those many volunteers, and we know that a strong team builds bright futures.

In the Yukon, we have many success stories and many instances to celebrate, but we also have too many students who are not succeeding in our schools — children living with disabilities, children who have been traumatized and at-risk children. As well, we have the challenge of meeting the needs of rural and First Nation children. How we react and meet the needs of all our children is critical for all our students and our society. It says a lot about our quality of life and the inclusiveness of our community.

Research has shown that community involvement does make a difference. We have seen success stories like Food for Learning, the Champagne and Aishihik cultural and language programming, the Tantalus and Watson Lake Moodle program combined with blended learning, the early literacy initiatives that the department has announced and is going forward with this year, the Individual Learning Centre, Wood Street, the experiential learning centres, Reading Recovery, Wilson Reading — all programs that contribute every day to the well-being and education of our children.

We know that research and experience tells us that the involvement of families and children in programming and extracurricular activities is critical. We know that involved parents and family lead to more engaged students. We must work together to find a way to ensure that all parents can contribute to their child's educational life and be valued for that contribution. To become a strong part of our educational team, all parents need to be involved.

Some parents have had less than satisfactory experiences within our school. Perhaps they have been attendants at residential schools. Previous experience has soured them. They have a reluctance to take a risk. It is incumbent on all of us to find a way to enable all parents a place in their child's education. Education should embrace that commitment. Like never before it takes a whole community to work together to wrap around and support children in all our communities.

There are no simple answers. Education and learning are about working together and about learning together; it's about taking risks and taking chances; it's about building relationships; and it's about being part of a team. We have an opportunity in the Yukon, so while we take this moment to celebrate and acknowledge our successes, continuing success will depend on all of us — you and me, Mr. Speaker, and each and every Yukoner — rolling up our sleeves, innovating, creating, caring and doing the work. Let us celebrate the relationships, the partnerships, the dedication of all those who have made education their passion and vocation. Let us work together to build a strong and inclusive team because we know a strong team builds bright futures.

So to those listening and to those in the Legislature, I urge you to get involved in education, attend some of the happenings this week and visit a school near you.

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I joyfully stand today to pay tribute to Yukon Education Week on behalf of the Yukon Liberal Party. This year's theme, "A strong team builds bright

futures”, reminds us all of the saying that it does take a village to raise a child. Education doesn’t just happen in the classroom, Mr. Speaker. I think we can all agree that we learn something new every day, which comes from a wide range of sources.

Children spend most of their day being taught in the classroom, but they also interact with many people in the community and learn from them as well. Sometimes it is within this interaction where the greatest lessons are learned. In our day-to-day lives it is the interaction with others and the relationships that we foster that guides us on the path of learning.

As legislators, we need to make sure that our citizens have the opportunity to pursue any learning path that they choose. We need to encourage and foster programs like YNTEP, which promotes First Nation involvement as educators in our communities. We need to encourage community involvement by inviting outside professionals into our classrooms to go beyond the scope of the standard lesson.

Many of our teachers continue to contribute their efforts outside of the classroom, volunteering their time in many extra-curricular programs, such as coaching or instructing or as tutors. Teachers play a large role in the development of our children, not just academically. They teach a child self-worth and how to build confidence; they promote inclusion, which goes beyond the classroom and into the child’s daily life. The stronger we build up the system that surrounds our children, the stronger our children will be. I’ve said this many times before and I will say it again, Mr. Speaker, we have the best students in Canada here in the Yukon and they do deserve the best education in the world.

In recognition of Lorenzo Grimard’s Birthday

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of all of my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly to tribute Lorenzo Grimard on his 100th birthday.

April 23, 2106 in Dawson City not only marked the earliest day on record for the breakup of the Yukon River, but it was also cause for the celebration for the oldest-living francophone in the territory: Mr. Lorenzo Grimard.

A party was held in his honour for his 100th birthday where he was recognized by both the Governor General of Canada and also the Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau. Lorenzo is an inspiration of positivity and an example of free-spiritedness that we can admire and aspire to. At 100 years young, he still has the glass-half-full attitude on life. He still knows how to entertain the crowds and he keeps the residents and staff of the McDonald Lodge smiling and happy.

Now, the Governor General and the Prime Minister were not the only ones to recognize the 23rd, because also the mayor and council of Dawson City also weighed in with a special proclamation and I would like to read that into the record here today. “Proclamation: Lorenzo Grimard Day:

WHEREAS Mr. Lorenzo Grimard is celebrating his 100th birthday on April 23, 2016; and

WHEREAS Mr. Lorenzo Grimard has been a long-time resident of our community and an active member of the Yukon Order of Pioneers; and

WHEREAS council is inspired by Mr. Lorenzo Grimard’s long life and offer him the sincere best wishes for continued good health and happiness now;

THEREFORE I, Wayne Potoroka, as Mayor of the City of Dawson, Yukon Territory, do hereby proclaim April 23, 2016 to be Lorenzo Grimard Day in the City of Dawson, Yukon Territory and commit this observation to the people of Dawson City.”

So Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all of my colleagues here in the Legislature, I would like to wish Lorenzo a happy 100th birthday and congratulate him on the proclamation to have April 23rd known as Lorenzo Grimard Day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Hassard: I would like to ask all members to join me in welcoming a couple of fellows from the Yukon government’s chipper crew team here today: Big Jon Rudolph and long-time resident of Teslin, Mr. Frank Johnstone. Rumour has it that Mr. Johnstone will be retiring from the chipper crew this year, so if that rumour is true, well, congratulations, Frank.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 26 — received

Clerk: Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly: I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 26 of the First Session of the 33rd Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King on April 21, 2016.

The petition presented by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King appears in two versions. One version of Petition No. 26 meets the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly. This is the version that will be entered into the working papers of the Legislative Assembly and is the version to which the Executive Council shall respond.

The other version does not meet the requirements as to form and will be returned to the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare Petition No. 26 is deemed to be read and received. Pursuant to Standing Order 67, the Executive Council shall provide a response to a petition which has been deemed read and received within eight sitting days of its presentation. Therefore, the Executive

Council response to Petition No. 26 shall be provided on or before Thursday, May 5, 2016.

Speaker: Are there any petitions to be presented?
Are there any bills to be introduced?
Notices of Motions.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop a new vision for education by examining student-centred learning, supports for learners, learning environments, supports for educators, family and community involvement, governance and responsibility, teaching and pedagogies, assessment, curriculum and programs, and that this work be guided by the new vision principles that:

- (1) meet the diverse needs of all learners and foster development of the essential skills and competencies they need for life in and beyond school;
- (2) identify the strengths and needs of each learner without pre-judgment or bias;
- (3) integrate northern perspectives and Yukon context at all levels;
- (4) embed Yukon First Nation cultures and world views in the curriculum at all grades;
- (5) implement the education-relevant recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada;
- (6) celebrate Canadian diversity and use culturally relevant approaches to support the individual strengths and needs of each learner, school and community;
- (7) engage students in their learning by providing a wide range of choices at school, on the land and in communities;
- (8) value and support our educators;
- (9) build the capacity of educators to work with learners and communities in a positive and respectful process, flexible in approach, and focused on competencies; and
- (10) be accountable, using research and evidence to ask questions, make decisions and celebrate successful practices in Yukon.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to release detailed cost estimates for the operation and maintenance of the new Whistle Bend continuing care facility.

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: Federal funding for capital projects

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker — right on time this time.

So far this Sitting, various Yukon Party ministers have told this House that the government sought federal funding for

the Dempster fibre optic line, the Stewart-Keno transmission line and the Whistle Bend continuing care facility. So imagine Yukoners' surprise to read that the Minister of Community Services now says that the Yukon Party government had not in fact applied for federal money. Rather, they were trying to influence how the federal government would set up some of these new funds that they had proposed setting up. The Minister of Community Services says that this government hasn't applied for funding for these projects, yet other ministers say they have. A simple question for the Premier: Has this government applied for federal funding for these projects or have they not?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is referring to a submission that this government put forward to the Finance committee of the Parliament of Canada prior to the federal budget coming down. That committee was seeking input on the shaping of the federal budget and the Yukon government sought to provide input for that process and we did so. We included four projects that we thought would be of interest to the Government of Canada and the Parliament of Canada and we thought that those individual projects would help shape potential funding pots that were going to become available in the federal budget.

In the case of the fibre project, that is one that has not been formally applied for. It was a project that we highlighted in our submission, because we knew that the federal government, or the Liberal Party, had committed to looking at broadband in the north. So we provided that project as an example of a project that may be eligible for a future broadband in the north fund.

Once that fund becomes available, we will obviously seek to apply to it. In the case of that project, Mr. Speaker, discussions are ongoing with CanNor and other branches of government to see if there's going to be an opportunity for funding on that.

With regard to the other projects, the roads to resources project has been applied for. The Minister of Highways and Public Works tabled that application last week. With regard to the continuing care facility, we've had a lot of discussion about that. We're funding that completely out of our own budget and there is more discussion to come on the transmission line

Ms. Hanson: Let's just pursue this a bit further. The combined total for the three projects that I just outlined are an estimated \$276 million. To be clear, these are not projects in the planning stage. The fibre optic line is supposed to be finished next year. There is \$5.3 million for planning on the transmission line, and there's over \$66 million in this budget for the Whistle Bend continuing care facility. These projects are well underway and they are a cost that will be borne by Yukoners if federal funding is not secured.

Mr. Speaker, you wouldn't start building a home without having the financing to pay for it. It just wouldn't be sensible, yet this is what this government has just done. How does the Premier explain his decision to go ahead with these capital projects without having identified the source of funds to pay for them?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Quite frankly, I think the member opposite is confused about the nature of the submission we provided to the Finance committee. Each of these projects has a different story. In the case of the continuing care facility, as I've noted, there is close to \$67 million in this year's budget to proceed with that project. We're fully able and willing to move forward with that on our own. However, we knew the federal government was interested in input around social infrastructure, so we provided some comment to them about a project we had underway that we thought may be eligible for funding under the social infrastructure component of their infrastructure plans. That hasn't been the case. I don't believe that we will receive funding from any of those new infrastructure funds for that project, but it was worth asking.

In the case of the fibre project, there is approximately \$500,000 in this budget for the detailed engineering planning, and discussions are ongoing with Canada with regard to funding that project. As I've indicated before, we think there's an opportunity through some of their broadband in the north funding that could be applicable on this particular project.

For this Mayo-to-Keno transmission line, that project has come up numerous times and my colleague, the minister responsible, would be happy to provide an update, but that project is not ready yet to begin construction. In the case of the roads to resources projects, that is one that we have applied for under the national infrastructure component of Building Canada, and we hope to hear back from the federal government very soon.

Ms. Hanson: Most people don't budget based on wishes. For a government whose most noteworthy accomplishment has been increasing our reliance on federal transfer payments, one would think that we would at least know by now that to receive federal money, one has to apply for it.

The Minister of Community Services indicated that his government chose not to apply for the New Building Canada fund money for the Dempster fibre link. Instead, this Yukon Party government hopes, as he said, that a new pot of infrastructure money will be developed to pay for it. Instead of applying for existing money, this government is planning to apply to a fund that doesn't yet exist.

How does the Premier, as Minister of Finance, explain his government's failure to properly plan for the financing for these projects and does he accept responsibility for putting Yukon's bottom line at risk?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I do certainly stand up before this House and all Yukoners to say that, in the 12 or 13 years the Yukon Party has been in power and we've had the ability to serve Yukoners, we have had no tax increases. In this mandate we've had annual modest surpluses. We have no net debt — now the only jurisdiction in this country — and we're standing very tall for Yukoners and not imposing a new tax on carbon that will raise the price of everything.

Yukoners are confident in the Yukon Party government — in managing our finances through good times and bad times. As I have said, I know that I am very optimistic for the future of this territory under a renewed Yukon Party mandate.

Question re: Prescription drug abuse

Ms. Stick: Last week, the first confirmed fentanyl-related death in Yukon was reported by the Yukon coroner.

Fentanyl is a strong painkiller often prescribed by doctors to manage ongoing chronic pain. It is 100 times more powerful than morphine and is known to be highly addictive.

Fentanyl use has been declared a public health emergency in British Columbia where there have been 370 deaths since 2012. In Alberta there have been almost 400 deaths in the last two years.

What specific preventive action is this government taking in response to the emerging fentanyl public health crisis we are witnessing across Canada?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

Certainly, as the member had indicated last week, Yukon learned that fentanyl was implicated in a recent death of a Yukon resident. Yukon is just as susceptible to this drug and other drugs as other jurisdictions across the country — or across the world, for that matter.

Fentanyl has found its way into many other illicit drugs. Individuals expecting their regular drugs may unexpectedly be exposed to lethal amounts of fentanyl. Yukon's chief medical officer of health has issued a public warning both to drug users and to those who may be with those drug users at the time they are taking the drugs.

At the same time, the department will be establishing a small working group made up of community nursing, the CMOH, Alcohol and Drug Services, the hospitals, the RCMP and EMS to determine outreach messaging to the public about fentanyl — certainly surveillance and protection for people who call 911 for an overdose.

Mr. Speaker, we need to collaborate to ensure that we have the right tools and the right messages for our citizens, and that is exactly what this government is doing.

Ms. Stick: Fentanyl is one of many varieties of opioids. More commonly prescribed opioids include codeine, morphine and oxycodone.

One of the contributing factors to this health crisis has been the high rate of opioid prescriptions in Canada. No other country in the industrial world prescribes and consumes more prescription opioids on a per capita basis than Canada. Opioids are highly addictive, leaving some patients seeking opioids illegally when their prescription is cut off or ends. Other opioids have been implicated by the Yukon coroner in several other deaths in the Yukon Territory. The United States has released new guidelines advising doctors not to prescribe opioids for chronic pain in most conditions.

What action has this government taken to work with physicians to improve the education and prescription monitoring in Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, again I appreciate the question from the member opposite. As I indicated in my first response, the department will be establishing a small working group made up of community nurses, the CMOH, Alcohol and Drug Services professionals, the hospitals, the RCMP and EMS to determine outreach messaging to the public about

fentanyl. We continue our close working relationship with the Yukon Medical Association, with the chief medical officer and with the chief of staff at the Whitehorse General Hospital, as well as other hospitals, with respect to how doctors are prescribing. This is just one area. But, as the member opposite indicated, we do know that fentanyl was implicated in the recent death of a Yukoner, and we will continue with the establishment of the small working group that I had indicated in responding to the community's needs on the basis that we can provide more information about fentanyl to Yukoners.

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, addiction treatment programs for dependence on opioids like fentanyl present distinct challenges to our health system. Opioid withdrawal is not just a matter of willpower. The detox process to ease physical dependence can last from hours to days, with physical and mental discomfort persisting for weeks. Opioid withdrawal is extremely difficult to endure, and relapse is common. Treatment may require other medications such as methadone and intense counselling and in-house programs. Escaping the cycle of detox and relapse is a long-term process for these individuals addicted to fentanyl or opioids. Opioid treatment programs are far and few between in Canada.

What level of treatment capacity will the new Sarah Steele facility have to treat opioid dependence in this territory?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, again I appreciate the question from the member opposite. As I indicated in my first response, Yukon is certainly just as susceptible to this drug and other drugs as any other jurisdiction in the country — or the world, for that matter.

I also indicated that we will be establishing a small working group of training professionals throughout the territory to address this and other issues. We certainly need to collaborate to ensure that we have the right tools and the right messages to pass on to Yukoners but, as Minister of Health and Social Services, I certainly have trust in the doctors to prescribe the appropriate medications to their patients as they see fit.

What this government is doing on a move-forward basis, and being planful, is the creation of the new Sarah Steele Building. We certainly look forward to the doors opening in the fall to that facility and providing the number of Yukoners who require that level of support a new facility with programming rolled out to provide that level of support as they are going through that treatment process. We are proud of those investments that we have made, and this Yukon Party government will continue to make those investments.

Question re: Tourism statistics

Mr. Silver: Over the weekend, the Tourism ministry gathered to take a look at the upcoming season. They also took a look over their shoulders at last year's season as well. For the longest time, the Government of Yukon monthly tourism stats were unavailable. Nothing past July was on the government's website until last week. The new stats do reveal some interesting information, Mr. Speaker. For the second

year in a row, border crossings are down across the board — Americans, Canadians and Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister confirm that the annual border crossings were down four percent in 2015?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I want to first of all say that our visitation estimates for any given year are really derived from a number of key indicators ranging from border-crossing statistics to air-passenger arrivals, highway traffic counts and data from the private sector as well.

A number of those data sources used to inform the overall estimation of visitation encountered a number of reporting challenges in 2015, which contributed to the delay in reporting. I just wanted to put that out for the member opposite.

Mr. Speaker, the department was able to finalize that visitation report for 2015 and we were very pleased to post the information online as it is in keeping with previous years. We continue to work with the Tourism Industry Association to strengthen our tourism numbers, to strengthen overall tourism business revenue. Certainly, based on the information that we continue to receive from the industry, they are very pleased with the working relationship and the investments in support of Yukon's tourism sector, which includes the single-largest tourism marketing initiative and investment in Yukon's history — Yukon Now funding of just under \$3 million in supported domestic visitation — and the list goes on.

Mr. Silver: It's good to know why those numbers hadn't been reported. The first day of this Sitting, I did ask why nothing past July had been made available to the public and it is true that finally, last Wednesday, there was some updated information.

It does show for the second year in a row that the border crossings in the Yukon are down. Land crossings are down. Air crossings are also down. This is the second straight year that border crossings have declined. In 2013, the number was 350,000; in 2014, it was 342,000; and in 2015, the number dropped again to just 327,000.

Can the minister explain, when it comes to border crossings, why this trend is happening?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I had mentioned just recently here, we recognize the importance of having relevant, up-to-date, accurate tourism visitation information. That is, in fact, why I met with the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon just last week to discuss a go-forward basis — in terms of review of our visitor tracking program and certainly the indicators that feed within that particular program that has become so valuable to industry and was directed for us to move on that program a number of years ago.

Mr. Speaker, I can say that, despite those reporting challenges that we experienced last year — that, I might add, were external to the Yukon government — Yukon's tourism industry has indicated that 2015 was a good year for tourism overall and a number of those tourism indicators do support that perspective.

Mr. Speaker, that is, in fact, why this government continues to invest in product development, visitor services,

and research and marketing initiatives such as Yukon Now, the largest single tourism investment in Yukon's history. Yukon also continues to invest in highway improvements and airport upgrades, waterfront investments, as we've seen in Whitehorse and Carcross, in Yukon museums and cultural centers and in new campgrounds — all of which the member opposite continues to vote against.

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, so just for the record, I am wondering if the Minister is saying that it's a reporting challenge that indeed is why the numbers are down or is it that the numbers are just down. Despite what we heard, it looks like they are down for the second straight year in a row. The picture that the minister is trying to paint doesn't seem to back up the government's own numbers. The full year-end stat report is usually released by the annual TIA conference in the spring. I didn't see anybody talking about it and I do not believe that it has been tabled yet.

When will the full year-end report be available so Yukoners can see all of these numbers for themselves?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, as I just articulated, the department has been working to finalize that visitation report for 2015 with the information that we had on hand. I articulated that there were a number of reporting challenges that were external to the Yukon Government that we experienced last year. In fact, since we have been able to confirm that information with the information that we have, we have posted that report online. All the indicators are up with the information that we currently have.

Mr. Speaker, as I articulated, we have just recently met with TIA as of last week to discuss the very importance of continuing to have accurate information, up-to-date, relevant indicators that continue to feed within the program that was developed with industry back in 2012. We are certainly committed to ensuring that we have the best information available for businesses to help maximize their revenues to help return the best return on investment for our businesses, and we are currently working with industry to strengthen that information made available.

We are very proud of our record-level investments in tourism industry — again a \$3-million increase in our tourism marketing budget over three years. We're very proud of those expenditures as we are with the partnership with industry.

Question re: Whistle Bend continuing care facility

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Highways and Public Works awarded Partnerships BC contracts for Whistle Bend continuing care procurement services in the amount of \$875,000. This month the Minister of Highways and Public Works championed Partnerships BC as one of Canada's leading procurement advisors who bring required expertise to procure specialized projects like Whistle Bend continuing care facility, which has enabled Yukon government to deliver this project in a way that ensures costs and schedule certainty for Yukoners. For cost certainties, the Minister needs to know the operation and maintenance costs before approving the capital expenditures.

Mr. Speaker, did the Minister of Highways and Public Works ensure that Partnerships BC provided operation and maintenance costs to the government as part of the Whistle Bend facility procurement study?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite. As I've indicated before, we do not have an approved budget yet for the O&M costs for running the new Whistle Bend continuing care facility. That's a couple of years out. However, we do have an idea of the order of magnitude of the cost for operation and maintenance for this new facility.

We currently operate a 96-bed extended care facility at Copper Ridge Place and we do know that the staffing model and support services costs will be relatively similar in the new facility, so we're doing this just on a cost comparison.

In 2015-16, the O&M costs for Copper Ridge Place were \$18,489,000. Of this, \$16 million, or 86.7 percent, goes toward payroll for nurses, therapies, dietary, housekeeping, administration, maintenance, laundry and so on. Food and nursing supplies account for approximately \$922,592, or around five percent, and \$890,000 goes for heating and electricity and that's approximately 4.8 percent. Pharmacy and medical costs were \$294,203 per year — 1.6 percent of the budget — while repairs and maintenance make up about 0.6 percent or \$113,210.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, we're trying to determine if the Minister of Highways and Public Works did his job managing the procurement according to law for this controversial project. Maybe that's why he doesn't want to answer the question.

Management Board Secretariat instructs departments on their budget submissions to meet the *Financial Administration Act* requirements when they submit their five-year capital expenditure plans, which are updated annually. The *Financial Administration Manual* requires all departments to include in the expenditure plan: "the total estimated capital cost of the project and the financial and human resources required to complete the project, including the resulting O&M impact of the project;"

Mr. Speaker, did the minister make sure that Highways and Public Works' Management Board submission met the requirements of the *Financial Administration Manual* by including the O&M costs?

Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: The need for a significant number of new care facility beds in Yukon was certainly confirmed through two needs assessments and a business case conducted for the Yukon territorial government.

This government recognizes that it is expensive to care for seniors. Even so, we are committed to providing our seniors with the care that they need and that they deserve.

Currently when this care is provided at the Whitehorse General Hospital, we pay over \$2,400 a day. By comparison, at Whistle Bend, we will pay just over \$500 a day per bed, or approximately \$28 million per year as forecasted in the budget before us.

We have included those O&M costs in our long-term fiscal plan. All of those costs are inclusive. They cover medical staff, ancillary staff, janitorial, food and other costs, as I have indicated with my reference in my first response on Copper Ridge Place.

Building a facility of this size also helps us keep those costs in line, which is another reason for the approach that we have taken. I ask the members opposite: At what point will they not provide this level of care to Yukon seniors?

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, it seems that, with the minister opposite producing his rough estimates, they have not done their work ahead of time and they have failed to obtain the operation and maintenance costs before they approved the capital infrastructure project.

The five-year capital financial plan must be approved by the department's deputy minister and minister before submissions to Management Board Secretariat. Departments must obtain approval of estimated operation and maintenance cost before a project is approved by Management Board Secretariat and become part of the capital financial plan. The *Financial Administration Manual* is clear: operation and maintenance costs are required before project approval.

Again, Mr. Speaker, did the Minister of Highways and Public Works make sure the procurement contract met the budgeting requirements to determine operation and maintenance costs before approving the Whistle Bend care —

Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. In my previous response, I indicated that this government has done work through two needs assessments and a business case that were conducted, determining the need for this facility. Also as I mentioned, this government recognizes that it is expensive to care for seniors, but this Yukon Party government is prepared to do that.

Even so, we're committed to providing our seniors with the care that they need and the care that they deserve. Currently, as I mentioned in my previous response, if we were to continue caring for seniors who need this facility in the Whitehorse General Hospital, it comes at a cost of over \$2,400 per day. We know that the costs at the Copper Ridge facility are just over \$500 per day per resident, and we are estimating that the cost will be very similar to that in the new Whistle Bend continuing care facility, taking into consideration that we certainly will have some specialized care for Yukon seniors in that facility, such as the palliative care, the mental health area and dementia area.

We've included those costs — the O&M costs — in our long-term fiscal plan and, as I indicated, the costs are all-inclusive. Building a facility of this size also helps us keep those costs down. This Yukon Party will continue to invest in Yukon seniors.

Question re: Yukon species at risk

Ms. White: If there's one thing Yukoners can agree on, it's that we're lucky to live in a territory with such rich biodiversity. Whether it's the moose and the caribou in our wildlands or the plant life that we encounter on the trails

around the territory, Yukon is a unique place when it comes to our natural world.

However, all is not rosy, Mr. Speaker. The Yukon is also home to numerous species at risk, like the peregrine falcon, polar bears on our North Slope, Baikal sedge and Dolly Varden trout, all of which aren't being given proper protection by current federal laws.

This government has tabled its last bills before we head to an election later this year, and there is still no species at risk legislation on the table. Mr. Speaker, why has the Minister of Environment failed to table species at risk legislation during this last Sitting of the Legislative Assembly?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I thank the member opposite for the question. It gives me an opportunity to highlight some of the work the department does. Our biologists continue to contribute to the federal species at risk assessment and recovery planning, as part of our commitment under the National Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk. The department manages and monitors species of plants and wildlife that are at risk and tracks all species of conservation concern. We put a lot of time and effort into it and there's money in our budget every year for that.

Ms. White: The Yukon Party was quick to act when the federal government cancelled tax credits or when asked for input on Bill S-6, but they were nowhere to be found when their friends in Ottawa gutted our federal environmental protection laws. In 2003, 2005 and 2009, this Yukon Party government was brought species at risk legislation, and in 2003, 2005 and 2009, this very same government chose not to act. Yukoners are asking themselves, "Why the double standard?"

This government can attempt to pass the buck for its inaction, but I have stood in this Legislature and called for strong species at risk laws more times than I can count. Mr. Speaker, why did the Minister of Environment decide that strong regional protection of Yukon species at risk isn't a priority for his government?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I thank the member opposite again. It just gives me the opportunity to talk about how, in the spring of this year, barren ground caribou, including the Porcupine caribou herd, would be assessed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. We're actively engaged in the national assessment process led by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada for species that live in the Yukon. We'll continue to work with our partners — the First Nations, local resources councils, Yukoners and all those who care about the Yukon — and we'll continue to do a wonderful job.

Ms. White: I guess I shouldn't be surprised by the lack of leadership from this Minister of Environment. The National Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk committed Canada — our provinces and territories — to a national approach to preventing species from becoming extinct due to human activities. That accord involves doing four things, one of which is the creation of local species at risk legislation. Other jurisdictions are meeting their national accord commitments, but Yukon, under this Yukon Party

government, is still dragging its feet when it comes to species at risk legislation.

Mr. Speaker, why hasn't the government, under this Minister of Environment, fulfilled its obligations under the National Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I would just like to add that the Yukon is very active in the general status of wildlife when it comes to species at risk. I have said it before: we will continue to work with our federal counterparts, our local resources councils, and First Nations and our department staff — the good work that the department staff does. The Department of Environment will continue to manage and monitor species of plants and wildlife, and work with our partners.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing line-by-line consideration of Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: We will take a 15-minute break.

Recess

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

Bill No. 23: *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing line-by-line debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

We were on page 8-8, Public Schools.

Department of Education — *continued*

Ms. White: I left this off on Thursday asking for more information about the planning of the francophone high school. Some of the questions that we have discussed loosely

over other years are, for example, the level of consultation with the City of Whitehorse.

There was the commitment by the current Minister of Education that the skateboard park would be relocated. There was a conversation that had to be had with the City of Whitehorse about where that spot could be.

What I'm looking for from the minister is just an update on the planning for the francophone high school in all ways, if I could, please.

Hon. Mr. Graham: I know I have mentioned previously in the House that we have an agreement with the francophone school board that we will not make any announcements other than those that come as joint announcements from that school board. I can't confirm or deny that we're making further or additional progress, but I can assure members opposite that the francophone school board and the Department of Education will be putting out a news release — hopefully later this week or very early next week — with respect to additional progress made on the French school — to be located wherever it's located.

I suspect we'll have an announcement next week.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for the answers and appreciate that, at this point, they need to be vague, which makes it just a bit harder to ask more pointed questions about.

I guess the last part that I would ask about the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon and the planning there is: With this most recent line item toward the planning, is there any kind of timeline that we're aiming for, for the completion of a school?

Hon. Mr. Graham: We are following along with the procedures established by the committee. I can tell you that we plan to do it as quickly as we can. This funding will be for actual drawings. The previous funding was for a concept. We've had that discussion with the French school board. Now the money will be for the actual design, and we're still aiming for that school to be opened by September 2018. There is no reason that we can currently see that it won't be ready by that time.

Mr. Tredger: I have a question on the technical education wing of F.H. Collins. Can the minister tell us the anticipated source of heating and what the annual heating costs for that and the weight room are anticipated to be?

Hon. Mr. Graham: We're not certain exactly what heating system will be installed by HPW, but perhaps we'll defer that one until such time as Highways and Public Works comes forward. We have an anticipated heating cost for that wing, but the member should know that part of the contract was to improve the insulation quality, it was to build a new Arctic entry, as well as do other renovations with the technical wing to upgrade the wing itself.

We have some anticipated numbers but, as to the exact heating source, I'm not sure.

Mr. Tredger: Is the Department of Education advocating for using the geothermal heat source that we have invested \$1 million in drilling the well? It would be a wonderful opportunity for the Department of Education to show the students that we're taking a lead into the 21st century

in terms of energy production and conservation. The anticipated savings in terms of fuel costs, as well as in terms of carbon production, are quite significant. Can the minister tell me whether the department is advocating for geothermal and use of the existing well?

Hon. Mr. Graham: No, unfortunately we are not. We did not believe that the volume or the size of this project, probably, supported the continued work on geothermal.

I will just throw out that, in addition to the extra interior insulation, we are also building a barrier-free access, we are completely replacing the exterior siding, and we are removing the overhead walkover that connects the current school to the tech ed wing. All of those things are being done, as well as washroom improvements. They will be done, hopefully, by this summer.

In answer to the first question, no, we did not push for geothermal.

Ms. White: I think one of the things my colleague was alluding to is that we have this industry, or these industries that are kind of blooming around not just the country, but hopefully in Yukon. We have a lot of photovoltaic businesses that are springing up and doing work like that. I wonder if it wouldn't make sense, within things like the technical wing, to look at embracing those kinds of technologies because that could be like a module of learning. The ability to do the work around geothermal, photovoltaic or any of those kinds of things — it seems to me like it's a missed opportunity not to include those in the tech wing because that is an industry that is generating a lot of jobs and a lot of interest across the country right now, as Canada looks to separate itself from a carbon-based economy.

Hon. Mr. Graham: I'm going to take the question under advisement and I'm going to pass it along to the Department of Highways and Public Works — because they have an energy management group within the department — and we'll get them to take a look at the potential for building the new French language school on the existing education reserve in Riverdale. It seems to be quite high. There's a potential that this could be done, but we would have to take a look and determine the relevant cost-benefit ratio, but it's something that should be looked at.

In answer to the first question, it's going to be a propane boiler heating the tech ed wing, and it will be installed this summer.

Mr. Tredger: While we are talking about energy, there used to be a program a number of years ago where each school monitored their electricity use. At the end of the year, if it had dropped, the schools were reimbursed some funds in terms of saved energy. It had the advantage of educating students about how to save energy. It kept their minds working and they came up with a number of innovative ideas in different schools.

Can the minister tell me what the state of that program is, whether it is still in place and how widely is it being used?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Amazingly enough, that program, which probably ended 10 to 15 years ago — actually there was a modified version of that in the original F.H. Collins

Secondary School when I was a student there. The reason I know that is because we learned all different kinds of things about electricity, and one was that turning a light on and off — and we had the number of minutes between switching the light on and off — and if we left the light burning for 11 minutes, it was cheaper to let it burn for 11 minutes than to turn it on and off once. Even back then we were very energy conscious.

In talking to my department, I found out that program has lapsed and we have no intention of bringing it back, but we are bringing changes to the recycling programs and other programs within the school in terms of green programs, I guess we call them, in the school system. I will be able to bring the member up to date on that more as plans advance, but that is planned for the fall semester.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for his assertion that he will have the conversation with the Minister of Highways and Public Works.

I am a bit disappointed, honestly, to hear that propane is going to be the fuel source for the technology wing. I think that there is great potential to do other things like what we were just talking about as far as learning opportunities. At the biomass conference that took place a couple of months ago, there was a lot of discussion around how we could be looking at that kind of technology, similar to what Corrections has with their pellet stove. I will also put the plug in again: I think that as an emerging trade, green energy would be a fantastic thing that could start in high schools. I thank the minister for saying he will have that conversation.

The next question I had was around the planning for the Burwash school. I have had the good fortune of visiting Burwash Landing numerous times. As far back as 2012, the conversation was that they were really looking forward to having this school in the community. Can the minister please tell me more about what that planning is for?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I am happy to inform the House that just last week we had a number of staff from Whitehorse go to Burwash Landing and look at sites for a potential school, but there are a number of discussions that will be required before we actually get into construction of a new school in Burwash.

Part of that discussion is about community uses for a school and what we can do in cooperation with the First Nation to build a truly community school. As members know, Burwash is a very small area and it seems ridiculous to build a school and not incorporate all the community's needs into that school and look for funding from a number of different sources. That will be part of the discussion with the First Nation there. The funding that we have in this budget is only for the functional plan. So what will be in the school, where it will be located, what is the contribution of the various partners is to the school — those are the kinds of discussions. We don't anticipate that this will go ahead and be constructed within the next year or so.

Ms. White: I appreciate the minister's answer, and it's our understanding too that it's really important in rural communities that the school be more than just a building

that's open from 8:00 to 4:00. Just as a separate pitch about renewable energy — Burwash Landing uses a district heating source with biomass, so hooray for the Kluane First Nation.

On Friday, I got to do a tour of YuKonstruct, which was really fantastic. One of the things, in conversation with the people who had that as the brain child, was that it would be a really phenomenal opportunity for communities across the territory that have shop wings within the school system if there was a way to take the idea of a makerspace or a community space. YuKonstruct, for people who may not know, is accessible to the public — in this case, because it's a private thing and it's not through government. There is a \$54-a-month fee, and then people have access to all this fantastic equipment, including a full wood shop and metal shop and things like that. What they were talking about was how that kind of space builds community and it allows people who don't have access to those kinds of tools and those kinds of facilities to come in and utilize the equipment that's there, including the training. One of the things the group was lamenting is that we have shops in rural schools where sometimes there may be shop teachers, sometimes there may not be, but the fact is that this equipment has been paid for by the Department of Education and it exists in the communities.

Has there ever been a conversation within the Department of Education about allowing those rural schools to allow access to the community for that kind of equipment?

Hon. Mr. Graham: It's interesting the member opposite would bring this forward, because during a recent tour in a number of rural schools, we had that discussion with people in the education system. What we do have, at the current time, is an agreement with Yukon College to utilize our facilities for instructional purposes when Yukon College is providing a program or a course in a community where we have a school located. Other than that, we don't have any agreements. We just had this conversation, and we talked about liability and insurance and qualified instructors and all those other difficulties that usually can be surmounted or overcome if we have enough will. It's something that perhaps we should be looking at in the department because, as the member opposite said, we have these facilities out there and they should be utilized.

One of the other things that was brought up to me by school employees themselves is the fact that the equipment doesn't last anywhere near as long and they have difficulty getting replacement equipment in some of the schools, so there are a number of other difficulties. But, like you say, difficulties are only challenges to be overcome, aren't they?

Ms. White: I thank that minister for an answer that was open and it wasn't a straight-up "no". I think there is a lot of potential there for what it could do for building communities.

The last pitch for me right now in general debate on public schools is that if the minister gets the opportunity to do a tour at YuKonstruct, it is well worth the time. If he would like to go, I would be happy to take him to see what the potential is for rural communities through that makerspace. I think it would fuel the "no" into a "possible" and hopefully into a "yes".

I thank the minister for his willingness, and thank you very much.

Chair: Does any other person wish to speak in debate on public schools?

On Public Schools — continued

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

On Administration

Administration in the amount of \$330,000 agreed to

On Program Delivery

Program Delivery in the amount of \$94,285,000 agreed to

On Learning Support Services

Learning Support Services in the amount of \$10,678,000 agreed to

On Student Support Services

Student Support Services in the amount of \$2,892,000 agreed to

On First Nations Programs and Partnerships

First Nations Programs and Partnerships in the amount of \$1,678,000 agreed to

Public Schools Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$109,863,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

On Facility Construction and Maintenance — F.H. Collins Secondary School — Replacement

Ms. White: Can I please get a breakdown of that?

Hon. Mr. Graham: The whole funding is to demolish the old school and complete the sitework. The demolition will include both the demolition of the building itself, plus the remediation, removal and disposal of any hazardous material present in the old building.

I am informed that discussions are now underway because the demolition contract was proposed to be a Yukon asset construction agreement with Kwanlin Dün, and negotiations are underway between YG and Kwanlin Dün with regard to the whole project. It will be done in two main phases. The first will be the remediation, removal and disposal of any hazardous materials. We understand that it includes several projects including removal of asbestos and then some others that include removal of lead-based paints. Those are almost complete now, and the actual demolition of the building and remediation of the site are intended to take place over the summer this year.

Mr. Tredger: Can the minister inform me where the asbestos and lead-based materials are going to be disposed of?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I am just drawing on my experience as a city councillor. It would probably go to the landfill. They have special hazardous waste cells that are permanently sealed, once the cells are used. I would anticipate that is where this will go, but I can't be 100 percent certain, but that is how it was handled in the past.

Ms. White: Understanding the size of the old school that will dismantled and disposed of — will all of that be going to the Whitehorse waste management facility? Have conversations been had about making sure that there is the available space and that it's not going to overwhelm the facility with the amount that size of building would bring?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Fortunately, I have been getting advice here as the member opposite has asked the question. First of all, Highways and Public Works is working with the City of Whitehorse to discuss what can be done with the building. We understand that if Kwanlin Dün and YTG come to an agreement with respect to the YACA, then they will have rights of salvage. What is being done at the present time is to ensuring that the minimum amount of waste possible goes into the landfill, which is why YTG and the City of Whitehorse are having those discussions. We would like to keep as much out as we possibly can.

Ms. White: This just gives me an opportunity to say that the biomass heating system at Raven Recycling would recycle this kind of wood. Wouldn't it be a fantastic heating source to have in the tech wing? I'm glad that it is going to be disposed of in the proper ways and I hope that it has a second life either as a heat source or as construction material.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Every time somebody says "biomass" to me, I have to interpret that in my own head and say that we used to call it burning wood.

But it's an interesting concept and we'll make sure that as much of this facility that can be recycled will be recycled.

Facility Construction and Maintenance — F.H. Collins Secondary School — Replacement in the amount of \$2,980,000 agreed to

On Facility Construction and Maintenance — F.H. Collins Secondary School — Technical Education Wing

Facility Construction and Maintenance — F.H. Collins Secondary School — Technical Education Wing in the amount of \$3,000,000 agreed to

On Facility Construction and Maintenance — F.H. Collins Secondary School — Prior Years' Projects

Facility Construction and Maintenance — F.H. Collins Secondary School — Prior Years' Projects in the amount of nil cleared

On Facility Construction and Maintenance — Francophone High School — Planning

Facility Construction and Maintenance — Francophone High School — Planning in the amount of \$400,000 agreed to

On Facility Construction and Maintenance — Burwash School — Planning

Facility Construction and Maintenance — Burwash School — Planning in the amount of \$40,000 agreed to

On Facility Construction and Maintenance — Modular Classroom

Ms. White: Can I please get a breakdown in the amount of the modular classrooms and where they are going to be located?

Hon. Mr. Graham: We just were able to provide some additional information in this. This was part of our discussion with CSFY earlier this year when we saw an increase in enrolment at EET. We gave a number of options to EET that we could utilize to handle this increase in enrolment. We offered a wing in Porter Creek Secondary School, a portable to house students, and either a portable for elementary school children or a portable for the high school. In October of last year, the CSFY board made the decision and asked us to

purchase a portable classroom for the elementary school children. The tender was awarded. The bid price was a little bit less than \$110,000. It will be delivered here hopefully in June, and the rest of the funding was to set it up and to put in the equipment and other resources needed to have that portable available. The good thing about this portable is that it will be movable. Once a French high school is built, this portable will be able to be taken away from EET and moved, if it's needed, in another location.

Facility Construction and Maintenance — Modular Classroom in the amount of \$600,000 agreed to

On Facility Construction and Maintenance — School Initiated Renovations

Mr. Tredger: That's a significant drop from the actual amount that was spent last year. I know that school-initiated renovations are very important to the individual schools because it allows them to have say over projects that go on in their schools. Have the amounts of requests dropped substantially? Why has that gone down? I know that last year they estimated \$125,000, and it went up over double that to \$267,000. It is now back down to \$125,000 as an estimate. Are the number of requests down or has it been a monetary decision?

Hon. Mr. Graham: No, the way this fund works is that \$125,000 is budgeted each year. It is distributed to various schools for small renovation projects, and there is a formula that is used that is based on school enrolment, floor area, the number of classrooms in the school, the grade level of the school and, usually, the age of the building as well. Then management decisions at the various schools are made to determine where the money would be best spent. What happened last year is that money had piled up in number of schools because they had one larger project that they wanted to do, so they piled up their funding for a number of years and then in one year spent three years' allocation. Last year, there was a lot of money spent, but the exact same amount of money — the \$125,000 — was budgeted and allocated to the schools. It is just that they managed to spend it all in one year.

I have one other comment that was brought to my attention. One of the big projects that happened last year was at Jack Hulland Elementary School, where they replaced school lockers throughout the school. They had saved for a number of years to do that project.

Facility Construction and Maintenance — School Initiated Renovations in the amount of \$125,000 agreed to

On Facility Construction and Maintenance — Capital Maintenance Repairs

Mr. Tredger: This is a significant drop from the amount spent last year. It looks like about one-third of it. Given the needs around upgrading the buildings to be seismic-ready, is there a reason that the maintenance has significantly dropped?

Hon. Mr. Graham: These are projects — it is kind of a proactive system of facility repair where we try to anticipate which building components may fail and repair or replace them before they do. Last year there were a couple of big projects that were considered to be urgent. One was

Del Van Gorder School repairs, and there were a couple of others that were larger projects but were considered urgent. Ross River School, for example, is where we did over \$2 million of repairs in order to bring the school back up to standard.

This year, none of the projects outside of the Watson Lake Secondary School are big-ticket items. I will just run through them: Watson Lake Secondary School has a roof replacement for \$600,000; soccer goal replacements are all being done this year, but it is only \$150,000; Christ the King Elementary School has a boiler replacement/heating system replacement for \$150,000; Teslin School has fuel tanks replacement for \$120,000; Tantalus School, fuel rehabilitation — as we've talked about that and I agree with you that it's well past the point where it should be done — Vanier Catholic Secondary School has a fuel tank replacement as well for \$120,000; École Émilie Tremblay office renovations for \$106,000; school revitalization plan, which is a number of schools' small repairs, for \$100,000; Nelnah Bessie John school handicapped access for \$92,000; Holy Family School light fixtures for \$75,000; Del Van Gorder School has additional structural remediation for \$75,000; J.V. Clark School has a boiler room ventilation study for \$70,000; Teslin School window replacement for \$60,000; Teen Parent Centre fire alarm panel replacement and then there are various repairs throughout the territory and in a number of schools for just under \$700,000 for the total. Those are all of the projects that are planned for this year.

Facility Construction and Maintenance — Capital Maintenance Repairs in the amount of \$2,910,000 agreed to

On Facility Construction and Maintenance — Prior Years' Projects

Facility Construction and Maintenance — Prior Years' Projects in the amount of nil cleared

On Instructional Programs — School-Based Equipment Purchase

Mr. Tredger: That is a significant drop from the amount spent last year. Can the minister explain why?

Hon. Mr. Graham: This fund is similar to the school initiated renovations fund, where funding is set aside each year for school-based equipment purchases. What was discovered is that, in the past few years, the money that was being budgeted to replace equipment — especially shop equipment in various schools — wasn't needed, so that it was decreased this year because the money that we had thought would be spent last year wasn't spent on shop equipment. It just simply wasn't ordered, so it was decreased because that money is still in the system. The schools are holding on to it so that they can spend — well, not holding on to it — but it is in the budget so that it can be spent in the year coming.

Instructional Programs — School-Based Equipment Purchase in the amount of \$300,000 agreed to

On Instructional Programs — School-Based Information Technology

Instructional Programs — School-Based Information Technology in the amount of \$1,852,000 agreed to

On Instructional Programs — Prior Years' Projects

Instructional Programs — Prior Years' Projects in the amount of nil cleared

Public Schools Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$12,207,000 agreed to

Public Schools Total Expenditures in the amount of \$122,070,000 agreed to

On Advanced Education

Ms. White: There was an announcement made recently about YuWIN funding carrying on for a year and the minister was great this winter when he gave me an entirely large stack of information about YuWIN — the questionnaire that had gone out the second time and the responses from the community, the evaluation process and the rest — so can the minister just tell us more — understanding that YuWIN has been given a year reprieve — as to what the expectation is to continue on with YuWIN?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I wasn't being kind to the member opposite. There were about 250 pages of dense information that she had to go through to glean the information she wanted, and I appreciate the fact that she actually did it.

Madam Chair, YuWIN and Advanced Education have signed an agreement — it's a two-year agreement by the way — and it will support the transition of employers from YuWIN to Canada's Job Bank. It will create an employer liaison service to improve employer involvement in Advanced Education's labour market programs and services because we see from time to time that a number of Yukon employers don't liaise with Advanced Education's labour market programs like we believe they should. We also see and appreciate that YuWIN has a very special relationship with many of these employers, so what we have agreed to with YuWIN is that they will provide the employer liaison service to Advanced Education. In other words, they will be a go-between. They have established a relationship with employers and we hope that relationship will continue.

We signed the agreement and it began April 2016 even though I think it was signed after that date. It was backdated to April 1, 2016. YuWIN's job board will be converted to a casual job and volunteer board, which does not compete directly with the Canada Job Bank. In that way, Yukon Education continued to support it. If it competes directly with the Job Bank, we would not be able to do so. It will be run independently of this agreement if and when YuWIN is able to provide other resources to do it. We hope that by providing the funding for an employee liaison service, we have provided the base funding for YuWIN to keep going. We believe we have.

We also believe they have the ability and the resources to continue the YuWIN job board as a casual and volunteer board without the funding that we have provided in the past. In any event, the YuWIN funding specifically for the job board will end on March 31, 2017 and YuWIN's board and the people associated with it are well aware of that, and they believe that they can continue to operate after that time.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer. I'm glad that, after the initial conversation was had, in my opinion — and I think the opinion of others — there was a value in the

services that YuWIN was offering, and that the department and the minister have figured a way to bridge what those services were. I'm looking forward to figuring out or learning how the liaison will work between the labour market programs and people.

I think it was last year — the minister can correct me if I'm wrong — we had a lot of conversations about the nominee program and Advanced Education's role and responsibility within that. After a meeting that I was invited to at the Department of Education, there were some things that changed. One of the things that changed was, instead of just waiting for a complaint — it wasn't so much to be a complaint-driven process any more — there was going to be site checks, where someone within the department was going to go around to businesses that hired nominee employees. I just wanted to know the status of that and what the department has learned since they started doing that.

Hon. Mr. Graham: We are doing that; we are carrying out those site checks. We find that employers are well aware that we're going to be doing those site checks. I think we've had less difficulty and fewer complaints since we began doing those site checks.

We believe that most of the employers in the territory are really trying to make the system work. There are a few that don't, and we will be ensuring that those employers are sought out and won't be able to participate in the program. That's one of the reasons we also said that we will continue to make it known publicly when an employer is banned from the program.

Since we've instituted these new rules, we haven't had that many additional employers that are in difficult situations, compared to what we had previously.

Ms. White: I thank the minister and the department, because I feel like that is the resolution I was looking for. I feel like that is successful, not only for my conscience, as an elected person, but others'. Just realizing that there's the human face on the employee and knowing that there's that oversight — I feel like that has really done what I was hoping it would do. I'm happy to hear that's working that way.

We have spoken to different new Canadians at different times who wanted to start businesses. One of the limitations they said was the proficiency level for English. So if they are coming in with a financial investment and they wanted to start a business in Yukon, because they wanted that as the opportunity to start the immigration process, one of the limiting factors is — I believe it's level 6 English. I can stand corrected — level 4 English.

Could the minister just kind of elaborate on how we came to that standard, if it was about investing money within the community and starting a business?

Hon. Mr. Graham: It's completely ironic that the member opposite would ask this question.

In the last two or three weeks — perhaps as long as a month — the Minister of Tourism and Culture, others and I have met with potential investors as well as others on this particular subject. One of the issues that we brought forward to the Government of Canada is that we would like to have an

exemption from the language requirement in the territory. This morning we had a tentative response, and what I have asked the department to do, as of 11:30 this morning, is to communicate directly with Canada because it would appear right now that Canada is not interested in giving us an exemption. In fact, we believe that Canada is moving in exactly the opposite direction to require a higher language requirement. We do not believe that is in the best interests of the territory, and so, with the support of the member opposite — because we agree with her — we can build parameters around the language requirements so that, once these people move to the country, they have to have a progression. We can do all of those things, but we agree that we should not require them to have a specific level of English if they are foreign investors who want to come to the territory and make their home in the territory. That is the important part.

We agree with the member opposite and we are just now waiting for a formal reply from Canada.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for definitely catching that last point. We are not just talking about investment without the actual investment of a lifestyle change. We are actually looking at people who want to live in the territory. That is a worthy thing to point out because we are not just talking about bringing in money and earning money; we are talking about building a life in Canada. Based on the research of the Department of Education, are there any other jurisdictions in Canada that have exemptions from that language requirement?

Hon. Mr. Graham: There are. In fact, I would say that the majority of other jurisdictions in Canada do not have a language requirement, and we wanted to join that group. That is when we found out that Canada may request all of us to enact some kind of minimum language standard when coming into the country. This is one of those issues that really goes beyond our political differences, and we would be happy to keep you up to date because this is something about which we will let everyone know as soon as we get an answer back from Canada. There are other jurisdictions in Canada that have no language requirement at all right now for business investors.

Ms. White: I appreciate the offer from the minister and that would be good to be kept updated.

Before I move on to a different aspect, I would like to congratulate the department on the website. It is a lot easier to navigate than it was last year — hugely easier to navigate. Congratulations to the people within the department who have changed the layout and made it easier to understand.

One of my other favourite things in Advanced Education is obviously trades and trades training. Before we have talked about the statistics on the number of Yukoners registered. I was wondering if the minister could let us know — maybe not by industry at this point, but if he could let us know how many apprentices are registered in the territory and, out of that number, how many of those are women?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I get those statistics every month. I don't have them with me right now. In fact, they provide all that information and I think it is public information as well. I don't see any reason why it shouldn't be public information. It

simply lists the apprentices by industry — male and female. I don't see any reason why we can't make that information available, maybe even do it online.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. There's the distinct possibility that it's available online right now and I just don't have the Googling skills with which to find it.

I have a couple of final questions. One of the challenges of being a business that hires people within the apprenticeship program is that you require a journeyman-level person to sign off on the hours. It's interesting, because sometimes it's perceived that, when you hire an apprentice, you're gaining one more body. I would say, from my experience, when you hire an apprentice, you're actually losing a body. The reason I say this is that, as a journeyman baker who worked within shops and things, my job was to make sure, with the apprentices coming through the ranks, that I walked them through everything, understanding that, in my industry, there was a lot less risk to life and limb, but there still definitely were things that had to be followed as far as safety protocol, both working with equipment and also for final products.

In my opinion, I would say that you don't really gain a body, but you kind of lose a body in that process. One of the difficulties, I think, that apprentices find in the territory is that it's hard for them to get placements because there is funding by the territory, but it sometimes isn't adequate to recompense the business for the loss of time for the journeyman. I wonder if there have been ongoing discussions with the trades community or if government has realized that it is sometimes a limitation for those apprentices to be able to get work where they can get their hours overseen by a journeyman.

Hon. Mr. Graham: This is also an issue that's very close to my heart. I'll just throw in, in advance, that as members opposite know and I've probably mentioned before in this House, we did an evaluation of the Yukon's apprenticeship and tradesperson qualification program. We received the draft last week. I haven't read it myself yet, but I know the issue the member opposite talks about. In fact, she knows that my father, who taught a number of trades — he taught automotive, heavy equipment and welding programs over the years at the old Yukon vocational school and then again at the college. This was one of his issues as well.

I can remember him telling me, time and time again, when he worked in the trades and he had young fellows working for him — in those days, you used to be able to have more than one — and he said that when you have one young fellow working for you, you have an extra man. When you have two young fellows working for you, you have half a man, and when you have three young fellows working for you, you have no man at all. His point was that all his time was spent with the apprentices, and he got absolutely no work done in his business whatsoever. His point was, "I should be able to have somebody who works with the apprentices and I just sign off on their time."

I know what the member opposite is talking about. It is a difficult one to work through because we have agreements with the rest of Canada under which we have an apprenticeship program and a red seal program. We will

continue looking at it. I will read the evaluation and we'll either put it on the website or we will put a summary on the website as quickly as possible.

Ms. White: My understanding, and again, if I am wrong, please correct me. Does the Yukon government pay a portion of an apprentice's hourly wage? If they do, is there a percentage? Or is it Canada that pays or does that not even happen at all anymore?

Hon. Mr. Graham: To the best of my knowledge, no, we don't pay anything in the salaries while they're actually working. What we do is pay when they go for their training, so each year when the apprentice goes away for their training or takes their training at Yukon College we pay, not a replacement salary, but we pay them for every week that they're in school. We don't pay their salaries while they're working for an employer.

Ms. White: I guess the next question is: Has there been conversation with industry at all as to whether or not a portion of that hourly wage that an apprentice was earning within their shop for example was covered by Yukon government — would they be more likely to hire apprentices?

The reason I ask this is that I have met people who have gone through the first year electrical program — for example, at Yukon College — and we're talking about incredibly motivated people who are knocking on all the doors of all the electrical contractors in town and what they're being told essentially is that they just don't have the time or the resources to take on an apprentice at the time. The reason why I ask about offsetting the costs for an organization is based on even the minister's father's lesson, which is that when they do have an apprentice they definitely gain in the ability of sharing knowledge, but sometimes you lose in the ability to actually get the job done.

Has the Department of Education had those conversations with industry or would there be an interest in having those conversations with industry?

Hon. Mr. Graham: We really, to the best of our knowledge, have not had that conversation. Of course we hire apprentices. We have a certain number of apprentices we hire as part of Yukon government each year. Other than that, we haven't had that conversation with industry, but it's something I'm sure that industry would leap at. I'm not sure if it would increase the number of apprenticeships seats that are currently available in industries — and by industry, I mean everything from baking to heavy equipment mechanics and welders to hairdressers. I don't know if that would increase the number of apprentices that would be taken in. I would hope it would.

Ms. White: Based on the minister's last comment, I hope that maybe this is a conversation that they have.

The minister just mentioned that there are certain numbers of apprentice spots within the Government of Yukon. Could he let us know how many spots there are and within which trades they exist?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I'm always very cautious about making commitments because then I find out I can't produce the information or my department can't produce the information that I've promised. We will take a look and see if

we have that information available. If that information is available, we don't have any problem sharing it, that's for sure.

Ms. White: I appreciate the Minister's caution because previously I've asked about how many apprentices were hired within Yukon government and at the time it was a sad, low number — because from my perspective, trades only really live on if the knowledge is passed from one hand to the other. It's interesting — from my trade's perspective, there are times where people hold on tight to secrets until they realize that if they die then so do the secrets. Not all the trades are quite so secretive with their information, but kitchens sometimes are a little bit uber-competitive because it's just not necessarily the skill, but it's also the imagination that got it there.

I'll just leave this for a future conversation, but I would really like to know how many apprentices are hired by Yukon Government and in which trades.

On Administration

Administration in the amount of \$460,000 agreed to

On Labour Market Programs and Services

Labour Market Programs and Services in the amount of \$9,600,000 agreed to

On Training Programs

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Ms. White: Although I don't have officials sitting right next to me, I have been asked to make sure that my statement isn't taken out of context.

When we have apprentices working within the shop, it's not that we're losing the man hours, it's just that there's a certain amount of hands-on that's required from the journeyman. I think that needs to be taken into account when we're talking about training programs and the reason why I asked the minister to maybe have those conversations with the industry. To be clear, the more time we put into an apprentice the quicker they learn, and the quicker they learn the more they have to offer the building or the business community. I do very much appreciate what happens in a relationship between an apprentice and a journeyman. I just hope to see more in the territory to make sure that the people we have going through the apprenticeship programs at the college — whether it's through carpentry or the electrician; whether we're looking at mechanics — that they all have an opportunity to work in the territory. Whatever way government can do to help facilitate those placements I think would be fantastic, so just a plug to continue on with maybe the conversation with industry about what government can do to better support them in their hiring of apprentices.

Hon. Mr. Graham: I fully agree and I guess I should clarify too — I think I did, but my dad's saying was that when he had one apprentice, he had still his full-time to teach, when he had two apprentices, he only worked half-time and when he had three, he didn't work at all on his normal job as he was with the apprentices all the time. I'm sure they got work out of them.

It was interesting to me because I had just moved into my parents' family home. One of the sad things I had to do was demolish his old garage in the back. A few guys came by as

they saw the garage going down, and they said, "My goodness. We spent a lot of time in that garage with your dad, both while we were students and while we were apprentices too." As a consequence, many of the things that we retrieved and salvaged from the garage went to various businesses around the City of Whitehorse — to apprentices who had worked through with my dad. It was really gratifying to me to see that all of those apprentices really remembered the journeyman whom they had worked through. Like I said before, it is a program very dear to my heart and we will do everything we can to improve it.

Training Programs in the amount of \$6,690,000 agreed to

Advanced Education Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$16,750,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

On Prior Years' Projects

Prior Years' Projects in the amount of nil cleared

Advanced Education Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Advanced Education Total Expenditures in the amount of \$16,750,000 agreed to

On Yukon College

Ms. Moorcroft: I would like to ask the minister if he can tell us whether the grant to Yukon College was forwarded to the college on April 1, 2016 so that they have the ability to manage and use those funds throughout the year or whether the amount is provided in installments. Could the minister give details on that?

Hon. Mr. Graham: As of April 3 or April 4, one-quarter went to Yukon College and one-quarter goes, each quarter, in advance of that quarter to the college.

Ms. Moorcroft: Has the government considered the request that we have brought to its attention fairly regularly of providing the full amount up-front to the college?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I knew even before getting any advice from my colleagues here that we had requested this funding when I was an employee at the college as well — any number of years. We discovered back then, and things have not changed, that it violates the *Financial Administration Act* and that the Department of Education simply could not pay out the full \$25.5 million at the beginning of the year each year.

Mr. Tredger: I have a question for the minister about Science Adventures. It is a fabulous program, and we have discussed it in the Legislature before. We have often done tributes to people who have been involved, and I know the minister had said that he would work with them to ensure that the program continued.

When I look on their webpage, I see Science Adventures coordinates hallmark events and activities such as: sci-tech girl — cancelled, all-girls science club — cancelled; Yukon/Stikine regional science fair — that went ahead; annual bridge building contest — again, that went ahead and both with quite success; and then the stay-a-day at Yukon College was cancelled. Those are pretty critical programs. I know a number of parents were calling me about them and

why they weren't being offered. I know the minister has said that he would look into it. Can you give me an update on where we are with Science Adventures and why the programming has been cancelled?

Hon. Mr. Graham: We have worked under contract with the college innovators in the schools and other programs, and we feel at the present time that, while we're in negotiations with the college, at the present time none of those programs should be cancelled due to a lack of resources that are being transferred to the college.

What we will do is, again, subject to negotiations with my department — but my path is fairly clear. If these programs cannot be done by the college with funding that's being given to the college, we will take the funding back and we will offer — because we believe those programs are essential to young people and we think they need to be offered.

Now this is not to say that absolutely everything that has been offered in the past will always be offered in the future because we evaluate programs on an ongoing basis, and some may be dropped and others added but we think these types of programs are so important that they can't be dropped.

Ms. White: We have discussed previously the importance of empowering young women in things like trades, technology and the sciences.

I think it was last year that I had an opportunity to go into the All-Girls Science Club as a guest instructor and we were talking about pulleys and things while using a bicycle as a demonstrator. I can tell you that, on a Saturday morning, the room was full to capacity and the young women were super engaged in what they were doing. They had fantastic instructors. I do echo the minister's thoughts that it's something that is important and should continue so I thank him for that commitment.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Just to make sure that the members opposite are aware, currently Yukon College gets \$57,000 a year for the innovators in the schools program and it also forms part of their base budget. They receive \$75,000 for the trades expedition camps and \$6,000 for the science fair adventures. We also provide, for the Yukon Women in Trades and Technology, about \$117,000. I realize that's not part of the funding intended for the public schools but it just gives you an idea of the amount of money that is going for those various projects.

We also contribute about \$8,500 a year to the Stikine science fair and we will continue doing that as well. These are the funds that we're talking about. We think that we have to offer the programs.

Mr. Tredger: I guess my big concern about this is that I have watched the program and Science Adventures grow over the years, and it's built on relationships, it's built on connections to the business and the scientific community. When programs start to be cancelled, or we change personnel or move from one institution to the next, we can lose that momentum and basically have to start over again. I guess that's my concern on that.

I will leave that one and I would like to go on to dual credit. The minister mentioned that they are looking at some

dual credit in Watson Lake. I know that dual credit has been operating in Whitehorse for a while. Can he give me an update on the number of students who have participated in the dual-credit courses? Are there primarily academic dual credits or are we starting to see some of the students taking part in dual credits for some of the trades?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I don't have those numbers available, but that is something that we can obtain and will send to the members opposite. Primarily, at this time, the dual-credit programs are all academic. Our first experience with the trades programs is the program that is now happening in Watson Lake, where we have Watson Lake high school students as well as adults participating in a trades program there. We intend, with the college's cooperation, to expand that as well because we feel it is a very valuable experience for these students — not only the high school students, but the trades students as well as the adult students. It's something that we are looking forward to continuing and expanding in the next while.

Chair: Does any other person wish to speak in debate on Yukon College?

We're going to move on to line-by-line debate.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

On Yukon College

Yukon College in the amount of \$25,509,000 agreed to

Yukon College Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$25,509,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

On Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining

Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining in the amount of \$1,123,000 agreed to

On Prior Years' Projects

Prior Years' Projects in the amount of nil cleared

Yukon College Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$1,123,000 agreed to

Yukon College Total Expenditures in the amount of \$26,632,000 agreed to

On Revenues

Revenues cleared

On Government Transfers

Government Transfers cleared

On Changes in Tangible Capital Assets and Amortization

Changes in Tangible Capital Assets and Amortization cleared

Department of Education agreed to

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, I move that you report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

Mr. Elias: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Elias that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.
Government bills.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 202: Act to Amend the Education Act — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 202, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Graham.

Hon. Mr. Graham: I move that Bill No. 202, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Education that Bill No. 202, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Graham: I rise today in the Legislature to introduce amendments to the *Education Act* during second reading. These amendments are related to school councils and school boards within the territory.

School councils play a very important role in shaping our schools and we appreciate their contributions to the Yukon school community. These amendments address how the numbers of guaranteed representatives are treated when it comes to determining minimum and maximum numbers of school council members and school board trustees. Section 67 of the *Education Act* requires the minister to specify the numbers of members of a school council and trustees of a school board, subject to fixed minimums and maximums. Section 68 provides for the guaranteed representation of Yukon First Nation people on councils and boards by agreement between the minister and Yukon First Nations.

Since 1991, the number of members of school councils has been established by ministerial order, in particular ministerial order 1991-02. Since that time, by tradition, the ministerial order refers to elected members only. Guaranteed representatives from Yukon First Nations have not been listed on those ministerial orders nor have their numbers counted toward the minimum or maximum number of school council members as set out in the act. Mr. Speaker, this is not to say that the guaranteed representatives from the First Nations themselves are not valued members of these individual school councils — in fact, in many areas, they are the majority. It's just that during the calculation of minimum and maximum

numbers of school council members, the guaranteed member's numbers have not been included. Uncertainty during this election as to whether these guaranteed representatives are to be included in the number specified by the minister or in the overall maximum has led to inconsistencies in school council numbers. This has not been an issue for school boards, since there are no guaranteed representatives on the Yukon Francophone school board.

The Chief Electoral Officer has raised a concern to me and department officials by letter about guaranteed representatives not being counted toward the minimum and maximum numbers. To resolve this, new subsection 67(4) explicitly excludes the guaranteed representatives from the meaning of "member" and "trustee" for the purposes of calculation under 67. This makes it clear that the guaranteed representatives do not count toward either the act's maximum number or the numbers specified by the minister, but are in addition to those numbers. New subsection 68(4) confirms that the guaranteed representatives remain members or trustees for all other purposes under the act. These amendments preserve the status quo and current practice of Yukon school councils. No changes will be required to either the existing number of elected members of school councils or to the number of guaranteed representatives on school councils.

No changes are being made to the election process, how school councils are constituted, the duties and powers of school councils or the numbers and roles of guaranteed representatives. Guaranteed representatives will continue to have the same duties, powers and responsibilities as elected members. There is also a grandmother clause that confirms the lawfulness of previous school councils and their decisions.

The act states that the number of school councils must have between three and seven members. No school councils have more than seven elected members; however, five school councils have more than seven members when guaranteed representatives are included in the total. These five are: F.H. Collins Secondary School, which has seven elected and four guaranteed representatives; Ghùch Tlâ community school, five elected members and three guaranteed representatives; Porter Creek Secondary School, seven elected members, two guaranteed representatives; Robert Service School council, six elected members and two guaranteed representatives; and the Watson Lake school council, which has seven elected members, three guaranteed representatives.

We are making the amendments at this time to ensure that the upcoming school council elections run smoothly. Mr. Speaker, just as an addition, school council nominations ceased last week. Unfortunately, there are not a huge number of school councils that will have elections; however, the changes to this act — I promised the Chief Electoral Officer — would be introduced and passed this session and that they would be made retroactive in the area of previous school councils with more than the allowed number of representatives where those decisions were made.

Mr. Speaker, it's because of this that we're bringing forward these amendments at the present time — no

substantive changes to the *Elections Act* whatsoever; no substantive changes to the composition of school councils. This is just to make sure that those school councils that have the maximum number of elected representatives are still allowed to have appointed representatives from the First Nations in their attendance area.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for his introduction. I would also like to thank the Chief Electoral Officer, as well as officials from the Department of Education and from Justice, for working on this. By acting on the concerns from Yukon's Chief Electoral Officer regarding the separate, but equally important, role of guaranteed representatives from First Nation communities on school councils, Bill No. 202 supports a robust school system that ensures an ongoing role for First Nations and for school council representatives.

Originally the guaranteed representation was introduced into the act when we were planning the act to ensure First Nations had participation in their local school councils and, in some communities, that they had a shared voice or equal voice so they could maintain some control. Because of that, Yukon school councils include two types of members: councillors, who are elected and guaranteed representatives, who are appointed. For all practical purposes, as the minister mentioned, they fulfill the same role. However they got there, they are treated equally. I was pleased to see that was ensured in this act, because it could quite easily be misconstrued.

I guess it was the ambiguity regarding the size of some school councils that led to the request to clarify the language surrounding the minimum and maximum numbers of elected council members. Since guaranteed representatives are not elected, they do not count as part of that question. While the NDP does support the bill, as it was presented, I do have a number of questions that I will raise in Committee of the Whole and seek some assurances.

I think the clarity is important when it comes to ensuring that First Nations are represented. A robust education would allow First Nation and non-First Nation communities to work collaboratively to improve the quality of and access to programming at our territory's schools.

A couple of questions I had are around the election process and whether or not there was an opportunity to have the elections held concurrently, should a First Nation decide that their appointed representatives could, should or may be elected. Another question I had was around — this is just from my experience on school councils and maybe this has been resolved by the decision to give the school councils \$100 for each child — but it has been an ongoing concern of school councils to meet requests from the schools for funds. Quite often school councils would forego their per diems so that they could put that money into school activities — or if people were absent from a meeting, they wouldn't get a per diem.

I am wondering if the minister has given any thought to the amount that school councils would collect per diem. Will that be changed if indeed we end up with boards exceeding 11 or 15? The other question I would have is: How do we ensure parity if school councils can have three to seven members? Is

that established per school, or will it be established per school, so that then when a First Nation is negotiating the number of guaranteed reps, they can ensure that there is an equal number? I know that quite often school councils don't fill their full number at the beginning, and so when a member of the public comes to the school council meeting and expresses an interest, they are immediately seized upon and encouraged to become members of the school council. If there is not a limit per school or a determined number, sometimes that could grow and it could cause some concerns.

Those would be my questions when we go to Committee of the Whole but, by and large, the NDP does support this bill. It looks like an excellent one.

Again, I would thank the minister and the Chief Electoral Officer as well as the departments of Education and Justice for their work on this. Hopefully it brings clarity to the situation.

Mr. Silver: I will be very brief on this second reading of Bill No. 202. I am very happy to rise to speak to the amendments proposed in the *Education Act*.

I do as well have a couple of questions for the minister for Committee of the Whole. We do understand that these amendments are to clarify the school council or board membership by differentiating between a member, a trustee and a guaranteed representative and that this clarification has brought all school councils and boards to within the council membership limits.

From the initial speech by the minister for second reading, he did talk a bit about limits. We were wondering if there are current limits set on the number of guaranteed representatives for each school, council or board, but have these changes affected the way members, trustees or guaranteed representatives are voted in or appointed as well?

Just clarification items — but other than that I am in total agreement that these are great changes to be made. We will be supporting this amendment to this act and we are looking forward to discussing it further in Committee of the Whole.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I would be happy to answer a few of the questions now, but I look forward to continuing this discussion in Committee of the Whole.

As for the election of First Nation representatives by the First Nation, we're told by First Nations across the territory that it's absolutely not needed.

They will choose their representatives within their own First Nation and just give us the names. In fact, the system has worked fine up until now. We placed no limit on the number of guaranteed representatives on any one school council. We are open to negotiation and we have negotiated — in fact, just recently I met with one First Nation and said: "Are you happy with the number of guaranteed representatives?" They laughed and said: "Well, we probably don't even need them because all of the elected school councillors are First Nation

folks as well.” But for clarity, we have not restricted in any way the number of First Nation representatives in areas. I look at the school in my community, which is Porter Creek Secondary School. They have two guaranteed representatives, and we look to get one from Kwanlin Dün and one from Ta’an Kwäch’än, which are the traditional First Nations in this area. Those are points of negotiation that we have with First Nations, and we are always willing to be flexible.

As for funding, we sincerely hope that the additional funding given to school councils, or provided to school councils in the coming year, will address many of the funding shortages. I have to tell members opposite that when I look at school councils across the territory, it is much like municipalities across the territory. Some of them are very frugal; they look after their money and have extremely large bank accounts for the size of the school. Others spend every cent they get every year. It depends entirely on the members of the school council.

I use Mayo as an example. I know that, on a municipal basis, year after year, Mayo is one of the most frugal, well-run municipalities in the Yukon, and I can think of a couple of others that are nowhere near as frugal or well-run. School councils are exactly the same.

We continue to work with them, and we know that the additional funding that many of them are getting this year is going to be an interesting exercise. We are already working with them to set the parameters. We have set the parameters and have done a number of other things in a cooperative fashion with school councils and it is turning out to be an interesting exercise.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I commend the bill to the House and look forward to Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. Stick: Agree.

Ms. Moorcroft: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 17 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for second reading of Bill No. 202 agreed to

Mr. Elias: I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

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

Bill No. 23: *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Department of Health and Social Services

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I’m pleased to introduce the Department of Health and Social Services capital and O&M budgets for 2016-17. First I would like to again thank my family, my friends and the constituents of Porter Creek South for supporting me, for believing in me and for encouraging me in my endeavours as a Yukon Party MLA and as a Cabinet minister.

My family, my friends, and when I’m speaking to constituents of Porter Creek South, all reinforce the importance of and recognize our stable and diverse economy, first-rate health care and high-quality education.

I would like to extend my thanks to the officials for joining me and providing support today.

Madam Chair, our Yukon Party government has done an incredible job at addressing a number of areas. The stronger the economy, the stronger our health care and the stronger our education systems will be. On the social side of the ledger,

I'm particularly proud of the investments we've made for those Yukoners living with disabilities or different abilities.

I have told colleagues in this house and Yukoners many times that since 2002, the Yukon Party government has stepped up to the plate to help kids like my son Jack and the issues they have facing autism, but also many other families and children who are affected by a number of other disabilities. My Yukon Party caucus colleagues and Yukoners know that without a functioning, stable economy to support it, a social safety net simply won't help anyone.

In this budget we are requesting \$348.363 million in operation and maintenance funding and \$112.148 million in capital for a total appropriation of \$460.511 million. This funding represents a projected increase of \$20.8 million, or six percent, in O&M funding over the 2015-16 main estimates and an increase of \$17.34 million in capital. The largest increase in the department's projected O&M increase mainly stems from a \$11.6-million increase in Health Services. Our largest projected capital spending will come from capital projects under three main areas: under Adult Services, they include the Sarah Steele Building replacement and the Salvation Army rebuild; under Continuing Care, it includes the new Whistle Bend continuing care facility; and under Yukon Hospital Services, it includes the MRI and Emergency department expansion.

Our projected revenue and recoveries are estimated to total more than \$41 million. Seventy-two percent of these projected recoveries are from Canada.

As I speak to Yukoners throughout the territory, I will continue to remind them that it is important to remember, in fact, where we came from. Most of us sitting here will remember that, prior to the Yukon Party taking office in 2002, Yukon was in the throes of a terrible economic recession. Our unemployment rate was double-digits. Our economy was far worse off than it is today. Both opposition parties did their best to euthanize resource extraction in the territory and our private-sector economy was in dire need of attention. These were the challenges before us when Yukoners elected the Yukon Party government in 2002 and re-elected us in 2006.

Moving forward to 2016, the Corporate Services division's capital budget will receive \$5.6 million, primarily to support the electronic health initiative, much of which is recoverable from Canada, and for the implementation of the e-health Canada Health Infoway system development projects. The electronic health project will eventually allow health care providers to access diagnostics, medications, treatments and other relevant clinical information for every patient in one location. This technological advancement will truly enhance the flow of information and increase efficiencies in our health system. Over the next year, the following three components will be implemented: a client registry, a drug information system and a lab information system.

We are also investing in the replacement of old IT systems used to administer social assistance. The new system will allow for all programs that administer income support services to be integrated and access necessary client information to support proper case management.

Madam Chair, it's not my preference to remind both opposition parties of the past, but I do feel it is incumbent upon me as a Yukoner and as an MLA to remind people exactly what their choices are and the harm the policy choices from the opposition parties have had on our economy and on our territory as a whole.

In 2016, for Family and Children's Services, we will be expanding early childhood and prevention services by adding a speech language pathologist and an assistant financial clerk. We will also be increasing funding for the Child Development Centre by \$174,000 to meet ongoing operational costs.

On the capital side, we have allocated a total capital increase of \$135,000 for the Family and Children's Services branch. This comes from an increase of \$135,000 to cover various minor capital expenses for the Young Offenders Facility as well as operational equipment. Under the Adult Services Unit, we will be increasing O&M funding by \$4.7 million to primarily support the operational costs of the three new facilities: Sarah Steele Building, St. Elias group home and the Salvation Army Whitehorse Centre of Hope. Over \$2 million will go toward operating the new Sarah Steele Building to support those struggling with mental health and addictions. This new facility will increase access to intensive treatment for all Yukoners by its new continuous intake model and providing simultaneous programs for both men and women.

Another large expansion is the introduction of youth addiction and mental health services, which will include a 365-day continuous four-bed residential treatment and withdrawal service program.

We are delivering on our party's platform commitment to increase after-care supports by enhancing post-treatment social work capacity and operationalizing eight transition beds to ensure that individuals are ready to integrate back into their communities. Operating the new St. Elias adult group home will require an increase of \$487,000. The St. Elias adult group home will have increased capacity from five to 10 rooms, four of which will be suited for more independent living. The facility will continue to provide a safe and supportive home for individuals suffering from mild to severe cognitive disabilities.

We have allocated \$25,000 to the Salvation Army's new after-hours social assistance program and \$170,000 to enhance the operations of the new facility opening this winter. Social assistance will receive an additional \$1.9 million to meet program demands. We will also be providing an increase of \$150,000 to provide day programming for persons with disabilities transitioning from Family and Children's Services to Adult Services. Teegatha'Oh Zheh will be receiving an increase of \$154,000 to meet the operational demands.

We have allocated significant capital spending of \$15.585 million under Adult Services to cover our key social service projects, including the replacement of the Sarah Steele Building at \$7.378 million and the Salvation Army redevelopment at \$8.207 million. We are very excited about the opening of the new Sarah Steele Building, which is expected to be opening later this fall. The expanded and

enhanced Salvation Army Centre of Hope is expected to open this coming winter. The purpose of this building is to serve our more vulnerable population in our community by providing emergency shelter and transitional housing options. The 20 transitional beds will be used to support individuals who want supportive services and are looking to make steps toward securing more independence. These two major capital projects reflect our commitment to supporting individuals struggling with mental health and addiction issues, and also to create more accessible and more diverse housing options for our more vulnerable people.

Not only has the Yukon Party been a tremendous steward of a strong, stable economy, but I have said before that the Yukon Party government doesn't give itself enough credit for the work they have done on the social side of the ledger over the last 14 years. Our clear vision for moving forward together and our solid leadership from the Premier maintains our path to support our commitments to all Yukoners. This Yukon Party government will continue down the path to improving upon achieving a better quality of life, building a prosperous, diversified Yukon economy, managing and protecting Yukon's environment and wildlife and practising good government.

The territorial health initiative fund continues throughout this fiscal year, and its funding is 100-percent recoverable from Health Canada. In 2016 under a Yukon Party government, there is an increase of \$4.3 million, which will be going toward mental wellness projects, chronic disease management, e-mental health supports and the Yukon telepsychiatry pilot project. There are seven term positions working on the fifth project. These will continue until March 31, 2017.

We are allocating \$228,000 in resources to the implementation for a preventive screening program for colorectal cancer in Yukon, and medical travel for Yukoners has increased by \$1.4 million.

The 10-year mental health strategy will receive \$1 million to support mental wellness community capacity building. This overall strategy and implementation plan provides clarity on how we are taking action to address mental wellness in Yukon and how we are going forward together.

This overall strategy and implementation plan provides clarity on how we are taking action to address mental wellness in Yukon. We are allocating a total of \$846,000 in capital spending under Health Services, which is distributed to various facilities and programs, particularly in the communities. I was very happy to announce, along with the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin, that we will be spending \$250,000 on planning for the replacement of the Old Crow Health Centre. I certainly thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for his advocacy in ensuring positive health outcomes for his community.

With respect to community and program support, we have increased regional support services by \$365,000 to enhance social worker services in rural Yukon communities. These efforts will help to improve mental health supports and increase access to social supports.

Social assistance administered through Regional Services will receive \$600,000 to meet program needs and the Yukon seniors income support will receive an increase of \$110,000 due to the growing senior population.

In regard to continuing care, the Sixth Avenue continuing care home facility opened this February and it is at full occupancy. The operational costs for this facility and programming will be \$1.7 million and will provide long-term care for its residents.

The Yukon Home Care Program will receive an additional \$244,000 as we continue to support individuals living in their own home for as long as possible. This program is continually trying to look at ways to support people at home with increasing levels of dementia and complex care needs.

The operational costs for phase 1 of the Whistle Bend continuing care facility are approximately \$262,000.

Under capital, we are proceeding with major capital projects under the Continuing Care division and have allocated over \$68 million for this year.

Our largest project is by far the Whistle Bend continuing care at \$67 million. The Whistle Bend continuing care facility will begin construction this spring and will be completed within 24 months. The first phase of the project includes the construction of the 150-bed facility and all of the support space, including kitchen, laundry and a village for the whole facility. Currently there are between 65 and 70 individuals waiting for services — for a continuing care facility. This government has certainly committed to meeting the long-term care needs of Yukoners.

In Dawson, we have opened the new McDonald Lodge, which currently provides 15 beds instead of the previous 11, and has the capacity to have five additional beds added in the future.

The new Sixth Avenue continuing care home facility, or Birch Lodge, opened in February of this year and provides an additional 10 beds. As I mentioned earlier, it's already operating at full capacity. In the next 10 years, the Yukon's senior population will almost double. Twenty percent of the current Yukon population is in the 55- to 60-year age group. The Whistle Bend continuing care facility will be critical infrastructure in helping us meet the current and future needs of seniors and other Yukoners needing continuing care services.

The Department of Health and Social Services has forecast \$28 million for O&M for the Whistle Bend continuing care facility. This estimate supports operational costs in line with other facilities operated in the Yukon, at approximately \$500 per day per individual — quite a contrast from the \$35 per day the residents are charged.

McDonald Lodge in Dawson City has been completed and demolition of the old facility will cost approximately \$500,000.

Madam Chair, the Yukon Hospital Corporation will receive \$200,000 for an additional emergency room nurse and, to match demand, we have increased funding for blood products by \$205,000. I should note that the new MRI machine will receive \$16,000 to cover increases in operational

costs. We've budgeted \$22 million in capital for the new Emergency department expansion project, and we continue to support and observe the benefits of having our own MRI program north of 60.

Now moving on to the revenue side of the budget: as I mentioned earlier, revenues and recoveries for the department total over \$41 million. The largest component of federal recoveries is from the new territorial health investment fund, THIF, at \$13 million. We're also receiving an increase of \$999,000 for increased recoveries at Copper Ridge Place and for our new Sixth Avenue continuing care home, or Birch Lodge facility, from Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development Canada. I should note that, when the Whistle Bend continuing care facility is open, it too will receive revenues from Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

These are some of the highlights for the Department of Health and Social Services for 2016. Madam Chair, I do have a few closing comments, but I see that my time is up, so I will sit down and offer the floor to members opposite, and I can continue on with my remarks when they're completed.

Ms. Stick: I welcome the officials from the department here. I'll be brief. I would like to get into the budget. I have questions in many areas to discuss and look for answers.

To me, it's just amazing how some things don't change in the last four and a half years. I think the number one thing that, for me, stands out is the lack of a mental health strategy. We're into day 10 of a 28-day Sitting in our last Sitting of four and a half years, and we still do not have a mental health strategy. This is something that goes previous to other Yukon Party governments in the past, where there was a call for a mental health strategy that would benefit all Yukoners in the communities and in Whitehorse, and still we don't have that piece — that document — in front of us that is going to show Yukoners and the people in this Legislature how this government intends to move forward on a mental health strategy, which is important when it impacts so many individuals and families in the Yukon.

We're back on another capital project — in particular the Whistle Bend project — and it really feels that due diligence has not been done. We received a report in 2013 — the final report, which happened prior to public consultation or even discussion about what people might like to see in terms of seniors and elder care in the Yukon. This growing need for senior care and continuing care we recognize and we agree that we need something. This shouldn't have come as a surprise to any government and planning should have happened for this long before now, when we have people waiting in hospital either in Whitehorse, Watson Lake or Dawson for a continuing care bed or room somewhere. This has been known to be going on for a long time and planning should have happened long before this. This government has been in power for just about 14 years and it just seems in the last two that we seem to have action on this.

With that, I will sit down and allow the member opposite to finish with his statements and then I have lots of questions.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Moving on with my closing remarks and then I'll try to address a couple of the issues that the member opposite has already brought forth, Yukoners selected the Yukon Party to lead the territory because this team has the vision, the energy and the experience to meet the challenges head-on with confidence. The Yukon Party government has again used the budget to make considerate and strategic investments.

I'll start with the Whistle Bend continuing care facility — what I can recognize is that since this Yukon Party government took office in 2002, we see more people staying in the territory including seniors and this Yukon Party government has done such an incredible job at governing the territory, we see seniors that had moved away from the territory moving back because of the exceptional services that are provided in the territory.

Madam Chair, the Whistle Bend facility will be a specialized care facility that will provide a safe and welcoming home environment for Yukon continuing care residents. This facility will be the resident's home, operated with a resident-centred philosophy. Within the plan for 150 beds, there will be two new programs for Yukon: a community hospice with 18 higher acuity rooms and a specialized, long-term care mental health house with 12 rooms, as well as five standard houses with an additional 120 rooms. Standard houses will be appropriate for residents with varying needs, including those with dementia and those who are dependant for all activities of daily life.

Important partners, stakeholders, staff and a team of residents and family members are certainly and have been involved in the planning process. The facility will be based on a village concept where the most private level of the spectrum is the house and will provide numerous communal and private spaces suitable for a variety of activities and interests. The Whistle Bend continuing care facility will have a dedicated space for an adult day program for frail, elderly individuals and to support seniors and elders to remain in their own homes.

Madam Chair, as I've indicated previously on the floor of this Legislature, we do not have a formal, approved budget yet for O&M costs for running the new Whistle Bend facility and we expect those numbers to evolve over the next couple of years as the stakeholder groups continue to work out the precise details of the programming. We do have an idea of the order of magnitude of costs for the operation and maintenance of this new facility and there have been dollars approved through the Management Board process with respect to the forecasted expenditures for O&M.

As I indicated earlier in Question Period, we currently operate a 96-bed extended care facility at Copper Ridge Place and we know that the staffing model and support services costs will be very similar to the new facility, so we can expect similar costs. In 2015-16 the O&M costs for Copper Ridge were \$18,489,000.

Of this, \$16 million, or 86.7 percent, goes toward payroll for nurses, therapies, dietary, housekeeping, administration, maintenance, laundry and so on. Food and nursing supplies

account for \$922,000 or five percent; and \$890,000 goes for heating and electricity. That is 4.8 percent of the total budget. Pharmacy and medical costs are \$294,203 per year — 1.6 percent of the budget — while repairs and maintenance make up 0.6 percent of the budget at \$113,210.

As I have also indicated on the floor of this Legislature, this government certainly recognizes that it is expensive to care for seniors. Even so, we are committed to providing our seniors with the care that they need, Madam Chair. Currently when this care is provided at Whitehorse General Hospital, we pay \$2,462 per day. By comparison, at Whistle Bend and Copper Ridge Place, we pay — or will pay — approximately just over \$500 per bed per day or approximately \$28 million per year. I did indicate in my remarks earlier that the expectation or the fee that the seniors pay toward that \$500 per day is only \$35 a day here in Yukon.

We've included those O&M costs in our long-term fiscal plan. Those costs are all-inclusive; they cover medical staff, all ancillary staff, janitorial food and all other costs.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Building a facility of this size also helps to keep those costs in line, which is another approach for the reason that we've taken. I can add that, in my earlier remarks, I talked about recoveries from Canada and we expect, on the Whistle Bend continuing care facility, to have recoveries in the area of about \$7 million per year.

The need for a significant number of new care facility beds in Yukon was certainly confirmed through the two needs assessments and the business case that was conducted for government and the current patterns of usage of long-term care and the long, growing wait-lists for facility beds.

Acute care beds are also being used by patients requiring an alternate level of care and who should receive care in a facility rather than in acute care at the hospital. The government has been proactive — and has been proactive all along — in planning for the care needs of our seniors and elders and the significant number of individuals who will be living with dementia in the near future.

As has also been mentioned on the floor of this Legislature — our Premier indicated, and our party believes, that both parties opposite would halt the work on the continuing care facility if they were elected, leaving anywhere from 65 to 90 people on the wait-list for continuing care. I can also add that by 2021, it is expected that we will need 383 beds. We currently have 182. To halt this project would simply be doing a disservice to that large number of people on the wait-list, waiting for long-term care. To halt this project would be doing a disservice to Yukoners. To halt this project would be doing a disservice to the men and women working in long-term care who know we need this facility.

I believe that this Yukon Party government has done its homework when it comes to long-term care — despite the members opposite telling people that we are developing this project based on input and feedback from residents, clients, families, First Nations, staff of long-term care and key stakeholders and we will continue to listen to those important people as we move forward on this project.

We are fortunate to have an amazing home care system here in the territory, the largest, most comprehensive program — which is at a very low cost, if any, to Yukoners. Home care services include homemaking, personal care, nursing, social work and therapy services. Because we have increased our investment in home care by nearly 400 percent over the last number of years, there is currently no wait-list for home care. We provide a number of community supports to help individuals remain in their own homes as long as possible. We're proud of those services and we're proud that we invest in Yukoners' health care.

Moving on to mental health — I was very happy to make an announcement just a number of weeks ago, and that announcement was around the \$1 million that this Yukon Party government has invested in community-based mental health initiatives. I went on to say that this fund will support the principles and concepts of the Yukon mental wellness strategy, which will be released in the next few weeks and will help communities tailor capacity-building initiatives to meet their specific needs.

It certainly takes partnerships from First Nations, from First Nation governments and all levels of government and communities to provide those individuals with the help and support that they need. I was pleased that the chair of the Mental Health Association was very supportive of us moving forward with this \$1-million investment in Mental Health Services. He went on to say that Yukon communities will benefit from having access to more resources and this fund is one way of providing them with the support that they need.

Madam Chair, I am very happy that in the next few weeks we will be releasing the mental wellness strategy. I know our critics will say that it has been a long time coming, but we have one chance to do this the right way and so we will, and we have taken our time to ensure that happens. Right now, our partners and stakeholders — both within Whitehorse and rural Yukon communities — are reviewing the strategy with a team from the department. It is important to me, as the minister responsible for mental health and to the government as a whole, that we have these very frank discussions up front and ensure that the context for the strategy is certainly understood by everyone. I can tell members that this will be a strategy for 10 years — that it will feature the best practices from Canadian and international jurisdictions and builds on past and current work here in the territory.

The government is already doing a lot of work in the area of mental health services for citizens and I can't thank a number of our partners enough — both NGOs, governments and in the communities — for the incredible amount of work that they are doing.

Madam Chair, under Mental Health Services, as I indicated there are a number of programs that are up and running and I would like to name a few of them here. Under the territorial health investment fund, a community knowledge exchange workshop on mental health and addictions will be held in July 2016. There is the FRIENDS group, through the Bell funding and certainly very appreciative of Bell and Northwestel — Paul Flaherty and his team — for partnering

with Yukon government and other entities that provide support and services around mental health. There is also mental health first aid training and I have talked to a number of staff throughout government who have taken this training and they are very appreciative of it.

There is a living life to the full course through the Mental Health Association of Yukon. I just talked to Ray Wells two short weeks ago and met with a couple of other members from the Mental Health Association of Yukon and they are very excited to be able to provide this workshop throughout the territory. I think they have done 15 or 16 workshops. Don't quote me on that, but I believe that they have presented a number of workshops in that number range throughout the territory.

We are also providing the trauma-informed practice training through Yukon government, another piece that is certainly very important.

Under the national initiatives, I've already talked about Bell Let's Talk and our important partnership with Bell and Northwestel. The Kwanlin Dün First Nation national knowledge exchange gathering was on March 29. I just talked with Chief Doris Bill a couple of days ago, and we were all very excited about how that gathering progressed. The outcomes were very positive and we look forward to working with First Nations as partners on our mental wellness and mental health programs, as we move forward.

In the communities, there are community addictions programs; there are mental health nurses and child/adolescent treatment services workers servicing communities outside of Whitehorse. There are: the e-mental health apps pilot project with schools outside of Whitehorse; supporting Many Rivers to deliver the Flourishing program in two rural Yukon schools as part of a pilot project; and the telemental health pilot to increase access to counsellors in Carmacks, Carcross, Pelly and Mayo.

I've had the honour and privilege of creating a relationship with the Canadian Centre for Child Protection over the last number of years, and that's a relationship we will continue to foster, as they provide some exceptional material, particularly around young people who have found themselves in unusual situations and need that level of support. More importantly, their program really offers the preventive measures through online marketing — perhaps Facebook posts or other — so children know there are outcomes to their behaviour around sharing intimate images but, needless to say, there is support for them and, if they are experiencing difficulties as a result of providing such images, there are means and ways in which they can get that support.

Madam Chair, I think that's all I have, as you're indicating my time is up. I welcome and look forward to the questions from the members opposite.

Ms. Stick: I would like to move into actual budget questions. The way I like to do it is that I start at the beginning and I move through and have questions on the amounts, but I also have questions on a lot of the information that is prepared in the budget, which I find very helpful in terms of determining programs and what's happening in them.

At the beginning, I have a couple of questions around Corporate Services and the budget item. This is a question I'm always interested in. It's in the number of auxiliary-on-call employees who are hired by this department. That includes in continuing care, group homes and social services. I know many individuals who are auxiliary on call and have been for a number of years. Many work full-time and sometimes even more than that. For some it is a choice to be auxiliary on call — they like the flexibility — for others, they wish to be permanent because, without that permanency, they do not have the same health or dental benefits as permanent employees, they do not have paid leave or days off for sickness, vacation leave and that type of thing.

There is an amount in their pay that somehow is supposed to cover those things, but for many it has been years that they have been working as auxiliary on call in the same position. I am just wondering what the numbers are. How long is this going to carry on? Is there any move to change some of the auxiliary-on-call positions to permanent positions? I know we did it recently with St. Elias where those positions did become — or some of them — permanent positions. I am wondering if there are any other areas where they are considering auxiliaries on call to become more permanent than they are currently?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I certainly extend my appreciation to the member opposite for asking the question regarding auxiliaries on call. They are very important positions, especially throughout the Department of Health and Social Services when we are operating a number of 24/7 care or supervision-type of environments.

As Minister of Health and Social Services, I would like to thank all of those who are working as auxiliaries on call. I know that, as the member opposite had indicated, many of them work as auxiliaries on call because they choose that — perhaps it is a lifestyle choice or a number of other reasons. I would certainly like to extend my appreciation to those individuals doing that work. Certainly, there would be opportunities for them to apply for permanent positions through competitions as those positions come available, but what I can tell the member opposite is that, at this current time throughout the department, we have 80.68 on-call equivalent positions. Those positions are used to cover volume increases, sicknesses and vacancies. As I mentioned, in 24/7 operations, we will always need some positions to meet program demands and, again, on behalf of the department I express my thanks and gratitude to those individuals.

Ms. Stick: That is a big number. Is that the same equivalent as an FTE — the 80.68? If so, the other question would be: How many individuals make up that 80.68 FTEs, if that is what that is?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: The 80.68, as the member was asking, are FTE equivalents. As far as the actual number of people who fill those 80.68 positions, I can commit to getting back to the member opposite.

Ms. Stick: Just on the same line — and I imagine the minister would have to get back to me on this one also. I am aware of individuals who have been auxiliaries on call for

over 10 years. Again, I know they can apply on jobs that might come up, but I am wondering if there is any move to look at those positions and make more of them permanent. It may mean that they still need to be doing coverage, but they can be scheduled in. That's a lot of individuals, Madam Chair, who don't have the benefit of health or dental coverage or paid leave for vacations or sickness.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: As the member opposite can understand, those 80.68 equivalent FTE positions are certainly — that's a number at one point in time. That number can certainly fluctuate. Those individuals provide services at a number of different programs that aren't necessarily transferrable. For an example, the new Oblate Centre or the Birch Lodge on Sixth Avenue — if it had auxiliary staff there, those positions wouldn't necessarily be transferrable for those individuals to work at, like in the RYTS program or at the Young Offenders Facility. Certainly there are smaller numbers in each of the programs. I know 80 looks like a large number, but with the size of the Department of Health and Social Services, that 80.6 provides flexibility and services at a large number of different programs.

As I mentioned earlier in my response, the auxiliary-on-call positions are utilized for a number of different reasons, whether it be vacations or sick days or so on.

With respect to those individuals who are working on call, I would certainly encourage them to continue to look for other vacant full-time permanent positions and continue to apply on those. I can't speak to the hiring of full-time staff and the HR requirements in our department, but I just encourage people — if there's a position out there and they are interested in working full-time — to continue to apply for those.

Ms. Stick: I will move on. We see in Health Services a substantial increase of \$12 million, and I'm just looking for a better explanation of where the \$12 million is being spent.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Madam Chair, we'll have more information when we get into the line-by-line portion of the budget. We've seen personnel increases of \$49,000; there was an increase of \$110,000 and one FTE for a functional analyst position offset by a decrease of \$61,000 due to staffing vacant positions at a lower rate of pay and a decrease in fringe benefits. There's \$1.465 million for medical travel increase benefits — a lot of this is under THIF; \$4,050,000 for physician claims to address increased costs for physician services within and outside of Yukon; \$625,000 to cover the high cost of drugs for the chronic disease program; a \$1,277,000 one-time increase to cover the high cost for medication used for the treatment of hepatitis C; \$98,000, a one-time increase for health benefits administration annual increase to adjust budget for the medevac contract, as negotiated; a \$100,000 increase for costs associated with the claims process and registration systems; a \$475,000 increase to the Yukon Medical Association agreement; a \$200,000 time-limited increase to the Yukon Medical Association agreement for the collaborative care initiative, and that's offset by a \$700,000 decrease for one-time funding for

physician services in Watson Lake and a \$350,000 decrease for one-time funding for the collaborative care initiative.

Ms. Stick: I thank the member opposite for that. I am just wondering if I could have an update on the Canada Health Infoway — the electronic health records. We had estimated to spend more than \$4.5 million in the last fiscal year and more than \$4.5 million in the coming year. I'm just wondering if I could have a reminder, please, of what the total cost of this project is going to be and how many more years we are looking at for this particular project.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: E-health means the electronic linking of relevant information between physicians, pharmacists and other health care providers to support personal health care decision-making and health system sustainability. The vision for e-health is that, eventually, all health care providers in Yukon will be able to view diagnostics, medication, treatment and other relevant clinical information as one patient record.

The current e-health project has three components: a client registry, a drug information system, and a lab information system. These systems will be implemented over the next year. The lab information system phase is now operational in the community health centres and continuing care, allowing the flow of lab tests electronically between these programs and the Whitehorse General Hospital. Phase 2, connection to BC, will occur over the next fiscal year. E-health committees are working with various stakeholders and partners and subject matter experts throughout the implementation of these systems. There is a \$10-million allocation, \$6 million of which is recoverable from Canada.

Madam Chair, I don't have to tell you that Yukon is far behind the rest of Canada when it comes to an e-health system. Additional infrastructure is usually required in rural and remote regions, like the north, and Infoway money is not guaranteed into the future. I thank the member opposite for bringing this forward.

Ms. Stick: If I can just go back to the same question and ask again, we saw funding last year — a little bit the previous year — in 2014-15. We saw funding last year in this fiscal year. Will we continue to see further funding of this amount or similar amounts in the coming years?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: This project is to be completed by March 31 of 2017. We don't expect any funds to be in the 2017-18 budget tabled next spring.

Ms. Stick: A question again under Corporate Services and human resources. I'm just wondering if the department is continuing to use outside human resource companies in terms of hiring management positions. We saw that in the contracts last year, where there were, I believe, contracts out for \$75,000 in terms of hiring management positions in the department, instead of using our own considerable human resource staffing that we have in the department now.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: At this time, there are no recruitment agencies hired by the Department of Health and Social Services.

Ms. Stick: I'm going to move on to some of the Family and Children's Services information. When I was looking at the statistics for child protection services and family services,

we see that these numbers are continuing to rise both in Whitehorse and in the communities. Under family services, we're talking about counselling, prevention and support measures provided by personnel in the rural communities.

Are there regular visits to every community by the Family Services Unit and do any of the communities actually have permanent staff who provide those services in the rural communities?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I extend my thanks to the number of social workers who continue to work throughout the territory in a number of communities. We have a number of social workers based here in Whitehorse, but we also have social workers based in Watson Lake, Dawson City and Haines Junction who service the outlying communities of those areas.

On top of that, there are a number of other professionals who service the communities. Many Rivers travels to a number of the different communities and we have the workers at the Child and Adolescent Therapeutic Services who travel to a number of the communities, but I think primarily the increases that we've seen over the last couple of years have been attributed to some of the public awareness campaigns that we've driven through this department and perhaps through other departments.

I know the Department of Education has been a great partner in those campaigns, and following the family and children's services act and the implementation of those public awareness campaigns, we've definitely seen an increase since then.

I think that most of the increases, as I mentioned, can be attributed to the public awareness. Earlier I talked about the relationship we have formed with the Canadian Centre for Child Protection and how that has — I know when we first signed the agreement with them and were speaking publicly about the relationship we had with them, the traffic to their website increased by 1,000 percent, or maybe even more than that. I continue to have dialogue with those organizations and with my government caucus colleagues on how we can look at doing future campaigns, promoting future campaigns with the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, but also with a number of the programs that we are operating through the Department of Health and Social Services.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Mr. Elias: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Elias that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order. May the House have a report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:25 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 260

1st Session

33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, April 26, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER — Hon. David Laxton, MLA, Porter Creek Centre

DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake

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Hon. Elaine Taylor	Whitehorse West	Deputy Premier Minister responsible for Tourism and Culture; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Justice; Yukon Development Corporation/ Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Doug Graham	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Education
Hon. Scott Kent	Riverdale North	Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources; Highways and Public Works
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Jan Stick	Official Opposition House Leader Riverdale South
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, April 26, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed with the Order Paper. Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Yukon Robotics Challenge

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to the students, educators and volunteers who are participating today in the third annual Yukon Robotics Challenge. Under the guidance of enthusiastic teachers, students in grades 6 and 7 have been learning to program robots to complete a variety of tasks. Approximately 130 students on 33 teams from Whitehorse, Destruction Bay and Teslin are participating in today's event.

The theme of the challenge today is "Alternate Energies". Tasks for the robots incorporate wind, solar, geothermal, hydro transmission, biomass and biofuel energies. All the teams start with the same basic kit.

I see the Member for Takhini-Kopper King smiling. Yes, it is an interesting challenge.

It is up to the students to decide how to arrange the sensors, wheels and robot features, and then, Mr. Speaker, the real fun begins. Working in groups of four or five, the teams program robots to place and rotate objects, to throw switches and to detect and follow paths. While they are having fun in a hands-on activity, students are also learning the basics of design, engineering and computer programming through project-based learning. They also hone their public speaking skills and build confidence by presenting their work and fielding questions from the judges. Lessons learned from this challenge will serve students well in the global knowledge economy.

The robotics challenge fosters creativity, collaboration, communication and critical-thinking skills. The development of these four competencies is crucial for the long-term success of every learner.

I extend my thanks to the Yukon Robotics Challenge organizers for making this experiential learning opportunity available to all students in the territory: Superintendent Penny Prynsuk and long-time educator Glenna Howard for championing the competition and initiating this now-annual Yukon Education Week event; Engineers Yukon for providing volunteer judges; Porter Creek Secondary School for providing the venue; the teachers from Jack Hulland Elementary School, Elijah Smith Elementary School, Takhini Elementary School, Holy Family School, Whitehorse Elementary School, Kluane Lake School and Teslin School,

who brought robotics into their classrooms and got their students excited about computer programming.

I would like to give special mention to teachers David Michayluk and Jill Potter, who have been involved with this event since the very start. Both have done an absolutely wonderful job and have grown this challenge, encouraging other teachers to bring their students into the fold. Most of all, I want to congratulate and thank the students on the robot designs, teamwork and their spirit of friendly cooperation. It can only serve them better in years to come.

In recognition of Gwaandak Theatre

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Third Party as we wrap up and reflect on a busy writers' week to pay tribute to Gwaandak Theatre, a group that transforms the written word to the spoken word and who earlier this month celebrated the 15th anniversary of their founding. When I asked the Gwaandak group if I could raise this tribute, I think they were a little taken back, which is really a reflection of the grassroots nature of who they are. Despite the fact that others have come to recognize their contributions, they themselves maintain their humility, which is in itself reason to honour them today.

Gwaandak Theatre is Yukon's only indigenous theatre company. It was founded in Whitehorse in 1999 by theatre artists Leonard Linklater and Patti Flather. Over the past 15 years, Gwaandak Theatre has grown from the inspired, but modest beginnings set in motion by Patti and Leonard, to become a real force in Canadian theatre, all the while staying true to their roots in Yukon.

As I understand it, Mr. Speaker, "gwaandak" in the Gwich'in language, means "storyteller", and Gwaandak Theatre's vision really is to shine a light and focus on indigenous and northern stories from around the world.

Anyone who has attended one of Gwaandak Theatre's plays or play readings knows that their stories touch the audience on many levels. They cause us to question, to honour and to celebrate. They explore themes of decolonization, cultural identity, social justice, under-represented voices and human rights.

In carrying out their vision, Gwaandak Theatre has committed to making their productions accessible to people wherever they live. They tour to both tiny communities and major centres in Yukon and across Canada. In addition, they provide comprehensive study guides on the subject matter covered in their productions for secondary schools and colleges.

In addition to developing, producing and touring plays aimed at both youth and adults, Gwaandak Theatre offers new play workshops, readings and training for new artists.

I have had the privilege of seeing Gwaandak Theatre productions in communities as diverse as Old Crow, Teslin, and Whitehorse. A couple of years ago during the international Biennial Gwichin Gathering in Old Crow, the group performed at the Old Crow community hall, sharing excerpts from the plays *Justice* by Leonard Linklater and *Sixty Below* by Patti Flather and Leonard. In addition, there was a

fascinating reading of *Lear Khehkwaii* — maybe the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin can tell me — a Gwitchin adaptation of Shakespeare's *King Lear* by Allan Hayton from the Fairbanks Shakespeare Theatre.

Mr. Speaker, it was neat to see community members and delegates from the Gwitchin Gathering participate in these readings. This idea of engaging community members as participants in the play readings really helps to break down the barriers around what theatre is, and it's a really amazingly good bridge for the arts. Gwaandak Theatre has also taken theatre to the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, delivering five one-and-a-half day, indigenous-centred theatre storytelling workshops at the Whitehorse Correctional Healing Room. Readings of the play *Sixty Below*, which is the story of a Gwich'in man leaving jail, and *Trickster Visits the Old Folks Home* by Sharon Shorty, about an elder moving to a seniors home, offer both an exploration of Yukon aboriginal storytelling traditions as well as creating a safe space for inmates to tell their own stories.

One of the more emotionally challenging plays that Gwaandak has staged was *The Hours That Remain* by Métis playwright Keith Barker. Local actors Christine Genier and Melaina Sheldon shone in the lead roles in this moving exploration of the issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women. It was an intensely personal and moving event for everybody who saw that, wherever they saw it.

Yukon's cultural fabric is richer as a result of the dedication and commitment of all the people, current and past, who are Gwaandak Theatre. I ask the members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in welcoming to the Assembly today: Marjolene Gauthier; the general manager, Patti Flather; and managing artistic director, Melaina Sheldon, who, in addition to being president of Gwaandak Theatre since 2012, is also a talented actress, as I've mentioned. Melaina was presented with a Tourism Industry award on Friday in recognition of the Inland Tlingit gathering that she's been involved with from Teslin for some time, and with Melaina is Austin Roe so I welcome them to the House today.

Applause

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I too am very honoured and humbled and pleased to be able to pay tribute on behalf of the Government of Yukon to Gwaandak Theatre's 15th anniversary. As I said at the very onset of the celebratory event that was held on April 9th at the Old Fire Hall — my, how far we've come in 15 years.

This is a tremendous achievement and I want to congratulate Gwaandak's founders, northern playwrights Patti Flather and Leonard Linklater, as well as all those who were just referenced by the Leader of the Official Opposition and many others to be sure who have really contributed to the development of this innovative company over the past 15 years.

For the last decade and a half, Gwaandak Theatre has been diligently working on fulfilling their mission, which is to develop, produce and tour professional plays to empower indigenous and northern voices. Gwaandak has made a

tremendously profound impact to our community and to our territory by providing that unique platform for theatre audiences to hear these many varied voices and stories. Gwaandak holds an important place within our arts community, producing thoughtful and provocative theatre productions and play readings that tell compelling stories and deeply resonate with diverse audiences.

Throughout these past 15 years, Patti Flather, Leonard Linklater and their teams have earned this place through their hard work, innovation, teamwork, collaboration and vision — as well as their award-winning writing. From its very beginnings as Gwaandak Theatre adventures to the company we know today, Gwaandak stands as Yukon's primary indigenous theatre company. It has become an established and respected theatre company that operates on local, national as well as international stages. It's an organization that operates territory-wide and they have taken theatre to communities across the Yukon and they have partnered with organizations and First Nations from rural communities on a multitude of projects.

I want to really thank Gwaandak Theatre for the performances and the learning opportunities that they have and they continue to contribute to our communities; specifically, the outreach that they do within our schools — to really continue within our schools, our theatres and each of our communities to tell the many diverse stories here in the territory in the north and bring them to life.

They offer practical and hands-on learning, development and mentoring in all areas of theatre, including direction and production, playwriting and acting, providing opportunities for local actors to explore challenging and meaningful roles and further their artistic development. As well, they offer Yukon talent the chance to practise their theatrical skills with national and international performers and companies. In fact, I think it's really worthy to note that just later on this summer in June, Magnetic North will be coming here for the first time ever. Of course, Magnetic North, otherwise known as Canada's Theatre Festival, will be taking stage here in our territory — the first time ever north of 60 to be held. Gwaandak Theatre will be playing a very pivotal and lead role on the national stage, so to speak, among many other theatre companies — national and international — and this does speak — is testament — to the work that they have done.

Most importantly, as has already been noted, they bring the stories of indigenous people from across Canada to Yukon, uniting voices and revealing truths that Yukoners might otherwise not have the opportunity to hear.

All that they do is achieved through the valuable relationships that this theatre company has forged with partners, not only here in the Yukon, but across this country and across the globe.

Furthermore, I would like to congratulate Gwaandak Theatre for their successes in touring their productions beyond our borders, showcasing Yukon's indigenous and northern playwriting and theatre production talent. Gwaandak Theatre is unflinching and courageous in staging productions that consistently encourage meaningful discussion and greater

awareness of many contemporary, northern social issues. *The Hours That Remain* is but one of the many productions that they have produced over the years and one that has resonated deeply with me. I wish to say congratulations on this anniversary year, and I want to thank you for all that you have offered over the last 15 years. Congratulations.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any visitors to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming my wife, Brittany Dixon, and her colleague, Lindsay Schneider. For reasons beyond me, they have chosen the Yukon Legislative Assembly for some lunch-hour entertainment. Please join me in welcoming them.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your due patience. I have for tabling the *Yukon Tourism Indicators Year-End Report for 2015*. Yesterday I incorrectly referenced that the report had been posted online when in fact it had not been — my apologies for that. I received a copy of the year-end report earlier today and that is what I am tabling. The report will be posted online as well.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?
Are there any petitions for presentation?
Are there any bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to examine establishing a partnership with the Pacific Autism Family Centre that would provide for a local office, resources for research, information, assessment, treatment and support, and capacity building in order to address the lifespan needs of individuals with autism spectrum disorders and their families.

Ms. Moorcroft: I rise to give notice of the following motion for the production of papers:

THAT this House do order the return of the operation and maintenance costs of the Whistle Bend continuing care facility as they were detailed in the Management Board submission.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?
This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Internet connectivity

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, for many years this government has said that they support a secondary fibre optic link for Yukon.

The Official Opposition, innovation and technology sectors, Yukon businesses and citizens all agree on the need to provide the needed redundancy to improve service reliability. To date, the government has provided few details. However, we do know that the government appears to have decided on the Dempster route as the preferred option. The Dempster route, we also know, presents engineering and construction challenges such as discontinuous permafrost.

Mr. Speaker, knowing the construction challenges and knowing this government's poor track record with project management, what assurances can this government provide to Yukoners that the costs of the Dempster link will not escalate out of control and that this is in fact the best fibre optic link option for Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Of course, this government understands the importance of such a link as the Dempster fibre link that the member opposite has mentioned, and we have \$500,000 in this year's budget to continue with detailed engineering because we don't want to be saddled with problems that are unforeseen. We want to be able to do the planning and do the work necessary so that we can move forward with this project in the proper manner.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for raising the matter of the money. The Minister of Economic Development has previously indicated that — and I quote: "... we have gone to the federal government looking for funding options, and I hope that we hear back very soon with some very positive results on those talks." At least he had a vague sense of where the money could be coming from. Yesterday, the minister responsible for Community Services said — and I quote: "In a case of the fibre optic project, that is one that has not been formally applied for... Once that fund becomes available, we will obviously seek to apply to it." The government's story seems to change day by day, depending on which minister is speaking.

So Mr. Speaker, knowing there is currently no funding source in place, can this minister explain how the fibre optic link can proceed?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Of course we know that projects such as these are not cheap and not easy to do. We continue to work with our partners. We work with the federal government in this case. We know that they have \$500 million set aside for this type of project, so we continue to work with the members in Ottawa who we need to work with to try to get this money nailed down so we can move forward with this project.

Ms. Hanson: The minister told this House that they decided not to apply for funding through the Building Canada fund; the government would instead hope — and I quote: "... that those individual projects would help shape potential funding pots that were going to become available in the federal budget." So we don't have a source and we're not sure

when, but it's also clear that cost-sharing and connectivity rates to the Mackenzie Valley fibre optic link still have to be resolved. We have already spent over \$700,000 on studies. The minister is indicating that we are spending another \$500,000 on a more detailed study.

Mr. Speaker, does this government still believe it is possible to complete this project, as the Premier has said, by 2017?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: It's important to note that this project wouldn't actually be eligible under the Building Canada fund, so that is why we have chosen to work with the federal government — with the other funding options that they are making available.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite also spoke about the money that we have spent engineering and studying. I think that's an important note because we want to make sure that the projects that we do move forward in a positive manner and with as few challenges as possible, so that's why it's important that we do spend the money and we do spend the time to engineer these projects and do the due diligence to ensure that we've planned things out properly and we're not just going off all willy-nilly and trying to do things that don't make sense.

Question re: FASD study and correctional system

Ms. Moorcroft: Last week the Department of Justice released the preliminary findings of its study into the prevalence of FASD in Yukon's correctional system. The release states that of the 80 participants, 14 or 17.5 percent were diagnosed with FASD. However, the release withheld some key findings that were presented to the National Biennial Conference on Adolescents and Adults with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder held three weeks ago. There the team indicated that if cognitive impairments, addictions and mental health difficulties were added to the number of FASD cases in Yukon corrections, we get a number over 90 percent.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister confirm that over 90 percent of study participants were assessed to have FASD, cognitive impairments, addictions issues or mental health difficulties?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: First of all, I have to correct the member. I find it interesting that she characterized the press release as withholding details of the preliminary report that has been made available.

The report itself I should note, in addition to it being presented, we don't yet have the final report. Once we do have the final report, we will have a full understanding of all the details. But the member, in listing off different conditions and issues, was blurring together FASD with addictions and mental health issues, and they are in fact not identical conditions.

We do recognize that within the prison population there is certainly a higher incidence than in the general public of issues including problems with addictions, cognitive disabilities and so on and so forth. Mr. Speaker, I should note that's exactly why we've done this study; it's to help build on the work that has already been done through the correctional

reform process and improving programming at WCC and other initiatives like the Community Wellness Court that have all been part of how this territory and this government have taken steps to modernize our correctional system and to better meet the programming needs of offenders to reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

Ms. Moorcroft: Numbers were provided at the FASD conference that indicated that over 90 percent of the inmates assessed either demonstrated or were diagnosed with FASD, addictions issues, cognitive impairment or mental health difficulties. This government-funded study is showing that almost all individuals in Yukon's corrections system have some form of mental health or cognitive impairment. Many Yukoners have suspected it, but the numbers are staggering. There is a crisis going on in our correctional system. What decisive actions will the minister take to meet the needs that were identified by the FASD study in Yukon corrections?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, what I should note is that in terms of the study, the timeline of the study covered a couple years because of challenges with getting enough people to participate in it. It is valuable data that will help us and the final research report will be completed in the fall of 2016, and comprehensive results will be made available at that time. In fact, I should note that this rate of 17.5 percent diagnosed with FASD is higher than the rate observed in a Correctional Service of Canada study conducted in 2007, which indicated a 9.9-percent rate of FASD in their 91-person sample.

Again, what I would like to encourage the member to do is look at the entire report and recognize that it is all about helping us improve the programming that has been made available there. I would remind the member, as I have on several occasions, that in fact we have taken significant steps since her time as Justice minister in improving the correctional programming offered at Whitehorse Correctional Centre and we are continuing to build upon that work, but the good work done by the Department of Justice, along with other departments and NGO service providers also includes great models like the Community Wellness Court which is being looked to by other Canadian jurisdictions and even internationally for its success in improving how courts handle persons with FASD and other cognitive disorders —

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, this Minister of Justice and Yukon Party government have stood in this House and refused to be accountable for how they manage the corrections system and the people incarcerated at Whitehorse Correctional Centre. For years, this government has failed to take action. Instead, the minister pointed to studies that were underway — studies that now show that almost all individuals in the system have some form of cognitive impairment or mental health difficulties. This government has failed these Yukoners and their families.

As the Auditor General concluded, they have failed to implement programming to help. They have not adequately trained corrections officers to provide the services needed and they have refused to amend the *Corrections Act* to make the

system more responsive to people living with FASD. The minister can no longer say he doesn't have the numbers.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit to immediate action to address the ongoing crisis in the Yukon correctional system?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, the content of the member's question is inaccurate. The member should be aware that in fact, we did amend the *Corrections Act* through the correctional reform process. I'm amazed that the member would not be aware of that. We have taken significant steps, including partnership with groups like Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon and Options for Independence. We have supported the committees and the actions that they're taking, and other great work as well done with support of the Yukon government through the Child Development Centre in identifying children with FASD and targeting supports to them. There have been significant steps taken, not only through the improvements in programming that have already been made at Whitehorse Correctional Centre, but through very successful initiatives like the Community Wellness Court, which is aimed at having the courts better address and recognize issues, including alcoholism, cognitive disorders and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. We are continuing to work in this area.

The member should be aware that the Yukon in fact is one of the leaders in dealing with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder within the world and has been recognized, including in the coverage of the fetal alcohol spectrum disorder prevalence study just completed — comments came out of the States that this is the first study of this type.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we do recognize that more work needs to be done, but staff of the Department of Justice, the Department of Health and Social Services and NGO service providers should be congratulated for the excellent work they've done to date.

Question re: Deputy minister staffing

Mr. Silver: I have a question for the Premier. In the last 18 months, there have been an unprecedented number of deputy ministers leaving this government for a variety of reasons. Two more were added to the list just weeks before this Sitting began. That brings the total number to at least 10 who have left since 2014. Some have quit, some have been fired and some have retired. This turnover comes with a cost to the taxpayer.

How much money has been paid out to cover severance packages for the 10 deputy ministers who have left this government since July 2014?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: When it comes to matters of human resource and those types of issues we don't usually comment and provide the information that members are talking about. When it comes to severance packages and the amount that employees get upon leaving employment with the Yukon government, that's not typically disclosed and we don't comment on human resource matters as such.

Mr. Silver: They don't comment, but they should. When the Premier hires deputy ministers and then fires them,

there's a cost to the taxpayer — hundreds of thousands of dollars each time that this happens. It is very unfortunate that this government keeps having to do this and it is even worse when it refuses to tell the public what this major turnover at the highest level of public service is costing the taxpayers.

In April of last year, the Premier shuffled deputy ministers and announced, "These appointments are an opportunity to fine-tune the senior management team to help us fulfill the mandate of the government over the next 18 months." He says that we're all done moving people around and that should provide some stability moving forward. Unfortunately, this has not been the case and the revolving door continues to spin. It doesn't inspire much confidence in the leader of the government when there's turnover at a senior level of staff.

Why has this government been unable to keep senior staff in place and why is it so eager to fire its deputy ministers?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: As all of those in the public service know, deputy ministers serve at the privilege of the Premier and from time to time they come and go as needed. That's a part of the position and it's well-understood by deputy ministers.

With regard to the compensation or the severance packages that any public servant receives upon leaving employ with the Yukoner Government, it's not a matter we disclose and that's something we decided and been consistent with over the years. That's the same practice as was taken by the previous Liberal government. The same practices were taken by the previous NDP governments and is consistent around the country. We don't comment on human resource issues as such.

Mr. Silver: I respectfully disagree with the last statement. It's not necessarily the number one practice across the country. There have been at least 10 deputies depart in the last 18 months; most others have remained and changed departments. In January of last year, the Premier was forced to shuffle his Cabinet to address problems there and had to fire his chief of staff as well. Since then the deputy chief of staff has also quit. There has been a tremendous amount of turnover that has cost hundreds of thousands of dollars — if not millions of dollars — in severance packages. It all adds up to a lack of leadership. Last spring, the Premier said the fine-tuning was completed, but there have been two major shuffles since then.

Can the Premier tell Yukoners how many of the last 10 deputies who left the government in the last 18 months have at least received a severance package? Can we at least get that information?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to human resources issues in the Yukon government, we don't comment on those types of matters. That is consistent with any branch or any department of government — whether it's deputy ministers, ADMs or any other employee of government. We don't disclose those types of information. That has been the policy we have had over the last 14 or so years and of course that is consistent with the previous policies of both Liberal and NDP governments. That is the

way it has been for a number of years, Mr. Speaker, and that's the way it is today. We won't be commenting on those types of issues in the Legislature or outside of the Legislature, and that's just the way it is.

Question re: Whistle Bend continuing care facility

Ms. Stick: Two weeks ago, I asked the Minister of Health and Social Services for the operation and maintenance costs of the new Whistle Bend care facility. He was not able to provide those numbers at that time. Last week in the House, this minister gave us an estimate of \$28 million per year for O&M. This number was based on a \$500-per-bed-per-day calculation. Yesterday the minister flip-flopped and said that the department did not have an approved budget yet for the O&M costs for running the Whistle Bend continuing care facility — and I quote: “That’s a couple of years out.”

Mr. Speaker, does the Minister for Health and Social Services have the operation and maintenance costs and budget for this facility or not?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: In addressing the member opposite, she will certainly be aware that when she first brought this question up on the floor of the Legislature, I didn't have the budget book with me, but I followed through the very next day and provided the estimate numbers for O&M for the Whistle Bend continuing care facility. The member opposite is correct — at approximately \$500 per day per person who is staying there. That's forecasted in the 2018-19 budget at \$28 million.

This \$28 million is forecasted and budgeted for, and we certainly recognize that it is very expensive to provide this level of care to seniors at a point in time in their life when they need it, but this Yukon Party government is committed to doing that.

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

The \$28-million estimate provided for the Whistle Bend continuing care facility is, by this Minister of Health and Social Services' own admission, based on the operating cost of the Copper Ridge facility. According to the minister, these costs will be very similar. But we also know that Whistle Bend will be offering a wider range of care options not available now. These include beds or a house for palliative care, mental health care, and high-acuity care for those who require a high level of medical care on an urgent but temporary basis.

Mr. Speaker, how does the minister believe the costs of operating Whistle Bend will be the same when the proposed range of services will be so different?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: In addressing the member opposite — because we see the trend for more Yukoners to want to remain here in the territory, this government has been very planful and forward-looking. The facility is ready-made to double in size with many of the supports required for an expanded facility already built in. If there is a need to expand this facility in the future, we expect the costs per bed to actually decline.

On one hand, the opposition wants to build a facility in every single community — one that we believe will bankrupt

the territory — but they don't seem to understand the costs of doing that business.

I ask, Mr. Speaker: If the opposition is critical of these costs and feels it is too expensive, at what point in time do they draw that line and not provide this level of care to seniors? This Yukon Party government is committed to providing this level of care and will continue on with these investments.

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, the current total operation and maintenance costs of continuing care is \$41 million. Even if one accepts the minister's low estimate of \$28 million per year for the Whistle Bend continuing care, this is a 70-percent increase in the operation and maintenance costs of continuing care.

How will we be paying for these additional operational costs at Whistle Bend? Will we see cuts to other continuing care services, or are we committing to a budget that we cannot afford?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, what we do know, and what Yukoners are comforted by, is that this has been a government that has been focused throughout its mandate on being responsible with Yukoners' money.

We know that families and small businesses have to live within their means, and Yukoners expect this Yukon Party government to do the same. We continue to not raise taxes. In fact, we have lowered taxes for small businesses; we have lowered taxes for all Yukon taxpayers. We continue to run through this mandate with modest surpluses and we are now the only jurisdiction left in this country with money in the bank. We can talk about the Ontario Liberals who this year will spend \$11.4 billion just to service their debt or the fact that the Alberta NDP is now borrowing money to pay wages. Yukoners are comforted to know that we continue to focus on the economy, on jobs, on Yukoners' health care and on education and ensure that we do it while we live within our means.

Question re: Financial administration practices

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Highways and Public Works confirm that his department is required by section 2.4.5.3 of the *Financial Administration Manual* to produce budget submissions that include the operation and maintenance costs for any capital project?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, I am truly astounded that the opposition would go to this level — basically implying that all of the people involved in this process — all of the individuals who worked through this process to get this project to where it is — are doing so in violation of the law. I am very disappointed that again we hear the opposition blaming and accusing government employees of doing something improper or, in this case, illegal.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, the minister responsible for Highways and Public Works has refused to stand up in this House and answer my questions on the procurement of the Whistle Bend continuing care facility. Now the Premier has.

The Auditor General of Canada has criticized this government for designing and building hospitals “... without

knowing the incremental costs — costs that should have been available to decision makers before approval...” It seems that same criticism is going to be applied to the continuing care facility. The *Financial Administration Manual* requires — and I quote: “... total estimated capital cost of the project... including the resulting O&M impact of the project.”

This government needs to be open and accountable. Why is the Minister of Highways and Public Works refusing to provide the estimates from the Partnerships BC study? Did he simply fail to get them for the Management Board submission?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, it sounds like a little bit of grandstanding by the member opposite in the direction of our potential candidate in the riding of Copperbelt South. The Auditor General has, year-in and year-out, provided an unqualified opinion that clearly states that this government has net financial resources, that we have money in the bank.

We have shown that we have budgeted capital to build the Whistle Bend facility. If you look in the outbound years, you will see that we have budgeted the operation and maintenance money within our budget to be able to operate this facility. All the while, Mr. Speaker, we continue to show modest surpluses and money in the bank. That is something that Yukoners count on us and we are very proud that we continue to operate in this jurisdiction in a manner that is different from all of the other jurisdictions in this country that are borrowing money today to pay for services today and asking their grandkids to pay for it later.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, when conducting an analysis, Partnerships BC states — and I quote: “In addition to the capital costs, operating costs, rehabilitation costs, bid development and financing costs and owner’s costs must also be included”.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Highways and Public Works stand up and tell the Yukon public whether Partnerships BC’s \$875,000 procurement study produced the O&M costs to operate Whistle Bend with its full suite of services and not a rough estimate based on Copper Ridge?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Certainly, Partnerships BC was a valuable participant in the Whistle Bend continuing care procurement. They have built many projects of this scale and we certainly relied on their expertise to assist us with this project. Partnerships BC ensured that Yukoners received value for money during the procurement and tendering of the capital construction of this particular project. Health and Social Services was responsible for the development of O&M costs of this project. This project has met all policy and legislative obligations that were required as it moved forward and I would certainly like to extend my thanks to the officials who were involved to ensure that this project was contained in our long-term forecast.

As the Premier alluded, we remain the last jurisdiction in Canada with money in the bank and this Yukon Party government is extremely proud of the investment we’ve made in Yukon seniors.

Question re: Keno area mining activities, health impact assessment re

Mr. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, there seems to be no money in this year’s budget to provide a long-term solution for Keno’s water well replacement. Keno residents wonder if this means their water will continue to be trucked from Mayo. The Yukon Party government has made promise after promise to the people of Keno that this issue would be dealt with promptly. In 2012, the government committed to quarterly water tests, which they failed to properly carry out. Last year, the community well was shut down. Now residents of Keno have heard that the water quality tests may once again be stopped at the community well.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister confirm that regular tests will continue on the Keno community water well and that the results will be made public in a timely manner?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, over the last year, we have had a lot of discussion about this particular project. As a result of some work we did to the Keno well last year, the well was disturbed and there was some sloughing inside the well that caused us to have to discontinue its use, and we have been trucking water from Mayo to the residents of Keno ever since. We’re exploring opportunities and investigating opportunities to fix the well or to get it working again properly. Whether or not or the frequency of the testing of the well that’s not currently in use — this is something I don’t have with me today.

It’s something I would be happy to get back to the member opposite about later on. Again, until we find a long-term solution for Keno, we will continue to truck water from Mayo and that is the way that we will continue to provide safe, clean drinking water to those residents.

Mr. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Keno is becoming a top Yukon tourist destination and many Keno residents rely on tourism to build their businesses, yet Keno business owners are concerned about the impact having trucked water will have on their tourism industry. Keno residents have already noticed that the shower house and public water taps are often running out of water and the tourism season hasn’t even started. They are concerned that the inconsistencies in delivery and volume will have an impact on businesses in the community.

Mr. Speaker, what assurances can the minister give to the residents and business owners of Keno that there will be an uninterrupted supply of clean, potable water throughout the tourist season?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, obviously having the well not in service is not an ideal situation and it’s one we’re trying our best to solve. In the meantime, we are going to continue to truck water from Mayo. We will do our very best to ensure that they have an uninterrupted supply. If there are instances where that isn’t the case, then I do apologize. We are doing our best to ensure that residents of Keno, whether they are local or businesses, have access to clean, safe drinking water. Of course there are other opportunities — individuals can drill their own wells if they would like. But in terms of providing that safe, clean drinking water, we will

continue to truck water from Mayo and do our best to find a long-term solution for the community well in Keno.

Mr. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, businesses need certainty and reliability in their water supply. The residents of Keno are fed up with the seemingly never-ending problem. They feel like the Yukon Party government is not taking their issue seriously. The local community club has come up with a plan to advocate for information and action when it comes to Keno. One of their main concerns is the simple lack of information provided to residents of Keno. They would like to meet with government officials to find a way to get consistent and reliable updates.

Mr. Speaker, when will the minister hold a public meeting in Keno to update residents on the progress of their water problems?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, Department of Community Services staff have provided information publicly in Keno previously. If members of that community aren't satisfied with the information they have got, they are welcome to contact me or anyone in the department to provide that information. I think for the member opposite to raise it in Question Period is indicative of his desire to make this a political issue. Obviously, this is an unfortunate situation where we have had a development with the community well and we have had to take the unusual step —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Dixon: — of providing trucked water from Mayo. The member can shout off-mic all he wants, Mr. Speaker. That is not going to get any solutions.

What we are trying to do is find a long-term solution for that well. In the meantime, we will continue to provide clean, safe drinking water, trucked in from Mayo at considerable cost to the public taxpayer of course, but that's important that we provide that service and we will continue to do so.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has elapsed.

Notice of government private members' business

Mr. Elias: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(7), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of government private members to be called on Wednesday, April 27, 2016. It is Motion No. 1136, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Mr. Elias: I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 23, *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

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

Bill No. 23: *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 23, *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Department of Health and Social Services — continued

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Again, I would like to just extend my thanks to my family, my friends and the constituents of Porter Creek South for their continued support. I would like to thank the officials for joining me today and also the many officials and staff back at the Department of Health and Social Services who have worked so tirelessly on preparation for this budget cycle.

As I said yesterday, on the social side of the ledger, I am particularly proud of the investments that we have made for those Yukoners living with many different abilities.

My Yukon Party caucus colleagues and Yukoners know that, without a functioning, stable economy to support it, a social safety net simply won't help anyone.

As I indicated yesterday in my remarks on this budget, we are requesting \$348.363 million in O&M and \$112.148 million in capital for a total appropriation of \$460,511,000. This funding represents a projected increase of \$20.8 million, or approximately six percent of O&M funding over the 2015-16 main estimates, and an increase of \$17.34 million in capital. As I indicated in my remarks yesterday, we have certainly seen that the largest increase in the department's projected O&M mainly stems from the \$11.6-million increase in Health Services.

Under Adult Services, we will be increasing O&M funding by \$4.7 million, primarily to support the operational costs of the three new facilities. We are very eagerly anticipating the opening of the Sarah Steele Building as well as the Salvation Army Centre of Hope in Whitehorse. I was also very pleased just last week to open the new St. Elias home for those with a varying degree of abilities.

With respect to the Sarah Steele Building facility that we will see opening later this year, the new facility will increase access to intensive treatment for all Yukoners by its new

continuous intake model in providing simultaneous programs for both men and women. Another large expansion is the introduction, as I indicated yesterday, of the youth addiction and mental health services, which will include a 365-day continuous, four-bed residential treatment program as well as a withdrawal service program. The Yukon Party government is certainly very much anticipating the opening of this program and the extension of the programs for Yukon youth who may need this service.

We have also seen an increase of \$1.9 million to meet the program demands of social services. We will also be providing an increase of \$150,000 for programming for persons with disabilities transitioning from Family and Children's Services to Adult Services. That is something that my Yukon Party caucus colleagues support, and we look forward to providing a greater level of service for those individuals transitioning from Family and Children's Services to Adult Services.

Our clear vision for moving forward together and our solid leadership from the Premier maintain our path to support our commitments to all Yukoners.

Yesterday I touched on the 10-year mental wellness strategy and we will be moving forward quickly on the release of that strategy. We have also invested \$1 million to support mental wellness, community capacity-building. This overall strategy and implementation plan provides clarity on how we are taking action to address mental wellness in Yukon and how we plan to move forward with all of our partners, stakeholders and agencies.

The overall strategy and implementation plan certainly provides clarity on how we're taking action to address mental wellness in Yukon and, as I indicated, how we plan on moving forward.

Yesterday I also had indicated one of our largest capital projects — the Whistle Bend continuing care facility — with a budgeted amount of \$67 million this year. We'll see the construction of the continuing care facility start in just a few weeks. We expect it to be completed in 2018.

The first phase of the construction, as we have talked about, includes the 150-bed facility and all of the support space that is necessary to expand to a 300-bed facility — so things such as the kitchen, laundry and a centre village for the whole facility. There is a buzz in the community and people are very excited about this project moving forward. It enables us to work on the wait-list, which, at any given time, can fluctuate between 60 and 90 people. We recognize that, over the next 10 years, the seniors population in the territory will likely double.

In speaking about the Whistle Bend continuing care facility, we know that this will be critical infrastructure in helping us to meet the current and future needs of seniors and other Yukoners needing those types of continuing care services, and sometimes around the definitions of that care there is some confusion.

The Whistle Bend continuing care facility will not be for everybody. It will be for those individuals who cannot be supported in order to stay in their homes or their communities

any longer — where the type of support that they require is so high that they require moving to the continuing care facility. As I indicated, we're anxious and very much anticipating the opening of that facility in 2018.

The Department of Health and Social Services, as I have indicated, has forecasted \$28 million for O&M for the Whistle Bend continuing care facility. This estimate supports the operational costs that are in line with other facilities operated in Yukon — at approximately \$500 per day per individual. That number is all-inclusive and takes into consideration some of the additional services around mental health, dementia and palliative care that we've spoken about on this floor a number of times.

The Yukon Party certainly has done a very good job at using a budget to make considerate and strategic investments.

Yesterday the member opposite had asked some questions pertaining to some staffing numbers, and I have brought in some information today that I didn't have at my fingertips yesterday.

Health and Social Services certainly has a strong presence in rural Yukon communities. We have an admin-support community. There are six part-time and three full-time staff, and there are no vacancies there. There are supervisors in Regional Services — allocated are three FTEs, so there are three full-time positions. There are social workers, including two mobile positions at 16 FTEs.

At this time, three of those are vacant. There is a business manager, a research assistant and a manager of Regional Services. There is an increase to Regional Services in this budget of 3.3 FTEs.

In Child and Adolescent Therapeutic Services, we have one FTE clinical supervisor, one intake worker, one FTE family therapist, five FTE outreach counsellors, one FTE camp counsellor — broken up into four casual positions for summer camp programming. In healthy families, there is one regional supervisor for the communities and they cover Watson Lake, Carmacks and Pelly. There are two regional family support workers and in Community Nursing, there are still three community vacancies and we are still fielding lots of inquiries. There are three positions out of the 24 rural positions vacant at this time.

On behalf of the department, and on behalf of this government, I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to all of those who are taking on these roles in the communities outside of Whitehorse and look forward to the questions from the member opposite at this time.

Ms. Stick: Thanks for the repeat of much of the same information as we heard yesterday. I really would like to move on with questions on the department specifically and looking at — I'm going to move on from where I left yesterday in Family and Children's Services.

Under adoption services, I had a couple of questions. We have heard about the extended family care arrangements and I'm wondering if, when considering children being adopted, whether immediate family members are given that first opportunity or are included in those decisions that are being made about the adoption of a child. I've heard of concerns in

the past where a family member might have wanted to adopt a family member and instead the child was adopted by non-related family. I'm interested in how many children we have waiting for adoption at this time. Is the policy of this department to look at immediate family members when considering placing a child for adoption and whether those family members are considered first before non-related individuals?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for her question and certainly appreciate the fact that she appreciates some highlights being brought forward back to the floor of the Legislature today from my remarks yesterday. Certainly the investments that this Yukon Party government has made in Health and Social Services, particularly, are very important and I thank her for being patient and allowing me the opportunity to highlight those once again.

The *Child and Family Services Act* permits a director to enter into an agreement with the extended family to support out-of-home care when a child is in need of protective intervention. The first choice for a child in need of out-of-home care is with the extended family, rather than have the child come into care or custody of the director and be placed in a foster or residential placement.

The extended family care program has been expanded to provide supports to extended family until the family reaches the age of 19 years, if a long-term placement is required. Funding certainly ranges from \$625 to \$775 per month for basic needs.

We currently have 24 extended family care agreements in Whitehorse and we have nine in rural Yukon. As for the number of children on a wait-list for adoption, I do not have those numbers at my fingertips, but I can look into accessing them if they're available to me at this time.

Ms. Stick: Just to repeat the one question that I did ask: Is it the policy of this department to look at immediate family members when considering placement of a child for adoption; not just placement with the family until the age of majority, as in a foster care situation, but specifically around adoption?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Perhaps the member was working on something else when I answered her question in my first response. The first choice for a child in need of out-of-home care is with extended family rather than have the child come into the care or custody of the director and be placed in foster or residential care. I do believe I answered the member opposite's question.

Ms. Stick: Madam Chair, I thank the minister for that answer. When we look at child placement services, children in care and fostering services, I wonder if I could have a comment please. It's just recently that the department has once again started advertising — looking for foster care families specifically for children. Has this been successful? Has the department seen a rise in those interested in actually providing foster care in Whitehorse and in the communities?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Ultimately our goal is to work with families to ensure that children can remain in their own home; however, for instances where that's not possible, we explore other options where the caregivers are known to the child and

those are the extended family situations that we spoke about in response to the member's last question.

Where First Nation children are involved, we work with their First Nation to help identify placement options when out-of-home care is required and, when other family arrangements are unavailable or unsuitable, we turn to foster parents. Foster parents play an important role in promoting the health and well-being of Yukon children and families by opening their homes and using their skills to provide for the physical and emotional needs of children in their care. I've had the great honour of meeting with just about every foster family in Yukon. I've heard their remarks, their struggles and the gains that they've made with their families and specifically with the children who are coming into care. I've had many opportunities to express my appreciation for them stepping up to the plate when many others perhaps would not want to take on that role.

To all the foster families in the territory that may be listening in this afternoon or reading Hansard: thank you; your work and your care is appreciated. We do know that at the current time there are approximately 64 active foster families.

On top of that, I understand that there might be some respite foster care as well. I know that this is a conversation I had about two weeks ago — that, at that point in time, they believed that the campaigning we did do to recruit foster families was fairly successful. I believe the number at that time that they were looking at was an increase — nine new families going through the process of being a new foster home to provide that level of care for the children who need it.

At the same time, there were over 2,000 hits on the website when we did the campaign reaching out to potential foster parents to try to grow our numbers of foster families.

The goal of our foster care action plan, based on discussions and input from foster families, is to enhance the program and address some areas of challenge. There were six key goals that had been identified in the plan. Those were: to improve communication; collaboration and partnership; a policy to support consistent practice; effective kinship services; recruitment of foster care givers; and recognition of support. When I continue to meet with the foster parents, those are certainly areas that continue to arise, but they are certainly grateful for the support and recognition that they have received over the last number of years. We also know that there is more work to do, and the department continues to work collaboratively with the new and upcoming association but, more importantly, with the foster parents who are providing that care to those children at a point in time in their life when they need it.

Ms. Stick: Looking at the estimates for Child Placement Services, we are looking at, for 2015-16, about 138 children in care — whether it is temporary or continuous, whether it is in Whitehorse or the regions. I have a couple of questions out of that. They would be: What is the breakdown between First Nation and non-First Nation children in care? Another one would be: How many children are actually placed outside of the Yukon — perhaps in treatment programs or in residential day programs outside of the Yukon Territory?

What is the number — we know the number of approved homes or foster homes — of children currently in foster care?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for her question. With respect to the children in care and the ratio of First Nation to non-First Nation, those are point-in-time numbers, so they can fluctuate on a daily basis. It is the same with the children who are being placed Outside for whatever reason. Again, those are point-in-time numbers, which I don't have at my fingertips right now.

The current number of children in foster care — again, those are point-in-time numbers. Thinking back a couple of months ago when I was working a little bit more closely on this file, at that point in time I think there were around 126 in care. But what I can commit to doing is at least looking at the numbers — but the member opposite needs to be aware that those numbers change and they can change on a daily basis.

Ms. Stick: With regard to the children who are being placed Outside, it seems pretty consistent when looking at contracts that there are a number of programs outside of the Yukon that we have consistently contracted with to offer day and residential services. I'm sure the minister should be able to come up with a number of those who are being placed Outside. It would seem to me that some of them are long term.

The other question that I had under Child Placement Services is: In these numbers, are we including group homes in Whitehorse — and the receiving home for boys and the receiving home for girls also in those numbers?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: The numbers that I have are all kids in care, so that could be the receiving home, that could be any of the residential youth treatment service homes and that could be any of the other group homes run by non-profit organizations.

In temporary care there are 35 — again, this number can change. In continuous care — at the point in time when the numbers came to me, there were 70 in continuous care. From other jurisdictions there were two.

As I understand right now, children in Outside placements as of this point in time — there are three. For the region — those last numbers are for Whitehorse. For the region — temporary care, 10 kids or youth; continuous care, 25; from other jurisdictions, one. On top of that are the fostering numbers that I have already provided to the member opposite.

Ms. Stick: I don't think those fostering numbers are on top of those numbers but are included in those numbers actually — it would seem to me.

Again, I was just asking: What are the numbers of individual children in group homes and in the receiving home?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Sorry — I was working on something, so I didn't actually hear the member opposite if she was asking a question. The initial numbers that I gave for Whitehorse and region are separate from the fostering numbers, so the foster numbers in Whitehorse are 62 and within the region are 25.

Ms. Stick: That seems confusing to me, Madam Chair. What we're talking about are children in care. Children in care

include those in foster homes, in group homes and in receiving homes. The question I was asking is: How many are in the group homes and how many are in the receiving homes, understanding that we have the two programs?

I understand that there are 64 active families providing foster care and there was a number given for the number of children in foster care, but I would assume that those would be included in the children in care — the 35, the 70, the two, the 10, the 25, the one. I would assume those numbers were included in that. Otherwise I would wonder: If there are two separate numbers, then where are all these 35, 72 — like, where are they if those are considered children in care?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Certainly I can look at getting back to the member opposite with the breakdown specifically to residential youth treatment services as the member is asking for. The number that I have provided to her of children in care — there are 35 in Whitehorse, there are 35 children in temporary care, there are 70 children or youth in continuous care, and there are two from other jurisdictions. Within the region of the territory, there are 10 in temporary care, 25 in continuous care and one from another jurisdiction.

There are approximately 30 youth in the RYTS — residential youth treatment services program — at any given time, but these are numbers that can fluctuate on perhaps even a daily basis. On the fostering side, there are 62 children in care in Whitehorse and 25 in care in the region outside of Whitehorse.

Ms. Stick: When I look at that sheet, it says: number of approved homes — 62 in Whitehorse, 25 in the regions. That is not the same as the number of children in those homes because some homes would have more than one child. They might have two or three siblings together or more than one child. Again, that is the number I'm looking for. The other piece that he did mention were the 30 who are in the residential treatment program — so, again, looking for clarification.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: That is my error. The first set of numbers I gave were children in care in Whitehorse and region, and then, under the fostering services, the number of approved homes as 62 and 25 — and at any given point in time, the number of children in foster care can fluctuate but, as I understand it, the last numbers I had were in the neighbourhood of about 120 or 125 throughout the territory.

Ms. Stick: Looking at Child Care Services, early childhood and prevention services, with regard to childcare subsidies, we're seeing these numbers go down, which I find surprising when it was supposed to become more accessible for families to be able to apply for the childcare subsidy, and there was some work done on what the eligibility amount or income was for a family to apply. I've heard from different families saying that they are having to make that decision where they have more than one child in childcare. They're trying to work and it has come to the point, because they're not eligible for a subsidy, of whether it is just better for them to quit their job and stay home because childcare is costing them so much — they are not eligible for the subsidy — or to

continue working and see their whole paycheque disappear into childcare costs.

I'm surprised to see these numbers from the 2014-15 actual of \$282,000 are dropping, even though our population of children is growing. I'm just wondering if the minister has any comment on that.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for her question. Certainly we have seen a decrease in demand for subsidies, as not all children in childcare are eligible for those subsidies because the program is income-driven.

Recognizing the importance of quality childcare and early development, this Yukon Party government has committed an additional \$4 million to address wages, training, subsidies and operational expenses of childcare programs over the last six years. The department has conducted a review of recent investments that have been made in childcare by our government. This report was completed in 2013. Based on the review, our government will be increasing funding to childcare subsidy programs to assist families with the cost of childcare if and when needed.

I think that addresses the member opposite's question — numbers that we have at this point in time for programs.

Number of programs in the communities — there are three with 105 licensed spaces. There are eight First Nation programs with 223 spaces, and there is one family day home with six spaces.

In Whitehorse there are 14 private programs with 479 licensed spaces; nine non-profit programs with 361 spaces; one First Nation program with 54 spaces and 23 family day homes with 184 spaces.

Ms. Stick: I have just one more quick question on this. When families are applying based on income for the childcare subsidy, is there any method of appeal if they are not in agreement with the answer that they get? Is there an opportunity for them to appeal that decision?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I certainly thank the member opposite for the question. That is something I can look into and commit to getting back to the member about shortly.

Ms. Stick: Moving on to early childhood prevention services and some extra information that was provided — I have some questions with regard to the healthy families program.

In which communities in particular is the healthy families program being offered? Is it only by referral that families can become involved in this program? Or is this a program that could be open to all — rather than singling out specific families — and be available for all families to receive some of that assistance, some of that parenting and support that first-time families often need, regardless of their situation. So where is it being offered and to whom? Is it only by referral? I'll leave it at that point first.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: The Healthy Families Yukon program is a voluntary, early intervention, home visitation program designed to help overburdened parents of newborns until the child reaches five years of age. Overburdened parents are identified through a range of factors, including a parent's childhood experience, lifestyle behaviours and mental health,

parenting experience, coping skills and support systems, stresses, anger management skills, expectations of an infant's development, plans for discipline, perception of new infant bonding and of attachment.

The healthy families program in the communities will work closely with a range of programs and services such as: the Child Development Centre, learning together programs through Education and First Nations; the Canadian Prenatal Nutrition program as well as a number of other services. Healthy Families Yukon expansion supports an integrated approach to establishing a family resource office, and it demonstrates concrete actions to support parents in rural Yukon. Healthy families has been jointly delivered in Whitehorse in partnership with the Whitehorse Health Centre. This structure changed in April 2015; however, Healthy Families Yukon and Community Nursing continue to collaborate on program delivery. The program is now available in Watson Lake and plans are underway to have the program offered in Carmacks and Pelly Crossing. This expansion certainly includes the establishment of family resource offices in Watson and Carmacks. In 2014, more than 130 families participated in the curriculum-based program that aims at building positive parent and child relationships and promoting healthy childhood development. Certainly this government is very supportive of the healthy families program, an investment that we are particularly proud of.

Ms. Stick: That leaves a lot of communities without the program, and I am wondering if there is a plan in place that is going to roll out to other communities across the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I have just shared with the member opposite some of the shorter term goals of this program at this point in time. At least I am not aware of any future commitments, but certainly those are always things that we are looking at and certainly the people who are running the program provide us with that information on a request basis.

Ms. Stick: Moving on to Youth Justice, we just heard of a report that was presented at a national or international conference on fetal alcohol syndrome and the justice system. I am wondering what we are doing when we are looking at individuals within the youth justice system in terms of assessment of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Are we taking the same view in looking at those individuals who come into the youth justice system — not only for assessment and recognition that some of these individuals might have fetal alcohol spectrum disorder or other disorders? What are we doing when those individuals leave youth justice to ensure that they are not coming back in and re-entering the youth justice system or going into the adult justice system? What services are we looking at — or are we — to provide these individuals the assistance and support to keep them out of the justice system?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Health and Social Services continues to fund and/or provide a comprehensive range of initiatives, services and programs related to FASD in partnership with others. For example, Health and Social Services has developed a local adult diagnostic clinic for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and 12 assessments are in progress.

The department partnered with the Yukon Housing Corporation and Options for Independence to support the development of a new housing complex for persons with FASD. As the member opposite is well aware, this facility provides expanded capacity for supported housing with 14 units.

In April 2015, the departments of Health and Social Services and Justice signed a protocol agreement on collaboration for common clients with complex needs, including those affected with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. The departments of Health and Social Services, Justice, Education, the Yukon Housing Corporation and the Yukon Liquor Corporation have initiated an interdepartmental committee on FASD to identify opportunities for increased collaboration between departments and programs.

Madam Chair, it's estimated that nine babies in every 1,000 born in Canada are affected by FASD and the estimated lifetime costs for each person with FASD is approximately \$1.8 million, not including the loss of productivity and caregiver burden.

Actions related to FASD can be grouped into a number of categories, such as prevention, assessment and diagnosis, supports to those with FASD, training, research and collaboration. Alcohol and Drug Services develops and delivers FASD prevention initiatives to increase awareness and healthy behaviours. Alcohol and Drug Services' detox reserves two beds for women and provides priority admission to pregnant women. Outpatient and inpatient treatment programs also provide priority access to their programs to pregnant women.

In 2013-14, Health and Social Services contracted Charis Management Consulting Inc. to conduct a literature review and gaps analysis related to FASD prevention programming here in our territory. Four reports were produced at a cost of \$78,000, which were paid for through the former FASSY fund. In response to the report, Health and Social Services is taking action on a number of fronts to: increase intersectoral and collaborative action to build knowledge and local capacity on FASD; to develop awareness campaigns and provide resources for schools; and to improve prevention services — just to name a few.

We also have an integration worker who works at the Young Offenders Facility to help set up services and supports for youth who are coming into custody as well as youth who are leaving custody. We provide assessments of needs on a case-by-case basis, working with a management approach and extending our work within the education system. Again, I thank the member opposite for her question.

Ms. Stick: A lot of the programs that he discussed had to do with prevention, support to pregnant women and those types of things.

What I was really trying to get at is we have — it says here — 80 young offenders in Whitehorse and in the communities. It forecast 90, actually, for this year and 80 for next. We've done the study and we should, I would think, extrapolate or be able to look at young offenders and, if they

have been in the education system, we should know the numbers of those who are a part of the youth justice.

The critical part is that when they leave — whether they're in the Young Offenders Facility or trying to fulfill other requirements of a youth probation order — that they have the supports they require to maintain themselves, to stay within those orders and not to be coming back into the justice system, whether it's youth justice or adult justice. But mostly I was focused on the youth justice. What are we doing to look at those numbers and to provide enough supports so that they're not becoming regular offenders or moving on into the adult justice system?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for her question. Madam Chair, in my first response, I spoke a little bit about the integration worker position that is at the Young Offenders Facility; but we also see the Youth Achievement Centre and the programming that they provide to our young people who go to that location for schooling. We have our social workers who work with a number of families and extend professional services, working with the Department of Education and a number of the staff. I'm sure the Minister of Education would be more than happy to share more details about some of the things that they're doing within the school system itself.

We continue to work with families on providing families and extended families — or foster care workers, or perhaps even adoptive parents — on providing that level of support to the children who need it.

Ms. Stick: Before we leave Family and Children's Services, I just have one more question. I'm always surprised — I forget that it's under Family and Children's Services. This is women's shelters and transitional homes. In looking through the federal budget, \$90 million was promised over the next two years for renovations or for new beds for women's shelters and transitional housing centres, and \$60 million was promised for the first year. In talking to one or two other people across the country, I know that the information has gone out to other jurisdictions as to what can be expected in terms of funding. I'm wondering what this government is expecting from the federal government in regard to those dollars for either renovations or new beds for women's shelters and transitional homes.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: As the member opposite has already indicated, in the federal 2016 budget, there was \$89.9 million over two years for the construction and renovation of shelters and transitional houses for victims of domestic violence that had been committed. Specifically, \$60 million is earmarked for spending in the 2016-17 fiscal year, while the remaining \$29.9 million will be spent in the 2017-18 funding year. Funding will be provided under the investment in the affordable housing initiative. Provinces and territories will not be required to cost match these investments.

Additionally there is \$10.4 million over three years that is proposed for the construction and renovation of shelters for victims of domestic violence in First Nation communities. The shelters in First Nation communities will also receive up to

\$33.6 million over five years and up to \$8.3 million ongoing in operational funding.

There is currently no information on the Government of Canada website as to when and how the money would be allocated among the provinces and territories. Media articles suggest that it is not yet known how the money will be distributed across our country. Here in the territory, the Yukon Housing Corporation is the lead, and I would urge the member opposite to direct her question to the minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation during his time on his feet.

Ms. Stick: I thank the minister for that answer and I will be sure to pass that on to the critic to ask those same questions for the Yukon Housing Corporation minister when that opportunity arises.

Moving on, Alcohol and Drug Services, Adult Services — we have heard a lot about the new Sarah Steele Building, the expanded services. I just want to come back to some questions. The minister mentioned that there was a literature study done on FASD; money was spent. Is there a clear prevention program strategy that is headed by Alcohol and Drug Services, and is it done in collaboration with other organizations and groups in the Yukon?

I know that at one time it was a critical piece of FASSY. They did a lot of in-school programming; they introduced the pregnancy test dispenser in washrooms in a few of the local bars and up at the college. Another question along the same line — there are two beds designated at Sarah Steele for women who are pregnant, and I'm curious about what the uptake on that is. Is it consistently full? Do those beds remain empty? Are there other things we could be doing to encourage women and their families and their community, when they are pregnant?

I'll leave that as a start.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for her question. She made some remarks around the literature study that had been undertaken. As I indicated in my previous response, through the departments of Health and Social Services, Justice and Education, the Yukon Housing Corporation and the Yukon Liquor Corporation, there's a group that has been established in looking on how we move forward in the territory. I look forward to hearing more about their work as it becomes available.

With respect to the two beds at the Sarah Steele Building that are given as priority for pregnant women, I do not have any statistics on the usage of those beds. What I understand is that priority is given for those individuals coming in who are pregnant.

The replacement of the Sarah Steele facility will enable the delivery of an enhanced continuum of alcohol and drug and mental health services, and it is on schedule to open later this year. The new building is purpose-built to include medically supported youth and adult withdrawal management facilities, youth treatment services and adult intensive inpatient treatment based on a continuous intake process, counselling services and expanded programming capacity.

I know this government is very much in anticipation of that facility opening up and being able to provide that

expanded programming to those Yukoners who need and want that service.

The expanded space also allows for better integration and collaboration with other service providers, such as First Nation health programs, KDFN land-based healing, Mental Health Services and Many Rivers Counselling and Support Services. Services to Yukon communities have been enhanced through the implementation of the community addiction program, or CAP. The CAP program has community-based staff in Dawson City, Haines Junction and Watson Lake, which provide support to surrounding communities and the other communities that are supported by an itinerant worker from Whitehorse. The community addiction program works in concert with First Nation health programs, Community Nursing, Regional Services, Mental Health Services and Many Rivers Counselling.

I believe I have addressed the questions from the member opposite, but we also appreciate our working relationship with FASSY here in Whitehorse and continue to collaborate and work closely with them.

Ms. Stick: Earlier the minister had mentioned a number of children who are born — the average across Canada with FASD out of 100. It just struck me as a very high number and one that we should be very concerned about and be doing whatever we can in terms of preventing something that's 100-percent preventable. It's not like other disabilities that might be genetic or those types of things — DNA. I just see that as critical.

Looking at some of the stats for Alcohol and Drug Services, it's noted that 69 individuals completed the inpatient, 28-day treatment program. I asked this last year and I will ask again: Does the minister have the number of those who entered the program, understanding that not everyone completes the program. Some individuals come back more than once; it's quite common. That's not to say it's good or bad; it's just what it is. So 69 completed the 28-day program — successfully completed the inpatient treatment program. How many actually entered that program?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Madam Chair, I'll start by just correcting the record. The member opposite — and I think it was just an error and I don't think it was done purposely — had indicated that it was one in 100 children who were born across Canada with FASD. The number is actually one in 1,000. That is the number I read into the record.

Certainly the department is very much focused on outcomes when it comes to providing those types of services for people who are entering into a treatment program for drug or alcohol treatment. We see similar statistics when those individuals are trying to quit smoking, just for an example. They try and try and try again until they're — and hopefully at the end of the day — successful. Within the department we're certainly focused on those outcomes and not so much focused on the individuals who keep coming back and trying and trying and trying — although we give them full credit for doing that in the hope that one day they will be successful and become drug or alcohol free. We have stopped counting the individuals who don't complete the program because we are

optimistic that they will continue to return until they have successfully completed and become drug or alcohol free.

Ms. Stick: Madam Chair, I asked this question last year and received much the same answer. To me, they are just simple numbers. You know exactly how many people enter a program. You open files on those individuals. There's a count on the first day and there's a count on the last day. I'm not trying to suggest that it's a failure; I'm just asking what those numbers are. It's like me saying that I lost 25 pounds but fail to mention that I gained 50.

Yes, 69 is a success and that's a great thing and I'm not questioning that. What I'm questioning is how many individuals go into the program.

I know that even by them predicting 86 will complete in the next year, they already know how many to expect that are going to enter the program. It's a simple question; there are files. Those numbers are kept track of, so to suggest that we don't isn't quite accurate because we do. The minister knows how many people enter a program at the beginning — possibly even partway through they might come into the program. I'm not trying to do a "gotcha" or look at how many entered and there are only this many — I understand the difficulty of addictions and treatment. I just would — looking for that number. Thank you, I'm waiting for an answer of what that number is.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: For the member opposite that number is not published. As I indicated in my earlier response, the department is very focused on outcomes. We recognize the fact that some individuals have to try and try again to become successful at therapy and treatment and so those numbers are not published.

Ms. Stick: I don't call that very accountable or very open. Yes, we want to measure outcomes, positive and otherwise, and if we don't measure those, we can't manage them. I don't understand this and I will move on.

We've heard something — we know the difficulties with other kinds of addictions besides alcohol or narcotics. We have certainly heard of the rise in opioid addictions across Canada. Not even talking about deaths, I am wondering if the minister has a number of individuals who are sent out to other treatment programs outside the territory. Do we keep track of those numbers of individuals we send out for treatment?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Those are numbers that I am going to have to look into obtaining.

Ms. Stick: I have a question with regard to outpatients. It was raised by someone speaking to me about their own experience. If I could have an answer from the minister with regard to how long an individual can receive outpatient counselling? Is it limited? What is the current wait time for individuals hoping to get in to get some regular counselling at Alcohol and Drug Services?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: In regard to wait-lists for counselling — they go up to, it looks like, one year, but they have a triage for more urgent cases, so for example pregnant women are higher need. Currently individuals can access unlimited amounts of services moving to specific numbers of sessions

and adding sessions and intake to better treatment to match the treatment that they are looking for.

We will be running groups for those wanting support who are on a wait-list and moving into a transitional phase, but certainly as we move into the new Sarah Steele Building this fall, a lot of those issues will be mitigated.

Ms. Stick: There are a couple of questions coming out of that. One year seems like a long time for a wait time. It was actually longer than I expected. When he mentioned that it was limited to a certain number of sessions, I am wondering what those sessions are? As part of that, for those individuals leaving a residential program and going back to their community or staying in Whitehorse, are they still eligible for ongoing individual counselling through ADS? There was one question that did not get answered: How many individuals have we sent out in the last fiscal year for alcohol addiction or opioid addiction or other forms of addiction?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Just to correct the record, wait times for counselling services can range from nine to 12 months, but certainly there are opportunities or instances where we can triage those counselling services. As I indicated in my earlier response, one example of that would be women who are pregnant.

As I have indicated on the floor of this House before, we certainly recognize and very much look forward to the new Sarah Steele facility opening its door later this year. The programming that will be offered, the expansion for continuous services for men and women and opening the doors for services for youth will mitigate many of these issues. We will see a number of new staff come on board. Certainly the existing staff are very much looking forward to transitioning over to the new facility — one that this government has committed to and one that we are very proud of investing in. Certainly we offer a range of services to support youth and families to prevent and/or reduce the harm associated with substance abuse and improve their health and well-being.

Ms. Stick: I will ask the questions again: How many sessions? The minister mentioned a number that a person would be limited to — how many are those? Is ongoing counselling available to those individuals leaving the residential program? How many individuals did we send Outside for alcohol or opioid or other addictions?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I believe I answered the member's question two questions ago when I indicated that currently clients can access unlimited amounts of services, moving to specific numbers of sessions and adding sessions during intake and after-care for better treatment to match their service or treatment requirements.

Ms. Stick: I am going to ask this one last time: How many individuals has this government provided with support to go outside of the Yukon Territory for addictions treatment, whether it was alcohol or opioids or other addictions?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: That was a commitment that I made to the member opposite three or four questions ago — that I was looking into those numbers right now, and as soon as I

have them I will be happy to share them with the member opposite.

Ms. Stick: I thank the minister for that answer and look forward to that information.

I'm going to move into Adult Services Unit's income support numbers. The minister should be prepared for this, since I ask for it every time. I note that there are 710 monthly caseloads. I realize those numbers fluctuate so this would be the average. What I'm looking for in a breakdown of those numbers is how many are single, how many are seniors, how many are persons with disabilities, how many are family units — one-parent families or two-parent families — and the total number of children that fall under the 710 monthly caseloads?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Over the past few years, our government has worked hard to improve social assistance policies and processes in order to increase social inclusion and enhance quality of life. This includes providing more individualized, integrated case management supports and streamlining application procedures to make it easier for individuals to access the benefits that they might find themselves eligible for. Yukon social assistance benefit rates are currently among the highest in the country, but we continue to look for ways to better support individuals with financial needs. The member opposite is asking for a breakdown of the 710 and that's not something that I have at my fingertips at this present time.

Ms. Stick: We perhaps have among the highest social assistance rates across the country, but it has been a long time since we have seen those numbers increase. We know that they are regularly indexed — annually — but we actually haven't seen a real increase in the social assistance rates. I'm curious as to whether there's any kind of review for this. The reason I ask is because numbers continue to increase at the Whitehorse Food Bank. The number of families and the number of children relying on the food bank increases — whether those are individuals who are working — and also the numbers who are on social assistance are coming to rely more on the food bank toward the end of the month, which indicates to me that the SA rates are not meeting the needs of families. That's especially concerning when we are talking about children or when we are talking about seniors, where healthy, nutritional food and food security is a priority.

If we want healthy children to grow into healthy adults, they need to have healthy food and be able to have that opportunity to grow and be healthy individuals later in life.

Are we looking at the review of those social assistance rates in light of knowing that families, including individuals, seniors and, most importantly, children, are having to rely more and more on the Whitehorse Food Bank?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: In addressing the member opposite, there was a review done on the system approximately five years ago and we have made a number of enhancements to that program. In this budget, I believe, we have budgeted an additional \$1.9 million for the social service program specifically and I extend my thanks to the management and staff who work in social services who make these reviews on

a very regular basis to identify needs and program options in the Department of Health and Social Services.

Ms. Stick: I'm not sure which enhancements the minister is speaking about with regard to the social assistance program because certainly the regulations have not changed. Schedule 1 or A or B — I can't remember if it's a number or a letter — has not changed that much in terms of what a person is eligible for when they first come in to social assistance, or after they have been on social assistance for six months. I would be curious to know what these enhancements are, besides the regular indexing.

This winter, we saw individuals in a housing situation who had to leave without notice because of the condition of the housing units that they were living in. Most, if not all, of those individuals were on social assistance and had to find accommodation rather quickly and, with the help of the department, were moved into various hotels for the first month.

I am just wondering if the minister can comment on these types of emergency housing and what happened to these individuals. They have certainly not been able to move back into their original homes, so what has happened to them since?

Along that same line is that we know many social assistance clients are housed in hotels over the winter — certainly in Whitehorse. I'm not as clear about the communities and what happens there. We are entering the tourism season and this is the time that they are removed or have to go and find other housing options for themselves. For some, it will be the campground. Some will be placed there and living in tents along the river. Others will be couch surfing or whatever.

I'm curious about the individuals who were facing eviction and have not been able to go back to their original housing. What are we expecting to pay, or what have we paid this season, for individuals being housed in hotels in Whitehorse?

I guess the other piece of that is: Is this also consistent in other communities? Do we also house individuals in Dawson, Watson Lake, Carmacks or Haines Junction in the hotels there?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: The rates of social assistance are set in regulation and we continue to monitor them. In order to provide vulnerable Yukoners with the stability, the Income Support Unit is enhancing outreach support services and collaborating with other government departments and agencies on housing stock issues. We also continue to provide guidance to landlords who may need assistance to support tenants with complex needs and to liaise with other government agencies.

In February of this year, approximately 58 individuals — ISU clients — were living in hotels for a cost of just over \$54,000. Housing and social assistance — we work very closely with our individuals. We have a new three-member housing outreach team that is working with those to find suitable housing. But, as I indicated, we work closely with landlords and other agencies in assisting those individuals

who have complex needs, to determine which agencies are best suited for them.

For the most recent fiscal year — 2014-15 — there was a total of \$574,155 paid to motels and hotels on behalf of individuals who were recipients of Yukon government social assistance. This is a monthly average of 54 clients per month, for a monthly average of just over \$47,000.

It's estimated that a range of other clients are living in other types of housing accommodation, and some of those are unable to secure stable housing. We continue to rely on our important relationships with government agencies, First Nations, Yukon Housing Corporation and Whitehorse Housing on providing those different supports for individuals who find it difficult to find housing.

I believe it was just last year that we opened up the home on Fourth Avenue for individuals who are experiencing mental health issues; they also find it difficult to find housing. We've found that this program has been fairly successful, so we look forward to continuing to provide services to those individuals who need that.

We're also looking forward to the opening of the new Salvation Army Centre of Hope downtown, which will provide a number of short-term housing units for those people who require them.

Ms. Stick: I do believe that the recent PIT count, which was looking at homeless and which took place a week or so ago — it will be interesting to see those numbers, when it comes to the homeless in Whitehorse only, because that was the only area that they covered. It will be interesting to see those numbers.

I was shocked when I met an individual at the Salvation Army who was in his 70s and had been living — you can't call it living. He had been sleeping at the Salvation Army for over two years, without a home. This was an individual who was not faced necessarily with addiction problems but who was unable to secure housing. He in his 70s and sleeping every night at the Salvation Army, getting his meals there and not having anyone, until recently, who was able to start following up on his health care needs, which were more substantial than any other difficulties this individual faced.

I'm looking forward to hearing on the homeless numbers — 54 individuals, \$1,000 per month. Over half a million dollars a year is a lot of money for not-secure housing because those individuals, in most cases, do not live there year-round. It's part of the year and then they're out. It's very unstable and unsecure housing. Yes, there will be some options for individuals in the short term with the new Salvation Army. I don't believe it will cover 54 individuals, including those numbers that we don't know yet about the homeless.

I'm going to move on.

Services to persons with disabilities — and I think I will start off with my favourite question in this area and that has to do with Takhini Haven at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

It's still there — the fence is still there. Individuals with mental disabilities who are not criminals, who are not involved in the justice system, are living in a group home at the jail. It has the lovely title of Takhini Haven, but if you ask

these individuals where they live, they're living at the jail. It's not a community, it's not a neighbourhood, it's not friendly, and it's not appropriate. What are the plans for these individuals to move into a neighbourhood or a community within Whitehorse that is not the Whitehorse Correctional Centre?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I certainly extend my thanks to the member opposite for asking this question about services to people with disabilities. As I have indicated a number of times on the floor of this Legislature, I don't believe the Yukon Party government gives itself enough credit for the significant investments over the last 14 years that they have made for people with disabilities.

I know many, many families that provide or have support provided to them, and I certainly would like to extend my appreciation to all former Health and Social Services ministers. Over the past 14 years we have seen significant investments in this particular area.

Key disability issues in Yukon include an increasing number of individuals with complex needs, a demand for transitional supports for youth with disabilities, and demand for supported housing for adults with disabilities. To better align services and support transition planning between FSCD — family supports for children with disabilities — and SPD, the social supports branch was recently reorganized so that both disability programs report to the same manager — just streamlining. Further discussions and planning will be initiated on transition supports. FSCD individuals will continue to receive their supports from the existing office location.

For clients with complex needs, Yukon is a member of a provincial/territorial complex needs working group that is preparing for an interjurisdictional workshop in May of 2016. The workshop will focus on the development of a framework of how complex cases are managed to provide more consistency in services and supports to individuals. In May of 2015, a new adult assessment and FASD diagnostic clinic was established and it has begun accepting referrals — pardon me, that was May 2015.

In April 2015, the departments of Health and Social Services and Justice signed a protocol agreement on collaboration for adults with complex needs. We have certainly seen the St. Elias group home just open last week and the department has partnered with other organizations and government departments, such as the Yukon Housing Corporation and Options for Independence, to support the development of a new housing complex for persons with FASD, which opened in February of 2014. That facility, as I indicated earlier, has 14 units.

When some individuals and some individuals with disabilities commit crimes and they are not found criminally responsible or are unfit to stand trial for a crime due to a mental disorder or cognitive disability, they are transferred from the court system to the Yukon Review Board. Annually, these individuals are ordered by the Yukon Review Board into the care of Health and Social Services and cared for by Mental Health Services or sometimes Continuing Care. Some

disposition orders last a lifetime. Over the last 20 years, the number of Yukon Review Board clients has tripled with a high of 22 people in 2013. In 2014-15, there were 17 persons in the Yukon Review Board system. Clients' needs change over time, resulting sometimes in discharge and other times movement into more intensive care arrangements, which are typically forensic hospital or specialized group home care settings such as Takhini Haven. The costs for care are significant and, with a growing caseload, we are constantly exploring options on how to manage these costs and service pressures while maintaining appropriate care.

I believe that the level of care provided at Takhini Haven — they do certainly work hard and I commend them for stepping up to the plate and offering to provide that service for us. That home has operated since 2012 and is a supported living residence run by Challenge Community Vocational Alternatives for individuals with cognitive disabilities — some of those on the Review Board. The facility was formerly the women's annex to the old Correctional Centre that has since been torn down. It was initially constructed to accommodate low-risk female inmates and is located on the Correctional Centre grounds facing the Yukon College road. Health and Social Services took possession of the building when the new Correctional Centre opened in 2012 as per their agreement with the Department of Justice. We certainly continue to work with the Department of Justice on the usage of that building and thank Challenge for providing the service to those individuals with complex care needs that are living at that residence.

Chair: Would members like to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order. We are continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services.

Ms. Stick: I want to go back to Takhini Haven and just clarify a few things. Takhini Haven has been there since the new Whitehorse Correctional Centre opened. It is for individuals with mental disabilities, some who come under the Yukon Review Board and others who do not, but are there simply because they have a disability and require specialized supports.

We have group homes throughout Whitehorse in neighbourhoods that have a variety of individuals with disabilities. Some are more complex; some are not. My whole point in talking about Takhini Haven and raising it every time is that it is not appropriate to have a group home on the Whitehorse Correctional Centre land. It has nothing to do with the service they receive or the support they receive from the individuals who work there. I know some of the staff; I have been long-time friends with them and they do a great job, Madam Chair. It is good programming that's provided. Challenge does a fine job.

The whole point of my raising this over and over is that the placement of individuals on the Justice land at the jail is not appropriate. We wouldn't put seniors there with complex care needs. That wouldn't be appropriate, so why do we think it's appropriate to put individuals with mental disabilities there? It's not.

Individuals who work in our community, who participate in recreation and leisure activities, who use our grocery stores, who work in coffee shops we might go to, or restaurants or any other day program deserve — more than deserve — need to live in the community like the rest of us — not at the jail. There are certainly other — it's a great building, yes it's new, yes it was used for this fine — fine, whatever, but it is not appropriate for individuals with mental disabilities to be housed at the jail. I have asked this over and over.

There are certainly housing and lots available in Whistle Bend, in Riverdale. There is nothing wrong with buying a house. How do we think other group homes came to be in our communities? Organizations bought them and they rented them from Yukon Housing Corporation. Teegatha'Oh Zheh — we have brought individuals back from Woodlands Institution in Vancouver, back in the 1990s because we recognize that those individuals deserve to live in a community with neighbours, with a front yard, a backyard, activities, and people around them. These individuals are isolated at that location. The college is nearby; there are baseball diamonds; but they are still at the jail.

It is not appropriate, Madam Chair, and I will continue to bring this forward because I object so strongly to it. It is not community living. It's not what organizations stand for when they talk about de-institutionalization, of bringing people into community, of them having the same rights to live and participate and play in the same neighbourhoods that we all live in. So there was no criticism of Challenge, no criticism of the staff or the programming — it doesn't matter.

All of those individuals are not Yukon Review Board and in fact, we have many individuals who live in group homes throughout our community who are on the Yukon Review Board. They are not all housed there. They are housed in group homes, other places — some of them live independently. Some have supports. So to somehow suggest that this is the best place for these individuals, to me, is just totally false and not sincere. We can do better and this government should do better for these individuals. Some of them are taxpayers. They are all voters. They deserve better than what they have.

I'm curious with regard to the residential numbers that we see. We see residential and supported living and day programming. We heard from the minister about transitioning from children and youth — Family and Children's Services into Adult Services Unit, but we haven't seen a real increase in actual residential spaces, even though we have children moving up — many still living with their families, but eventually we are going to see it. Not every family can maintain that level of support for their individual and it becomes more difficult for some families as they reach adulthood and become involved in other things in the

community. We see the number increasing by five and I would assume that is the St. Elias increase of five beds.

I'm curious — is there any more planning taking place looking at whether we're going to need more group homes or other forms of supported living? It doesn't have to be group homes. We have approved homes now like foster care that are set up for adults or individuals who are part of a family. Are we looking at supported independent living — the numbers haven't really changed there — where individuals live on their own but have an allotted number of hours a week where a support person comes and may help them with groceries, banking or ensuring that they get to work? We haven't really seen these numbers change except for the group home one, which I'm assuming is for the St. Elias home. Is the government looking at longer term planning for these children who are coming up in the system where families may not always be able to care for them?

On the other end of the spectrum, are we looking at individuals who are becoming seniors? Are those individuals included in planning in places like Copper Ridge or the Whistle Bend facility and how do we integrate them into those services?

Are we considering options of individuals possibly aging out in the group home where we might change the supports that we provide to those people where they can still live in the home but, instead of being focused on getting to work and those types of things, we might have to do more personal care or provide more of those supports that seniors might want?

Those are just a few of the question that I have. Again, I would go back to Takhini Haven. I will continue to ask this question. It is an important one and it reflects on all Yukoners as to how we care for people.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for bringing this question forward. We are currently looking at all of our residential and support systems in Health and Social Services and how they align with the needs identified in the housing action plan — just for one example. We continue to work with our government homes that are providing support with supportive homes — those adults and children who are receiving support through a number of the non-profit organizations within our community.

We provide programming and support for not only seniors, but also some youth and younger adults at the Copper Ridge continuing care facility and will extend those services when the new Whistle Bend continuing care facility is complete in 2018. We are certainly proud of the support and services that are provided to those individuals who either cannot provide the level of support for themselves or are working on a supported independent living type of situation where their ultimate goal is — for some their ultimate goal is to live independently and require fewer supports.

We certainly see that with the program supported independent living workers who do work with a number of individuals transitioning from perhaps a 24-hour care type of situation and then into an independent living situation where the numbers would be reflective of not an increase in care.

The member opposite asked about the five new beds, and she is correct in assuming that those are the new beds at the St. Elias group home. I was very excited to fulfill a commitment and an investment from this government and express my appreciation to the former Minister of Health and Social Services for starting this project and many others that are coming into fruition over the next short while. Again, I thank the member opposite for her question and certainly thank all of those who are providing that level of care to those with disabilities in our territory.

Ms. Stick: I am going to ask a few questions around statistics — and that would be about those individuals who are in services to persons with disabilities. What is the number of those who are receiving social assistance? Has there been any more consideration given to indexing the Yukon supplementary allowance — which individuals with disabilities would receive along with their social assistance? That number has not changed and they are not receiving the indexing, so it stays the same.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I don't have a breakdown of the number. There are 147 people currently receiving services through SPD. I do not have the breakdown on how many of those are receiving social assistance, but I can certainly look into that.

With respect to the indexing, I'm not aware of any intent at this point in time although perhaps it's something that we can look into the future of indexing those additional support dollars.

Ms. Stick: I heard the minister mention earlier that to date there have been 12 FASD assessments completed through the new program under Health and Social Services that at one time FASSY was providing. I'm wondering from those 12 assessments how the planning goes in terms of providing those supports to individuals.

We certainly have OFI — the Options for Independence, which is a residence for individuals with FASD, but I imagine with new individuals coming up through the system who are diagnosed as FASD, one of the critical pieces of the assessment is then having a plan in place to provide appropriate levels of service. So from those 12, are we looking at more service provisions, better supports or more residential programs?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I don't know that it would be completely appropriate. Since there are only 12 individuals that have gone through the assessment, it would be easy to identify them perhaps in the community, so that I shouldn't stand on the floor of the Legislature and start talking about the particulars of their life, but certainly this government has been well-prepared and invested a significant amount of dollars over the last 14 years to services for persons with disabilities and we're proud of those investments. We will continue down that path on providing that level of support to those individuals who need it at a point in time in their life.

Ms. Stick: In no way was I asking the minister to give out details that might identify individuals; I know better than that.

The minister indicated that there have been 12, so it has been at least two years since FASSY stopped bringing in the team to do the FASD assessments. I'm wondering if the minister can clarify how many the new local team will be expected to complete per year. What is anticipated in terms of FASD assessments for adults?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: As the member opposite has indicated, Health and Social Services has developed an adult diagnostic clinic for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. As she also indicated, 12 assessments are in progress. Adult diagnoses were previously completed by an Outside agency travelling to Yukon and we were able to complete about eight assessments per year. Training to support the local diagnostic team was provided throughout the first 10 assessments in 2015. The assessments will provide practical information that can then be used to assist each of those individuals on building upon their strengths.

Health and Social Services funds the Child Development Centre \$90,000 per year to coordinate diagnostic teams for preschool- and school-age children. The diagnostic team for preschool children draws on therapies from the Child Development Centre and the school-age team utilizes Education staff. The two teams have the capacity to diagnose up to 10 children per year.

Ms. Stick: I'm going to move on.

Community and Program Support is regional services, as well as looking at Yukon seniors. We saw a change in the pioneer utility grant with new legislation that came in. It became income-tested so that it was no longer a universal program, but helped individuals in a sliding scale. I'm wondering if the minister can tell us what the uptake has been, since we've had a full year I believe now of the new pioneer utility grant. Along those lines, my questions would be: In the past, it was automatic through the financial workers, who would just go ahead and do that. Have the numbers stayed the same, gone up or gone down — and the amount we've spent; has it gone up or down?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Changes to the pioneer utility grant were introduced in June of 2015. These changes included an earlier application date and the introduction of an income test and increases to rural grant recipients. A steering committee was formed to oversee all facets of implementation and continues to meet regularly to monitor the progress of the program.

A new computer system was developed to facilitate processing, and over 1,200 PUG applications have been paid out within 30 days of receipt of application. The transition has been successful and, as a result of income testing, staff are now also able to identify and offer support to seniors who may not be in receipt of their maximum pensions.

I've heard a number of seniors' stories about this, particularly that our staff have done such a great job; they have allocated other funds that were available to seniors that they did not know they were available, so in fact they are getting more money now. Singles with incomes below \$40,000 and couples with incomes below \$56,000 receive the

full grant, while singles with incomes above \$117,000 and couples above \$165,000 are no longer eligible.

In 2014, the value of the grant was \$1,030; the 2015 maximum amount for a rural applicant is \$1,132.92, and \$1,049 within the City of Whitehorse. The average grant paid is \$911, and fewer than 10 applicants have been deemed ineligible — the majority of those due to higher incomes.

As some background information, the PUG program was introduced in 1978, perhaps even as the former Health and Social Services minister was a Cabinet minister at that point in time. If he had anything to do with it, I would like to thank him for starting this. I thank the member opposite for her question.

Ms. Stick: Also under Community Support, I did hear the minister speak earlier about the social workers in the regions and supervisors and vacancies. He was giving a lot of information. My question has to do with the social workers in the regions. What I'm hearing back from some communities is that there are social workers available — not on a full-time basis in the communities — and, in many instances, the social workers live in Whitehorse and only travel to the communities. They don't live there as part of the community. Twenty, or even 15, years ago, we had social workers in most communities who lived there and were a part of the community, and that was the norm. It was the same for regional supervisors. They did not live in Whitehorse but they lived in the communities and had an ear to the ground about what was happening and they could react quicker when they were there.

I'm wondering if the minister can explain to us — the number of social workers who are regional social workers but live in Whitehorse, and also around regional supervisors. Do we have any who actually live in the communities or are they all living in Whitehorse?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Social workers are professionals whose primary focus is on helping children, youth, families, seniors, groups and communities to increase their individual and collective wellness and well-being. Yukon social workers are employed in a variety of fields, including mental health, education, health, social services and justice, both within government services and professional community partners. They are counsellors, family group or youth justice conferencers, family support workers, family service workers, child-in-care workers, foster care workers, adoption workers, probation office workers, educators; they work for First Nation organizations and communities; they work for government, hospitals, care facilities, schools, custody centres, non-governmental organizations and other non-profit societies and in private practices.

In Yukon, regional social workers provide integrated service in communities working collaboratively with First Nation partners in areas of community development support, child welfare, recruitment and support of foster homes, probation and senior supports.

Social workers in Whitehorse provide a range of services and more specialized branches and units by working collaboratively with First Nation partners in areas of child

welfare, adoption, counselling via child and adolescent treatment services, probation, senior supports, and services to families with children with disabilities.

Social workers also work in the hospitals as members of a treatment team, and they provide a link between the team and the family and community resources — and in schools where they help students adjust to the school environment. They also work as probation officers and in custody centres.

With respect to Regional Services community offices, the Carmacks office is fully staffed; Pelly Crossing became vacant in December; Dawson and Old Crow are fully staffed; Mayo is currently vacant; in Ross River/Faro there is a short-term maternity leave; Haines Junction is vacant; Carcross has been vacant since December; Teslin is fully staffed; and Watson Lake is fully staffed.

Having said that — and I don't have to remind the members opposite that recruitment and retention issues and challenges are not subject to just social workers, but they are subject to professionals all across the territory. It is a great challenge to find and retain some of those positions in some of our communities.

Social work staffing in rural communities fluctuates and, up until recently, Regional Services was fully staffed, except for one vacancy due to a maternity leave in Ross River.

With a whole host of other agencies and professions that are providing social-type work in the communities — I know we just announced not long ago that we extended a contract with Many Rivers to provide additional support services in the community of Faro and Ross River and we are certainly very appreciative of the relationship that we built with Many Rivers over the years and their commitment to provide that level of service in that community.

Our goal is to identify social workers with specific interests in rural social work practice and a strong commitment to working with Yukon First Nations. In this regard we are working closely with Yukon College to support students by offering practicum opportunities in rural Yukon. We actively promote regional social work positions as rewarding career opportunities to Yukon's social work graduates and provide housing for practicum students in select communities.

I know, as we fill these positions — I talked about the recruitment and the retention earlier — sometimes when we hire staff and they have the understanding that they're going to a rural community, they're very excited and some thrive in those communities; others find it challenging and realize that it may not be specifically for them.

We'll continue with our recruitment and retention opportunities and work with a number of NGOs, government agencies and educators — not only in Yukon, but in other jurisdictions — trying to recruit new people.

Some of the numbers that I provided earlier to the member opposite — I can certainly go over them again if that would be helpful to her.

Health and Social Services has a strong presence in rural Yukon communities. Admin-support community — there are six FTEs; supervisors, Regional Services, there are three

FTEs; social workers, there are 16 FTEs; business manager research assistant and manager of Regional Services — each of those have one FTE, which is an increase to Regional Services in this fiscal year by 3.3 FTEs. In Child and Adolescent Therapeutic Services, there is one clinical supervisor, one intake worker, one family therapist, five outreach counsellors and one camp counsellor that is broken up into four casual positions over the summer for summer camp programming. In healthy families, there is one regional supervisor for the communities of Watson Lake, Carmacks and Pelly. There are two regional family support workers. The Watson Lake worker is, as I mentioned earlier, on maternity leave and recruitment is underway for Carmacks/Pelly. In Community Nursing, there are still three community nursing vacancies and, as I indicated, we get calls every day about people inquiring about opportunities for community nursing throughout the territory. There are three positions out of the 24 that are currently vacant.

I can report some changes even since I have been on my feet this afternoon with respect to Regional Services community offices — that the vacancy in Haines Junction has been filled and the vacancy in Carcross has been filled.

Again, I thank the member opposite for her question.

Ms. Stick: I was surprised actually at the number of vacancies, even with the change since the member got on his feet, of social workers in the communities. I was surprised that the number was so high because I had not heard that recently. On the same note, it's not surprising when you look at what the expectations are for those regional social workers. Some cover more than one community. They cover support to foster families, child protection, youth justice, adult probations.

They are given a very wide range of duties and services to provide to their community, and I'm sure they understand that going in. But when you're the only social worker in a community, or maybe more than one community, it can become an issue of too much, especially when you have to put travel on top of that. I am surprised at the number, but I'm not surprised that there are vacancies.

I'm wondering if — besides encouraging new students or new social workers just coming out of school or students doing their practicums in communities — there is a hiring plan. Certainly we see it with doctors. We encourage them to come and we pay them a bonus for staying and we give them a bonus for coming. We do it for physicians. It seems to me that, in a community, sometimes a social worker has just as important role to play around the health of the community.

Are there any plans like that to encourage social workers to come to our communities to provide those services but, at the same time, offering them the support that they get time away, that they're able to take their vacation or have weekends off — and not necessarily have to leave the community, but to have that weekend free and not being on call? Are there any of those kinds of incentives or plans in place to encourage social workers to settle in our communities to provide that service and work?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Again, I cannot reiterate enough that there are certain challenges when it comes to recruitment and

retention, but we will continue with the work that is being done. We are providing opportunities, as I indicated earlier, for students to do practicums in some of the communities, but there are communities with complex needs. There is no question about that, and the cost of doing that type of business in the north is more expensive than doing it down in the south. We see that also in some of the northern parts of the provinces, but the challenges increase, it seems, as we move east through NWT and into Nunavut. Through the department, we have mobile social workers who leave from Whitehorse and go to the communities as needed, whether that need is a result of vacancies or social workers going on vacation. We will continue on with that practice as we see fit and as those needs arise. I thank the member opposite for her question.

Ms. Stick: I am going to move on. The last bit is around Seniors' Services/Adult Protection. I am curious about the number of individuals who are covered by adult guardianship, where parents or siblings or a friend may have applied for guardianship of an adult. The concern I have heard raised from a number of families and other individuals is the cost of applying for adult guardianship. In terms of getting a lawyer and having to go to court, it is not cheap. It is expensive for families to try to move in this direction and provide the type of support that they want to help with decision-making, but in particular around adult guardianship.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for her question. The responsibility of adult guardianship lies within the Department of Justice, and the members opposite may want to raise that question when the minister is defending his budget on the floor of the Legislature this spring.

Ms. Stick: My apologies, Madam Chair. I should have realized that. I was looking at *Decision Making, Support and Protection to Adults Act*, and I just automatically folded in the adult guardianship.

I will move on into Health Services. The minister mentioned that there is an \$11-million increase in Health Services, I believe. The first question I want to ask about Health Services is around nurse practitioners. We certainly have the legislation in place and the regulations. We have encouraged clinics and doctors to take on nurse practitioners in their practices. We spent a lot of time in the last four years talking about collaborative care, especially around health care, and yet it seems to me that we really haven't taken the extra steps to ensure that this is happening.

I know that there are nurse practitioners in the Referred Care Clinic, in the Yukon Sexual Health Clinic and at the older women's clinic and that there are positions in there as well as one in continuing care, but we haven't seen any move into regular clinics within Whitehorse or in the communities and we haven't seen any hospital privileges or nurse practitioners being incorporated into that.

When we talked about collaborative care we talked about something that was more sustainable than the current system where individuals looking for a prescription, blood pressure testing or counselling around chronic disease management — that this was a way where nurse practitioners could practice in their scope of practice to be able to offer that and reduce the

time that individuals have to see their family physician when it's not necessary. We still have people going to the Emergency department to get their prescriptions refilled. If I want my prescription refilled, I have to make an appointment ahead of time to see my doctor regardless of the fact that I've been on a prescription for 20 years and nothing has changed — I need it and it's what I do. Do I need to take up a doctor's valuable time when I'm not sick; when I don't need interventions of any kind; when I simply need a prescription renewed?

There are a lot of reasons why we introduced nurse practitioners into the Yukon health care system and it was to make our system more sustainable, more affordable and more collaborative, and yet I don't see the uptake on that. I'm wondering what the department is doing in looking at that and how are they going to encourage more nurse practitioners to practice in Whitehorse and in the communities?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: This Yukon Party government has shown its commitment to introducing nurse practitioners, or NPs, into Yukon's health care system. To date we have three nurse practitioners working in private and public clinics, one works in our continuing care facilities, one in the Referred Care Clinic and one is shared between two Whitehorse physician clinics as a result of the collaborative care initiative fund, but we also have one additional NP who has been contracted to provide vacation or sick relief as needed and I believe that those processes are still in place.

As part of implementation, we'll continue to explore options to expand access to health care for Yukoners. Nurse practitioner regulations came into effect November 23, 2012 and I extend my appreciation to the former Minister of Health and Social Services for working very hard on ensuring that those processes came into effect. Nurse practitioners are being recruited into the private health care system as a result of the collaborative care initiative fund negotiated with the Yukon Medical Association as part of their MOU with Yukon government, which will expend \$1.6 million over five years. That agreement ends on March 31, 2017, but I look forward to continuing to work with nurse practitioners.

I just met with one last week and was discussing some of the great work that's being done in the territory, and perhaps there is room for improvement; we are aware that we could potentially utilize nurse practitioners in other areas.

So those are the things that we as a government and the department are looking at on a move-forward basis, and I extend my thanks to the member opposite for recognizing the important work that nurse practitioners have done and do in our amazing territory.

Ms. Stick: I agree. There's money; it's sitting there; it's running out in another year. It seems to me we should be far ahead of where we are now. Nurse practitioners are integrated into health care systems across other jurisdictions in Canada in a much more progressive way than what we see here.

I'm going to move on. The minister touched on the collaborative care initiative. We have the Referred Care Clinic now, which is a great place. It's where individuals who are frequenting the Emergency department on a regular or more

than regular basis with complex needs — some of which are mental health issues — can be referred by the emergency room doctors to the Referred Care Clinic.

To me this is a model of a clinic that we want where we have physicians, where we have nurse practitioners, and where we have outreach workers who understand that some people need to be picked up, need to be reminded that they have a doctor's appointment and need to get a ride. To me, it's a model that has done well in terms of providing collaborative care that we continue to talk about but don't often see. The other great example would be the one at Kwanlin Dün, where we have outreach workers, nurses and home care people who go out and meet with seniors and elders. To me, it's an exemplary example of what collaborative care can look like. We just seem to be struggling and not getting there.

I would like to hear from the minister what he sees happening with the collaborative care initiative. Are we looking at different options? Are we looking at setting up a clinic where perhaps doctors would be on salary, where nurse practitioners would be part of that team and where there are outreach workers? It's a good model. We have demonstration of it here in Whitehorse where it works very well.

I think individuals are looking for something different from what we have now. This way it would be sustainable; it would be collaborative; and it would be meeting individuals' needs. More importantly, it's sustainable. We just can't continue to pay physicians more and more and more without looking at ways of reducing those costs and of being more collaborative and meeting the needs of the individuals in Whitehorse and in our communities.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: The Referred Care Clinic provides medical services with extensive addictions and mental health knowledge and clinical expertise, with a strong social support component. The social support component may include outreach services such as assisting patients with access to essential services, linking with community resources and developing rapport with patients to assist in establishing their relationship with the clinic.

The Referred Care Clinic was initially established on a temporary, part-time basis to provide access to physician services for people with complex mental health and addictions issues. This additional funding has enabled the clinic to expand their scope of practice, point of referral and hire additional health care professionals.

There will be an evaluation on this. The focus of the evaluation for the Referred Care Clinic will be to determine if the program is achieving its goals of reaching the target clientele, reduction in non-urgent Emergency department visits, improving health outcomes, improving health outcomes and the effectiveness of collaborative care models in our territory. That evaluation will contribute certainly to future programming and funding decisions.

In January 2013, the Department of Health and Social Services committed to this evaluation — a time-limited project — as part of the funding request for that clinic. In 2014-15, the Referred Care Clinic supported 115 individuals with complex care needs who are without services of a family

physician and who may also present with compounding addictions, pain management or mental health care needs, for a total of 1,115 visits. We have certainly seen a great deal of work being accomplished with the Referred Care Clinic and I have not seen any outcomes as far as the evaluation goes, but certainly look forward to seeing those.

Ms. Stick: It is good to hear that the program is being evaluated. When does the minister expect to have the final report on the evaluation and, in the meantime, have we committed to a contract with the Referred Care Clinic for six months or a year to ensure that it carries on until the report comes out and decisions are made?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Madam Chair, we do currently have a contract in place to provide the Referred Care Clinic operations. I am not certain exactly when that contract is due for renewal, but it would be my hope that we would certainly take a look at the evaluation prior to extending any contract on a long-term basis, just to ensure that due diligence is taking place and that we're receiving the best service for taxpayers' dollars.

Ms. Stick: Moving on to Health Services and Insured Health. It's interesting — one of the things that was hoped to be accomplished and I imagine to some degree has been is the referral of people away from the emergency room and to the Referred Care Clinic, instead of them showing up at the emergency room. Unfortunately, what we see though is that our numbers are projected to continue to rise for emergency room visits — outpatient visits.

My question is — at one time under the Canadian Institute for Health Information, it was reported that for the Yukon the largest proportion of individuals showing up at the Emergency department were non-urgent. I'm wondering if the minister can fill us in — if we're still keeping those statistics on emergency room visits and if the non-urgent numbers are continuing to rise.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Certainly the Yukon Hospital Corporation would have those statistics. I can commit to reaching out to them to see if those are readily available and when they would be available for me to present to the member opposite — or perhaps the next time the Hospital Corporation is in the Yukon Legislative Assembly as witnesses, that could be a question that could be asked of them.

Individuals are being referred to the Referred Care Clinic — many of whom would come from the hospital itself. As I indicated earlier, I am looking forward to that evaluation coming forward hopefully this year. Like I said, that will determine the investments that we make into this programming and future funding decisions.

Ms. Stick: In this section of Insured Health and Hearing Services, one of the sets of information that was not available was around hearing services. Over the last number of years it has been an issue in terms of wait times, especially for just a person, non-emergency, looking for hearing tests and there were exceptions made for children, but at one time the wait-list was quite extensive. For seniors who were losing their hearing, it was quite frustrating — and probably for their

partners and family members when they have to keep repeating themselves.

None of this information was included in this budget book. There is a lot of information to be gleaned from this, and to me it's important. I'm just wondering if the minister can give us any statistics at all on hearing services. What is being provided? What are the wait times or wait lists currently?

There are the universal neonatal screenings and re-screenings that happen. I think that's very important to be able to identify infants with hearing problems. This is a good way to catch them very early on. Industrial screenings are important when we're looking at workplace loss of hearing, and it certainly impacts people lifelong. I'm just wondering if there is an explanation, especially since hearing services was one of the ones that seemed to go out across the communities also in terms of providing service or testing.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for this question. I can report that, as of April 19, 2016, there were approximately 231 adults on the wait-list and four children — 41 adults and children are awaiting recall.

Since January 2016, there have been 154 new referrals — individuals who have never been seen before by Hearing Services. Hearing Services currently has one resident, full-scope audiologist. The department is working diligently to recruit a second full-scope audiologist to meet the hearing needs of Yukon, including outreach to rural communities and home visits to extended care facilities. In the area of audiologists, we continue to see shortages right across Canada. This is not something that is unique to Yukon. Even as I speak — I gave you the number of four children on the wait-list. There are actually three on the wait-list as of now. We have significantly reduced our wait-lists.

As I was saying, we see shortages of audiologists across Canada, which makes it very challenging to even recruit them, let alone retain them once they have come into the territory. We will continue down that path and continue with attempts to recruit a new audiologist to the territory.

As the member is aware — as I have said on the floor of this Legislature before — when it comes to the wait-lists, children are given a priority because we believe that their hearing, their learning and the early learning component of their lives are very important. Although there are wait-lists, I am pleased with the work that is being done in the territory and pleased that the department continues with the recruitment efforts to retain an additional audiologist to bring those wait-lists down.

Ms. Stick: I am curious whether the government is still — at one time they were contracting for itinerant audiologists to come to the Yukon on a regular basis to supplement the one that we have here now. Is that continuing — where people from Outside come up on contract to provide hearing testing or those services?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I can also report that we are training a new staff member to provide the industrial screening component of audiologist services, and we are about to interview for a second audiologist so that we can do outreach

and extended care — and, potentially, other rural communities. With respect to contract audiologists doing itinerant services, I am not aware that we have a contractual agreement in place at this point in time. I can certainly look into that, but I don't believe we have that in place right now.

Ms. Stick: My last question on this area would be about the universal neonatal screenings and re-screenings. Are those currently still happening with the audiologist we have now?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: With respect to the neonatal screening, it is my understanding that it would fit into the wait-list of the three children, but I'm going to have to commit to the member opposite to look into that in greater detail.

Ms. Stick: I'll look forward to that information. It seems to me that it's pretty critical to know as soon as possible in terms of any hearing difficulties with young babies or young children. I look forward to those.

Moving on to the information around health benefits — our numbers continue to rise in terms of our pharmacare costs and extended benefits. But some of the statistics I was confused by — especially when we're looking at the children's drug and optical program subscribers. It had to do with the rise in prescription costs from the last estimates. It seemed like the numbers were going down. I forgot to bring my other budget book in, because I had them both laid out and was looking at the number of children on the children's drug and optical program from last year and from this year. I was comparing the numbers.

What surprised me was the increase in prescription costs around children. I wonder if there's an explanation for that.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Before I move into that question, I just want to back up to the neonatal screening. Yukon is part of the pan-Canadian newborn screening working group that examines opportunities for a common approach to newborn screening. Following action from other Canadian jurisdictions, Yukon continues to review whether to screen newborns for SCID, a rare genetic disorder that compromises immune systems and is only detectable at birth with screening. At this time, Ontario is the only jurisdiction screening newborns for that.

As Yukon currently sends all newborn screening tests to British Columbia, we continue to follow the lead of the province's laboratory procedures and disease screening for all newborn testing. We have a full-scope audiologist with direct experience in developing the BC program. We do screen at the hospital. I think that answers the member opposite's question.

With respect to higher costs — the rise in prescription costs — for drug and optical, I'm waiting for more information on that. Just for clarification about the drug and optical numbers that the member opposite is asking: Is she referring to the dollar amount or the subscriber amount? There's an estimate of 180 individuals under the children's drug and optical program, which is an increase from a forecasted number of 175 for the previous year.

Ms. Stick: I found my yellow sticky that I was looking for earlier. What I was referring to is — if you look at that same line that you just referred to, for 2014-15 the number

was 201 children under the children's drug and optical program. The forecast for this year is 175, so that's a drop. The estimate for the next year is up by five to 180. When I was looking at the prescription costs — you go down further — it's not the forecast, the estimate, the actual. It says total prescription costs including the fill fee — and if you look under CDOP, it's for 123 individuals submitting claims and you see a total of \$11,542.

We saw huge increases in prescription claims around chronic disease and, I believe, under the children's drug and optical program, even though the numbers have come down. I'm looking for explanations as to why there are these jumps in prescription fees. There was mention made in the budget briefing about high-cost drugs for children. I think that was one of the answers but I'm looking for further explanation.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I'm sure we can attribute some of the increases that the member opposite is talking about to the higher cost of drugs and recognize the work that our Premier has done with the Council of the Federation in addressing the high cost of drugs across the country — not just around children but throughout our population.

I'm unclear about what the question is from the member opposite. Once the member has a little bit more clarity about the question — or perhaps she wants to write me a letter or send me a note, and I can address the question at that point in time.

Ms. Stick: I'll come back to this particular page just because I did have questions and I just need to go back and refresh myself and look at last year's budget also, so that I can do the comparison and ask the questions and hopefully we'll have time to come back to that.

I'm going to move on. Medical travel — I did have one question actually back to hearing services and also midwifery has become an option for families in the Yukon. Are they somehow sought out or included when looking at neonatal screening? If their children are not born in the hospital, do they have access or is an attempt made to get in touch with those families and offer that service to them also?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Yes, if there was a family that chose to go down the path of having a midwife, it is not my understanding that the midwife would provide that type of screening. That type of screening would still occur at the hospital.

Ms. Stick: I'm going to move on. I'm going to move into Mental Health Services. We have had a lot of discussion about a strategy and responsibility of that strategy, hopefully coming in the next couple of weeks, so I want to move away from that and just talk about services that are currently available. Right now I'm hearing from individuals about wait times, including for youth at Mental Health Services and for adults who are looking for help; that they still have a long wait to be able to get into those services for assessment or for intake. I think the most concerning is the number of families with children who are looking for a referral to Mental Health Services and are having long wait times. I wonder if the minister could fill us in on what those wait times are now for individuals not just in Whitehorse, but in communities as well.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: The Department of Health and Social Services currently provides a range of services and supports to individuals with mental illnesses, mental health challenges, concurrent disorders and addictions, and as well to their families. Yukon is placing a greater focus on child and youth needs through its policies, structures and youth mental health services and Yukon has access to a child psychiatrist. We're certainly challenged by a large geographical area and an inability to provide all services to all people in all areas, but we certainly do a terrific job in my opinion.

A mental health nurse and a support worker travel to Ross River from Dawson City together once a month. The support worker makes another trip two weeks later. Many Rivers Counselling will now be in Ross River every two weeks, first to deliver the mental health program, Flourishing, in the school and also to see any community residents, youth or adults, who require mental health counselling or supports. This service is also available in Faro.

In Ross River there is an inter-agency group comprised of all visiting agencies that provide services and all resident agencies, for example, home care, social services, CATS — Child and Adolescent Therapeutic Services, Child Development Centre, hospice, health centre staff, education staff, RCMP, First Nations — and so on — all have a role at the table.

Mental Health Services has two rural offices staffed by mental health nurses in Dawson and in Haines Junction. These nurses travel to other communities and provide assessment and treatment services to those with serious mental illnesses and consultation and education services to professionals as well as to the public.

Mental Health Services is currently recruiting for a mental health position in Watson Lake. Mental Health Services provides itinerant counselling services in Faro, Ross River and Old Crow and Many Rivers Counselling and Support Services — their counsellors, therapists and nurses from Mental Health Services and Many Rivers travel to the communities outside of Whitehorse on a regular basis to provide counselling services to those Yukoners.

THIF has worked with CYFN and community partners to develop a community front-line knowledge exchange workshop. We've also targeted training and response to community program area needs, building capacity within the communities by identifying Health and Social Services and First Nation staff who would be available. We're piloting a new video link telemental health system and looking forward to the evolution of that program in supporting that type of support and service throughout our communities.

THIF will also be piloting the use of e-mental health apps. It is another tool in the toolbox in providing supports and services for people with mental health issues. I should certainly recognize that right now today, the absence of a mental wellness strategy doesn't mean that there hasn't been a lot of good work that has been done throughout the territory and would also always recognize those professionals who are providing that front-line type of support to Yukoners who need it.

Yukon also currently has two resident psychiatrists. As well, we have itinerant psychiatrists for children, youth and seniors who provide services for our residents.

On wait times, we categorize or triage so there would be urgent individuals who are seen within two days. These people are significantly potentially suicidal and have deteriorated so significantly they are virtually not functioning and have minimal or no supports. There are semi-urgent supports — individuals are seen within two weeks. These people have a higher risk of self-harm, but are able to again agree to keep themselves safe and have significant decompensation, but may be still going to work and have some other supports that they can access. Then of course there is our regular waiting list of individuals who are determined, after an intake screening, to require comprehensive mental health assessment, and then they might be on the wait-list up to eight months.

Some of these individuals access a skills course like Changeways or anxiety management while they are waiting, but not everyone does that. Certainly it would be voluntary, and perhaps for others it might be appropriate for them to attend such a class. There are group services, so many individuals after an intake screen are referred directly to a skills course. Depending on when a referral comes in, they may go nearly immediately into a course or have to wait until a course is offered next. If they have to wait, the wait-list could potentially be up to three months, although longer if the referral comes in in the spring when the courses are finishing. They would then have to wait until the fall courses are offered.

For children, there is an autism wait-list. We can do about four to six autism assessments per year. Depending on how many referrals there are, a child may be assessed in the year it comes in or be on the wait-list for over a year. I can tell you that, since the time that my son was diagnosed with autism about 13 years ago, services and supports in this territory have grown exponentially. Other children and youth — basically the same criteria: urgent, semi-urgent, regular apply as above in terms of how we view clinical presentations. However, the child or youth regular wait-list can be up to a year long. It should be noted that we are constantly triaging urgent and semi-urgent individuals to the top of the list, which is the reason why the wait-list continues to grow.

With respect to individuals who could be observed to be psychotic — in early psychosis, referred individuals — presuming that they are willing to engage — are first seen, and the assessment starts within 72 hours of an intake screening. Older individuals with serious mental illness — the same standards of urgency apply but, even on the regular wait-list, the wait-list is probably not longer than one month and is only that long if the person is relatively stable.

For other instances, intake screens are completed within two weeks of being referred unless there is something unusual — for example, if we can't get hold of the person or they are away. We are very appreciative of the work that the people are doing across our territory in the area of mental health. We certainly appreciate our many partners, including: First

Nations, communities, organizations such as Bell through the Bell Let's Talk program, Northwestel through their significant investments in the north, and many others. I certainly look forward to Mental Health Week next week and a number of events and tributes that we can very much look forward to. I certainly extend my thanks to the Mental Health Association of Yukon for their continued work and volunteer efforts in many Yukon communities in providing the services and supports that they do. I look forward to continuing to support that organization and thank them for the work that they do across the territory.

Ms. Stick: I'm going to go back to the beginning. The minister spoke of mental health nurses in the communities and that we're looking for one for Watson Lake. It seems to me we were talking about this a year ago — that there was going to be a third mental health nurse for the communities. Did Watson Lake in fact get a nurse, are we looking for another, or have we not been able to fill the position?

The reason I ask is because, for two mental health nurses to cover all the communities including Old Crow, it is a lot of work and would explain why often nurses only get to a community for one day or for two days, which makes it very difficult. We've heard from individuals that, when you need a mental health nurse or mental health support, it's not on a schedule, usually. Often it's left to community members to try to cope.

The wait-list concerns me, especially when I hear that a person who might be suicidal can wait up to 72 hours for help. You can ask them to have a safe plan, to be kept safe or to keep themselves safe, but that seems like a long time for a person who's contemplating or planning to kill themselves.

On that — I was trying to find the number in the Yukon of suicides, because we all hear about them; we all know, in our communities, that suicides happen. They're tragic when they do, and they just don't impact family — they impact communities. They impact workplaces and schools, and it's a concern.

I can think back in the last year of just the number of situations I am aware of, but I cannot find anywhere what the number would have been, either for the last fiscal year or in 2015 — the number of suicides. I did do some asking around and tried to find that number, and I was given the range — that it's nine in 1,000 for the Yukon, so this averaging. What I was looking for was the actual number. If the minister is able to find that for me — I don't expect him to have it on him right now. That's fine, but I would like to find out what that number is, because it does seem to be of concern to all communities. When I hear that there could be a 72-hour wait, that is even more serious.

In terms of people presenting as suicidal, some show up at the hospital. I'm wondering if the government and the Hospital Corporation have been able to come up with a solution for the lack of psychiatric care at Whitehorse General Hospital. It would seem to me this would come under Mental Health Services under the department, as well as with the Yukon Hospital Corporation. For individuals to show up in the Emergency department, suicidal or with some real mental

health concerns, we know often that the Emergency staff and physicians are not able to cope with that kind of level. If we could find that, I would appreciate that.

It has been going on for some time without that psychiatric support. What we see end up happening is that individuals are discharged or they come into the Emergency department, they leave, they're having a mental health crisis, they do something foolish, they do something uncharacteristic, but a part of their illness — they end up being picked up by the RCMP and they are sent to the jail. There is a whole trigger of events that happen and that never get around to addressing the mental illness or the mental health crisis that this individual might be having, and we start criminalizing it. We all know of situations like that. We know of individuals who have, for lack of a better place, ended up at Whitehorse Correctional Centre under that hospital designation, which is not appropriate. I can think of instances in the last year or two with different individuals — very minor incidents — but that is where they ended up, until eventually they were sent Outside.

If I could just hear a bit more about the mental health nurses in the communities, do we have backup for these individuals — the one in Dawson City and the one in Haines Junction — so that they are not on call all the time? What happens when they're ready to take a month of holiday? The psychiatrist care at the hospital — what's happening around that and around suicide rates?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for her questions. I'll start with the mental health nurse position in Watson Lake. We had recruited and retained a position that was supposed to start this spring and that individual has since withdrawn their job offer, so we will continue with the recruitment of that position. We are also working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation in Whitehorse to allocate a mental health nurse in the emergency room and we look forward to that ongoing work coming to fruition. I don't have any timelines for either of those positions at this point in time.

We've been working for many years on establishing solid strategies to treating mental illness and increasing the mental wellness of our Yukon citizens. The Yukon mental wellness strategy, as I've indicated, is nearing completion and is expected to be released in the next several weeks, but just because the strategy is not out, as I indicated earlier, doesn't mean that we've not been working on mental wellness here in our territory. There's no quick, easy solution; we know this is a struggle all across the country. One only needs to read or listen to the news to be reminded of that. Mental wellness and addictions are something to be tackled by working together with other communities, with other groups, with NGO's, with First Nation partners and with all government departments.

A few examples of initiatives that we have been working on include continuing support of the important work at Jackson Lake healing camp, signing a multi-year funding agreement with Kwanlin Dün First Nation, partnering with Bell Let's Talk and Northwestel to form the FRIENDS program to provide mental health prevention and treatment for youth, continuing to fund Many Rivers Counselling to

maintain offices in some rural communities and travel to others, including the recent addition of more funding to Faro and Ross River that I spoke about earlier.

We have the new Sarah Steele facility opening soon, a new community addictions program providing enhanced alcohol and drug services supports to rural Yukon. Our government also focuses continually on providing economic, recreational and social opportunities for all Yukoners, which is another way to create strong, healthy communities. Yukon currently has two resident psychiatrists and an itinerant psychiatrist for children, youth and seniors who provide services for our Yukon residents. Mental Health Services delivers a host of programs to our residents and Many Rivers — our partner NGO — also provides a variety of services to our residents to help ensure their mental well-being. We're working together with resident psychiatrists, management from the Hospital Corporation and members of the Yukon Medical Association to address gaps in service that have been identified, and work is underway to address these gaps with short-, medium- and long-term plans for change.

I was very pleased on April 7 to announce that our Yukon Party has invested \$1 million in this fiscal budget in community-based mental health initiatives, and we certainly look forward to more details coming out around that announcement and how we can continue to partner with our stakeholders and partners in the territory.

The Yukon mental wellness strategy engagement process has now been completed. We had well over 100 people participate in the process and were given opportunities for input, including both internal and external contributors. Engagement sessions were held in a number of Yukon communities. Participants were also given the opportunity to provide written comments directly to the department. Staff are currently reviewing the strategy and making adjustments, based on feedback received throughout the engagement process.

I certainly extend my appreciation to all of those who were involved in the process and I very much look forward to tabling the mental wellness strategy here in the Legislature in the coming weeks.

The Second Opinion Society, or SOS, launched the Yukon distress and support line on November 24, 2014. Effective March 1, 2015, Many Rivers Counselling assumed responsibility for the distress and support line. This decision was supported and endorsed by the Second Opinion Society, which is now focusing on its core service delivery.

There are three FTE nurses in rural Yukon communities, as I have already indicated, and then positions travel to Yukon communities as vacancies are filled with nurses who may have recently retired or other positions that have come available.

Madam Chair, I can also report to the Legislature, to all members, that, as of this morning, I received a call from the chair of the Hospital Corporation, and they were very pleased that they had just signed a contract with the local psychiatrist to provide additional supports and services at the hospital — certainly a gap that we have spoken about in this Legislature,

so I'm very pleased with the department's work, with the Hospital Corporation's work and with the proponent that has been contracted to provide those services. We very much look forward to being able to ensure that those services are readily available to Yukoners who are staying in the hospital or going on an emergent basis and requiring those types of services.

As I indicated, I'm happy to advise that the mental wellness strategy will be released in the next number of weeks. We have been criticized that it has been a long time coming, but we certainly recognize that we have one chance to do this the right way and so we, and our partners in the process, have taken the time that we need to ensure that happens. As I indicated, right now our stakeholders, both in Whitehorse and in rural Yukon communities, are reviewing the strategy with a team from the department and making changes and alterations as they see fit.

Madam Chair, it's important to me as the minister responsible for mental health and to the government as a whole, that we have these very frank discussions up front to ensure that the context for the strategy is understood by everyone.

I can tell you that this will be a strategy for 10 years that will feature best practices from Canada, from international jurisdictions, and it certainly builds on past and current work done by many professionals throughout the territory. The government is already doing a lot in the area of mental health services for citizens and a lot of it is work that you will never particularly see until there comes a point in time in your life when you require those services.

This strategy comes with a \$1 million innovation fund that communities can access for capacity building. We have been able to increase services to Ross River and to Faro through an innovative partnership with Many Rivers and the Department of Education, doubling the availability of counselling within those communities.

There have been a number of programs that have been implemented throughout the territory — the territorial health investment fund with the community knowledge exchange workshop on mental health and addictions. We have certainly seen — and I was a part of the announcement with Bell and Northwestel on the FRIENDS program that is being implemented throughout the territory. We know that, through the Department of Health and Social Services, the mental health first aid training has been taken by a number of individuals, some of whom I have talked to who have taken the training and they have found it extremely helpful to have those tools at their disposal, particularly for managers who are providing management and directive to their employees within government.

We've seen the Living Life to the Full course offered through the Mental Health Association of Yukon. I know, in speaking with Ray Wells, the chair, and with a number of other members of the Mental Health Association of Yukon, they're very excited to be able to provide that training in a number of jurisdictions in Whitehorse. I think they were branching out into a couple of other jurisdictions within the territory.

I want to say my thanks to Ray Wells, but unfortunately Ray, right now, has flown south and is riding his motorcycle around in warm weather, so I can only offer so many thanks to Ray, as it makes me a little bit jealous.

We also provide the trauma-informed practice training through government and other initiatives that I've indicated through Bell Let's Talk and Kwanlin Dün First Nation. Their national knowledge exchange gathering that was just held a number of weeks ago — in speaking with Chief Doris Bill and other members of Kwanlin Dün, and certainly members of the audience who were participating in that knowledge exchange gathering, they felt that it was extremely helpful and extremely important in providing that type of gathering within our community. But, in speaking with members from Kwanlin Dün First Nation, they felt that it was a very good building block upon the mental wellness strategy that is now a work in progress.

With the mental wellness strategy, I've indicated that it is a 10-year document. It will be a living document, not something that we will table and shelve. It will have a review process and a number of partners who are very eager and willing to commit their time and resources in partnerships with Yukon government and other stakeholders with respect to the outcomes of that strategy.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Mr. Elias: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Elias that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

The following document was filed April 26, 2016:

33-1-127

Yukon Tourism Indicators Year-End Report (April 26, 2016) (Taylor)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 261

1st Session

33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, April 27, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER — Hon. David Laxton, MLA, Porter Creek Centre

DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Darrell Pasloski	Mountainview	Premier Minister responsible for Finance; Executive Council Office
Hon. Elaine Taylor	Whitehorse West	Deputy Premier Minister responsible for Tourism and Culture; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Justice; Yukon Development Corporation/ Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Doug Graham	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Education
Hon. Scott Kent	Riverdale North	Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources; Highways and Public Works
Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Community Services; Public Service Commission
Hon. Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Minister responsible for Environment
Hon. Mike Nixon	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin	Minister responsible for Economic Development; Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Party

Darius Elias	Government House Leader Vuntut Gwitchin
Hon. David Laxton	Porter Creek Centre
Patti McLeod	Watson Lake

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

New Democratic Party

Elizabeth Hanson	Leader of the Official Opposition Whitehorse Centre
Jan Stick	Official Opposition House Leader Riverdale South
Kevin Barr	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes
Lois Moorcroft	Copperbelt South
Jim Tredger	Mayo-Tatchun
Kate White	Takhini-Kopper King

Liberal Party

Sandy Silver	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, April 27, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Administrative Professionals Week

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I rise today in recognition of Administrative Professionals Week and to pay tribute to the crucial role that administrative professionals play in the day-to-day operations of all businesses and organizations, including our Yukon government.

In 1952, the celebration was started as National Secretaries Week and has since expanded to recognize the changing role that administrative professionals play in our workplace. The work that administrative professionals perform is foundational to the smooth functioning of our organization. All of the programs and services that are crucial to the daily lives of Yukon citizens are supported by the work of our administrative professionals.

They are typically the person who greets us when we enter a government office or the voice that assists us on the other end of the phone line. Many of them work behind the scenes to ensure that the many tasks, both big and small, are completed so that our schools, hospitals, highway camps, emergency services, airports and other important program areas operate efficiently. Since 2015, the Yukon government has been hiring administrative staff from the AR06 to the AR09 level through a centralized recruitment process. For anyone who is looking to work for the Yukon government in the administrative area, I encourage you to visit the government's employment site to learn more about applying for one of these positions.

A career as an administrative professional can offer a lot of opportunity and variety. A person who has a strong administrative skill can find themselves working in almost any field and on a variety of different projects. Any manager will tell you that an administrative professional who is skilled, dedicated and has the trust of their colleagues is a precious commodity in any office.

Please join me in celebrating Administrative Professionals Week and to take a moment to thank administrative staff in your office for the amazing work that they do each and every day.

I would ask all members to join me in welcoming our incredible Yukon Party caucus administrative professionals. In the gallery we have Loretta Devries, Brianne Warner,

Harmony Istchenko, LJ London, Kelsey Hassard, Madison Pearson, Leah Kelly and Jessica Hall. Thank you very much.

Applause

Ms. Moorcroft: I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to this week and day for administrative professionals. It is celebrated every year on the last Wednesday of the last week in April in many countries around the world. Since National Professional Secretaries Week began in 1952, organizations have evolved and so too has the role of that person.

In 2000, the name was changed to Administrative Professionals Week and Day to reflect the complexity and new tasks these workers take on. The administrative professionals' work touches on technology, finance, customer service, vendors, the law, health care, human resources and taxes — all in one day. Anyone who works in an office environment for any length of time knows that it is these front-line people who make our offices function well.

We are fortunate in our office to have Maggie Larocque. She is new to this position, but already we know that she reflects who we are by being that friendly person to greet our visitors. She is the one who constituents are comfortable talking to, whether on the phone or face to face. She is also there to listen to and support each person in the office, whether caucus or staff. She maintains her smile throughout interruptions and constant course changes throughout the day. She is one of the spokes that keeps the wheel that is a caucus office balanced and turning every day.

This week it is our turn to officially recognize and thank the administrative professionals in our workplace for the work they do each and every day, for their support and encouragement, for their patience and insight, for their friendship, for the contributions they make to the success of our organizations, and especially for their contributions to each of our individual successes.

On behalf of the Yukon New Democrats, I encourage people to recognize and celebrate the contributions of the administrative professionals in their own workplaces. I hope they have an administrator as skilled and dedicated as the one whom the Official Opposition is privileged to have working with us.

I would like to ask all members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming Maggie Larocque to the gallery today.

Applause

In recognition of Celebration of Swans

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I rise today to ask members of this House to join me in recognizing the unique opportunity in the Yukon that is the Celebration of Swans and the work of the wildlife viewing program at Environment Yukon for making this special and natural event available for the enjoyment of all Yukoners.

Every year, thousands of trumpeter swans and tundra swans use the shallow waters of M'Clintock Bay on Marsh Lake as a stopover ground on their long migration to northern nesting grounds. Swan Haven Interpretive Centre

gives Yukoners and visitors alike the opportunity to relax on the viewing deck, walk the 500-metre riverfront trail and educate themselves on swans and other migratory bird species that migrate north each spring. Throughout April and May, wildlife viewing staff hosts a Celebration of Swans at the Swan Haven Interpretive Centre.

I would like to turn your attention to the gallery, Mr. Speaker, in order to welcome and acknowledge our wildlife viewing technician, Scott Cameron, for his team's work in making this event possible each year. Mr. Cameron, as well as the other wildlife viewing staff, spend much of April and May at the Swan Haven Interpretive Centre facilitating free educational events for Yukoners and visitors alike, such as the bird banding and ID workshops, film screenings, new Yukoner day and many more. There are also fun community-building events like musical jam nights and open houses.

For the efforts Mr. Cameron and his team take to educate Yukoners in a fun and inclusive way, I would like to thank him and the rest of the wildlife viewing section.

As Minister of Environment, I encourage all members of this House to take the time to visit Swan Haven. It is a wonderful asset and one of many reminders of the beautiful place that we're fortunate enough to call home. It's only 40 kilometres south of Whitehorse. It is also an accessible excursion that can be enjoyed in the evening by the whole family.

To quote a former Minister of Environment, I would note that there are no baby swans to see at this time of year. If you see what looks like a baby, it's a duck.

Celebration of Swans, along with the other Yukon government wildlife viewing initiatives, works to foster an appreciation for wildlife and habitat in the territory. This in turn leads to recognition and support for the sustainable conservation practices that will allow future generations the same experience.

To close my remarks, I want to again thank Mr. Cameron. I had a chat with him earlier; apparently the swans came quite a bit earlier and there are not many left, so if you haven't been out, you should get out. I want to thank him for doing a wonderful job so please give a warm welcome to Mr. Cameron.

Applause

In recognition of Victoria Gold's Every Student, Every Day initiative

Hon. Mr. Graham: As it is Education Week this week, I'm honoured to rise today to pay tribute to the Victoria Gold Yukon Student Encouragement Society's Every Student, Every Day initiative, which works to raise awareness about and funds for grassroots student attendance programs across the territory. Five very committed volunteers lead Every Student, Every Day, and since the fund was established in the fall of 2012, they have raised and distributed over \$200,000 to support community-driven student attendance programs in our Yukon schools and communities.

From Old Crow to Watson Lake and from Ross River to Riverdale, 28 student attendance projects have been funded, and yesterday, another round of successful projects were awarded funding for the 2016-17 school year. I'm very proud that the Department of Education partners with the Every Student, Every Day team to administer the application process in Yukon schools. We appreciate the strong and innovative partnership we have with the Victoria Gold Yukon Student Encouragement Society and the many industry and community champions that come together each and every year to support our territory's students and help them stay engaged in our schools.

The private sector — particularly the mining, service and supply industries — have been steadfast partners from the very beginning. I would like to take the opportunity to make special mention of the Victoria Gold Corporation; Air North, Yukon's airline; and CKRW, The Rush for their acknowledgment of student attendance challenges in the territory and their commitment to addressing them. The Every Student, Every Day initiative is making tangible and positive attendance rate increases. It is helping to alleviate absenteeism through the programs it has funded with an approach that encourages individual educators and community groups to develop and implement projects that reflect the needs of their unique students.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the volunteer team that tirelessly leads the Every Student, Every Day initiative each year: Tara Christie, Amanda Leslie, Deb Ryan, Shena Shaw and Lenora Hobbs. I would also be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I didn't mention my colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works, who was Minister of Education when this program began. I take the opportunity to thank all of these people for the wonderful achievements.

I would also like to thank John McConnell, CEO of Victoria Gold, who, with my colleague, Minister Kent, initially discussed back in May 2012 the vital importance of helping Yukon students graduate and the links between success in schools and success in life. From conversations such as those, Every Student, Every Day was born.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I extend my sincere appreciation to the Victoria Gold Yukon Student Encouragement Society and its Every Student, Every Day initiative. It is through partnerships such as these that we are able to ensure our students are receiving the very most from their education here in the territory.

Thank you very much.

In recognition of Watson Lake rural experiential model

Ms. McLeod: I rise on behalf of all members today to pay tribute to the rural experiential model taking place this Education Week in the community of Watson Lake.

The rural experiential model brings together students in grades 10 to 12 and educators from six rural Yukon communities for an intensive week of learning and teaching in fine arts and applied skills. The Department of Education is committed to increasing the diversity of programming options

and improving learning outcomes for rural and First Nation students in the Yukon.

This initiative supports equity in education for rural students by delivering enhanced opportunities to the participants as those made available to urban students. Students from Carmacks, Dawson City, Pelly Crossing, Ross River, Teslin and Watson Lake work together in larger groups, practicing fine arts and applied skills along with rural teachers and local experts while learning about Yukon First Nation culture and traditions on the land.

There are several daytime session options and evening activities for students to choose from, allowing them to direct their learning toward their own interests. These session options include introduction to trapping, programming and game design, fashion exploration and more.

Students will also participate in three evening sessions of their choice, such as job-shadowing paramedics for a night, archery, Arctic sports, beading, a trip to the Liard Hot Springs, Dene games, music, hiking, yoga, bowling and movies. All of these opportunities have been developed and are being delivered by rural teachers, local experts and departmental support staff.

The rural experiential model is an excellent example of how successful collaboration between teachers, administrators, Public Schools branch staff, school councils, First Nations and rural communities can empower Yukon students. The success of the rural experiential model is a product of the dedication and efforts of many terrific teachers, administrators and department support staff who work together to create programs that engage learners.

The Department of Education is successfully offering opportunities for students and staff to connect with peers and colleagues from across the territory. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the community of Watson Lake for hosting the rural experiential model again this year, because last year was very successful for the community.

The Minister of Education and his good friend, the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, are very much looking forward to visiting and participating with students in Watson Lake tomorrow.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I just wanted to point out in the gallery today — joining us is my mother, Dianna Raketti. I was just asking about the Mother's Day date and, in preparation for that, just wanted to say Happy Mother's Day to you.

She celebrated 50 years of being a resident of Watson Lake last year alone. She's a champion of tourism, a bookkeeper, obviously a long-time resident of the territory, and my number one advisor. Thank you.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?
Are there any petitions to be presented?
Are there any bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to table the preliminary findings from the Yukon FASD prevalence study.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to allow St. Paul's Anglican Church to participate, as it has for many years, in the 2016 spring litter pickup campaign.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to explain why, after spending more than \$600,000 to develop a new Yukon visitor tracking program, it is "unable to provide an accurate estimate of total visitation to Yukon at this time", according to the 2015 Yukon tourism review.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to release a spring 2016 Yukon economic outlook.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Climate change action plan

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that one learns after many years in intergovernmental work is that the hardline positions rarely achieve positive outcomes. The Premier has demonstrated that he knows how to say "no". As a leader, the challenge is getting to "yes".

Has the Premier considered the implications to Yukon and to Yukon's economy if he takes his hardline "no" to the upcoming meetings with the Prime Minister on Canada's transition to a low-carbon economy?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: This party is very adamant that there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to dealing with the challenges of climate change. We do believe that we all have to do our part. The difference is that, in the north — and when I speak of this, I am talking not only about Yukon but also the governments of Nunavut and Northwest Territories that say that a carbon tax does not work in the north.

Our plan for Yukoners is very simple — where we actually will reduce greenhouse gases, put people to work and not make everything cost more expensive. That is — practical solutions to a problem, not just simply dealing with an ideology.

Ms. Hanson: It is not beyond the realm that the federal government will tie future federal funding for much-needed

infrastructure development to their efforts to institute a national carbon pricing system — infrastructure funding that this government has already signalled it needs.

The Prime Minister has made it clear that the transition to a low-carbon economy will happen. Industry understands this, other governments understand this, and Yukoners understand this. But the Premier doesn't seem to understand that his hardline, ideological stance could put at risk Yukon's opportunity to reap the real benefits that will flow from a national plan to transition to a low-carbon economy.

Is the Premier prepared to say "no" to future federal funding in order to maintain his ideological stance of "no" to any discussion of carbon pricing?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: What is clear is that both the NDP and the Liberals, if elected, would put a carbon tax in place to make everything in this territory more expensive: food, milk, diapers, clothing, home heating fuel and everything else. Yes, Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Party will stand up for what is best for Yukoners. We have a plan to create more employment, to reduce greenhouse gases and not make everything more expensive.

Ms. Hanson: The Premier was part of the Vancouver agreement, which did not exempt Yukon from the national dialogue on transitioning to a low-carbon economy. The Premier talks about being a net contributor to Canada and he now has the perfect opportunity to contribute in a positive manner to building that national low-carbon economy. Instead of slamming the door shut on dialogue, the Premier could show leadership. He could engage with Yukoners to discuss the elements of carbon pricing that would work for Yukoners. Yukon could show Canada that we are ready to engage as partners in this important national discussion; that we are ready to be part of the solution; and that we are ready to reap the economic benefits of the transition to a low-carbon economy.

Will the Premier commit to talking to Yukon citizens, prior to the First Ministers' Conference, and for the good of Yukon, will he commit to reflecting Yukoners' views, even —

Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, we will commit to finding real solutions to the challenges that face this territory — not making everything more expensive, which is exactly what the NDP — it's exactly what the Liberal Party would do. Canada contributes 1.6 percent of the global emissions and within Canada, Yukon contributes less than one percent. We already have 95 percent of our energy produced from renewables. Our largest contributors to greenhouse gases are buildings and transportation. Our plan would increase employment, create jobs and training opportunities, and would actually reduce greenhouse gases instead of making everything more expensive.

As I said in my budget speech, Mr. Speaker, the NDP and the Liberals are comforted at night with their carbon tax. For the rest of us, it's our furnace.

Question re: Physiotherapy wait times

Ms. Stick: Yesterday in Committee of the Whole, we heard the Minister of Health and Social Services confirm wait times of nine to 12 months for alcohol and drug services counselling. Wait times such as these are unacceptable. Unfortunately, they are not limited to alcohol and drug services. Yukoners without access to extended health or third-party coverage rely on Yukon health care to provide occupational therapy and physiotherapy. While urgent referrals may be seen within seven days, wait times for cases deemed non-urgent are significant. Yukoners can remain on these wait-lists for years.

Will the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us what the average wait time for occupational therapy and physiotherapy is for Yukoners not covered?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I certainly thank the member opposite for bringing this question forward on the floor of the Legislature this afternoon. Certainly we have many professions in the territory that provide those professional services to Yukoners — their services are greatly appreciated in the territory. We see physiotherapists at the continuing care facilities. We see them in the private sector with private businesses and we encourage and thank them for providing those services.

As for wait-lists, I am certainly not aware at this time that a senior in continuing care would be on a wait-list to see a physiotherapist, albeit that could very well be the case. We commend the staff at our continuing care facilities for assisting those seniors at a point in time in their life when they are not able to help themselves with those things. Again, I thank the member opposite for her question.

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, there was no criticism of physiotherapists or the hard-working occupational therapists, and I was not discussing those services in continuing care. This government is not meeting the needs of many Yukoners who cannot afford to pay for these therapies at private clinics. One senior constituent reported on being on the physiotherapy wait-list for four years. There supposedly are 600 people on this wait-list. Without treatment, this senior's condition has deteriorated. She now relies on a walker to get around and is now on a wait-list for surgery that could have been avoided. She has gone from requiring preventive services to now requiring surgery.

What action will this government take to cut the long wait times for occupational therapy and physiotherapy in Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, certainly when it comes to access to health care across our territory, we see very similar challenges in Yukon, as do the other two territories and, in fact, many of the provinces across the country. Access to health care is certainly more than seeing a doctor. As I have indicated, there is a whole host of professions that provide a multitude of different services throughout our territory. It is about receiving quality care when needed by the appropriate provider and in the manner that is sustainable. This government believes in making those investments. We certainly recognize that those professions often have to triage their clients, and that is not something that I as a minister

would ever weigh into. Again, I thank those professionals for providing those services at the hospital, at the continuing care facilities and those in the private sector.

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, these wait times for occupational therapy and physiotherapy will result in long-term costs for our health care system that are not sustainable. Meanwhile, the quality of life of hundreds of Yukoners on these wait-lists suffers. The condition of patients who do not receive timely treatment deteriorates. As their conditions become worse, their treatment options become more serious and some will require costly surgeries.

Does this government realize that keeping patients on wait-lists for years affects their quality of life and increases the health care costs for all Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, in addressing the member opposite, as I mentioned earlier, access to health care is certainly more than just seeing a doctor. We certainly recognize the many professionals throughout the territory and across the country, for that matter, who provide these services on a daily basis. We also recognize that Yukon is not unlike other jurisdictions in Canada and across the north when it comes to the challenges that we face in recruitment and retention of these professionals, but when they are in the territory, we see the exceptional work that is done on the ground.

If the member opposite has a unique case that she wishes to write to me about, I would be happy to receive a letter, but we're very comfortable on this side of the Legislature with making those investments in health care and making health care in Yukon one of the best in the country.

Question re: Dawson City sewage treatment

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, earlier this year one of the worst kept secrets in Yukon was finally brought out in the open — the WTF in Dawson would not be handed over to the city as promised. The reason — also not a secret — has been obvious for years: the waste-water facility doesn't operate properly and the O&M is beyond the capacity of the city to manage. The Yukon Party and Yukon taxpayers have been left holding the proverbial bag. The City of Dawson has rightfully refused to take on this white elephant. In 2014 the government told Yukoners that this plant would cost \$340,000 per year to operate.

Can the minister please confirm for the record that the cost to operate the facility is now over \$2.4 million per year?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Yes, indeed, the Yukon government has agreed to assume responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the waste-water treatment plant in Dawson City, including the facility's water licence. We are currently working on a service agreement with the City of Dawson regarding the long-term operation and maintenance of the plant.

We have retained Corix, a company that specializes in this, to do that work throughout the remainder of the warranty period as they were the company that originally constructed the project. Community Services continues to address deficiencies, warranty issues and training needs and we are

working with a contractor and consultants to develop a plan to improve treatment performance for this coming summer.

We acknowledge that the price to operate the plant is unacceptably high right now and we're working with our partners to bring that cost down. I believe the number referenced by the member opposite is close to correct. I don't know the exact amount off the top of my head but it is in that neighbourhood which, as I've noted, is unacceptably high, but we are doing our best to try to bring that cost down.

Mr. Silver: I appreciate the answer. After seven years of refusing to take "no" from the city, the Yukon Party was forced to agree to keep the keys to this project. Dawson is refusing to accept the WTF because it doesn't work and it costs millions of dollars to operate — millions more than advertised, Mr. Speaker.

The responsibility for this poor management and overbudget project will stay where it belongs with this government, which has been responsible for the oversight from the get-go. This government likes to talk about good fiscal management, but projects like this demonstrate that the facts don't match up with the talk. After spending \$25 million on a project that doesn't work and costs way more to operate than advertised, Yukoners have a very clear picture of this government's inability to manage these larger capital projects.

Is the government now prepared to admit what a disaster this project has been, virtually since day one?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I think what we have done is stepped up to the plate and offered assistance where it's needed. We had a unique situation in Dawson that has a very long story. I know the member knows it. Obviously there was originally a proposal for a sewage lagoon — that was voted down in a referendum. There have been court cases and there have been pleadings over the last decade or so that have played into the story but, ultimately, where we are today is we have a large and complex piece of infrastructure that is complex in nature and difficult to run. We're trying our best to get the costs down. We acknowledge that they are too high right now.

Through discussions with the City of Dawson, we have determined that Yukon government is in a better position to manage those complexities than the City of Dawson would be, so they have been very appreciative that we've been willing to step up and help them out with this and work with them collaboratively on it.

Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, I certainly acknowledge that the cost of the plant is excessively high to run and we are doing our best to bring that cost down. I'm told by the engineers in my department that it is possible to get those costs down. I don't know enough about it from a technical perspective to explain what those actions might be, but my understanding is that there is the possibility to bring the cost of operating the plant down and we're hopeful we can get those costs down.

If we're not able to, Mr. Speaker, we'll have to work with the contractor through our dispute resolution mechanisms to look at other options.

Mr. Silver: It's unfortunate that the minister refers to the referendum. He's taking a page from the previous

minister's ability to blame Dawson City residents, instead of taking responsibility for this project.

It's time for the government to level with the public and admit what a disaster this project is. The O&M is seven times what was promised on a \$25-million project that doesn't work — that actually won't work as designed. It is too bad that the government can't get the City of Dawson to take over the responsibility for this project. But it doesn't end there, Mr. Speaker. Last fall, the minister received a report that recommended two different expensive options to fix the WTF. The cost is another \$5 million to \$10 million, depending upon which option is used.

Is the company on the hook for these modifications or is the taxpayer expected to pay, once again?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: When I was commenting about the City of Dawson and their role over the years, I wasn't casting aspersions. I was simply quoting the former mayor. That's what the former mayor has said to both me and publicly about the role the Yukon government has taken and the leadership we've taken in taking on this project.

With regard to the specifics, my intention has been to direct officials in the government to find a way to get the costs down to operate this plant. If it's determined that the plant, as the member says, simply doesn't work and we simply have a lemon, then we will have to look at other options. Those include holding the company that constructed the plant to account. There is a range of opportunities for that, including the dispute resolution mechanisms we have in place in the contract. Obviously, no one wants to go down that road, Mr. Speaker, but if we have to, in the interest of taxpayers, we will. That is one option that, of course, remains on the table.

For now, we'll continue to work with the City of Dawson. We'll continue to work with the Water Board to try to take on the water licence and find a service agreement with the City of Dawson and ultimately hope to bring the costs of operating the plant down to a more sustainable level. If that's not possible, we'll have to look at other options.

Question re: Financial administration practices

Ms. Moorcroft: We have heard this government to continue to story-tell Yukoners about the amazing job they have done of managing the finances of the Yukon. The Premier even said — and I quote: "... a government that has been focused throughout its mandate on being responsible with Yukoners' money." An April 2016 C.D. Howe report on fiscal policy stated that Yukon and Nunavut have the worst records of all — and I quote: "Yukon and Nunavut's budget projections were the worst guides to results among all jurisdictions." Every year, we have seen a reduction in the surpluses that this government has presented in its record budgets.

Mr. Speaker, how can this government stand up and tell Yukoners that all is fine, when they have the second-worst budgeting record of all Canadian jurisdictions?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: We have gone over this. C.D. Howe acknowledged the recent changes in processes that Yukon has made by stating: "Yukon also deserves a

compliment. Its budgets are now consistent with its Public Accounts, making it the one territory where our reader would be able to find the comparable numbers." At the end of the day, the truest report card, when it comes to fiscal management, is that this is the only jurisdiction in the country that has money in the bank. We have net financial resources, Mr. Speaker — truly the envy of the entire country.

Ms. Moorcroft: Let's present another study. In 2013, the Auditor General drafted a scathing report on the mismanagement of capital projects in the Yukon by this Yukon Party government. That report stated — and I quote: "The Corporation did not analyze the ongoing financial resources needed to operate the hospitals before starting to build them. It might not be possible to obtain sufficient funding to operate the hospitals."

Mr. Speaker, did the government not learn from the 2013 Auditor General's report or will we need to wait for the next Auditor General's report to find out if the government had the true O&M costs before approving the construction of the Whistle Bend facility?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: The Minister of Health and Social Services has been very articulate in describing how, in fact, we have budgeted. It's clear; it's there for the members opposite to see in our outbound years, where we continue to show in each year a modest surplus and money in the bank. It's also very clear, if you look at 2018-19, that the money for O&M is reflected in that year's budget. We continue to invest this year almost \$67 million in that facility. We might see that the federal government might be interested, and if they are, that would be wonderful because that would be a bunch of money that we have now that we can put in other projects as well, Mr. Speaker.

This is the one party that is focused on what is right for Yukoners. We will continue to do it in a responsible manner. Families and small businesses have to live within their means and Yukoners expect their government to do the same.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, this government is undertaking what is perhaps the largest capital project in Yukon with the Whistle Bend continuing care facility. We have asked for fact-based operation and maintenance numbers to be presented to this House — not assumed costs based on an existing facility with very different services. The minister opposite said — and I quote: "This project has met all policy and legislative obligations that were required as it moved forward."

Mr. Speaker, if this government has truly met all its obligations, why is this government giving us the runaround and not presenting the true O&M costs submitted to Management Board for the Whistle Bend continuing care facility?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite quoted a report earlier, and I wanted the opportunity to in fact quote another report, and this was dated this Monday. It says that Alberta's NDP government's credit rating will take another hit. Moody's Investors Service announced on Monday that it has downgraded Alberta's long-term debt rating to double-A1 from triple-A and has given it a negative outlook.

Mr. Speaker, it's the second downgrade from the rating services since the province released its budget less than two weeks ago, and it included the removal of a debt ceiling and a forecast of \$58 billion in debt by 2019.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that is focused on the economy, focused on health care, focused on education, focused on investing in infrastructure, creating opportunities for Yukoners, and we will do it by being fiscally strong managers and earning the opportunity again to govern this territory, to serve all Yukoners in a responsible manner. Yukoners have to live within their means and their government should do so.

These two parties would show us — and they have. We should remind all of the 6,000 new Yukoners who have moved here since the Yukon Party came into power of the history and the record of the previous NDP and Liberal governments — double-digit unemployment, mass exodus from the territory, Mr. Speaker.

Question re: Housing as a human right

Ms. White: Yesterday, the Minister of Health and Social Services told us that their most recent data shows that the government spends more than half-a-million dollars a year to house Yukoners in long-stay hotels over the winter months. As the tourism season draws closer, these same people can expect that they will again be asked to leave to make room for visitors to the territory.

Mr. Speaker, the community has been asking this government to find a way to reduce their dependence year after year on insecure housing like hotel rooms to house Yukoners receiving social assistance.

Why does the government continue to throw half-a-million dollars a winter at a problem that could be fixed by making that same yearly investment in low-barrier housing that would address the root cause of this issue — that of housing insecurity and homelessness?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for her question. In order to provide vulnerable Yukoners with stability, the income support unit is just one tool that we have that is enhancing outreach support services and collaborating with other government departments and agencies on housing stock issues.

We also continue to provide guidance to landlords who may need assistance supporting tenants with complex needs and to liaise with other government agencies. We have also seen other projects that this Yukon Party government has invested in, like the mental health housing, Options for Independence — just to name a couple. This Yukon Party government is proud of those investments and we certainly extend our appreciation to those professionals who are on the ground, working to ensure that the needs of these individuals — more vulnerable people — are met.

Ms. White: It sounds like another excuse for off-loading that responsibility.

A hotel room was never designed to be a long-term home. Most hotel rooms don't have kitchens or cooking facilities, they have less security than other multi-unit facilities and, as

we know, many long-stay hotel tenants must leave in the spring and seek other accommodations until the fall. This leaves those Yukoners in a constantly vulnerable housing situation. They have to move at least twice a year.

Mr. Speaker, this just isn't a question of financial management or program delivery. It's a question of human dignity. It's a question of believing in access to housing as a human right.

Mr. Speaker, what kind of community do we live in if our government leadership refuses to acknowledge housing as a human right? Mr. Speaker, does the Premier recognize housing as a human right?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: In addressing the member opposite, addressing homelessness is a challenge that is faced by many jurisdictions across Canada — and the world, for that manner — and our government remains committed to ensuring that housing needs for Yukoners are addressed, particularly those persons who are homeless or at the risk of being homeless.

A number of departments continue to work together to set priorities and to make recommendations for the housing action plan. This government has provided a 14-unit complex for individuals with FAS, which I talked about in my first response. We've provided the mental health housing on 4th Avenue. We're in the process of building new transitional housing with the partnership with Salvation Army, and we've expanded the new St. Elias group home for individuals with moderate to cognitive disabilities.

Contrary to what the member opposite is trying to indicate, this government stands proud of those investments, and I thank the men and women who are providing that support on the ground.

Ms. White: This is about values and this is about showing the difference between NDP values and Yukon Party values. I want those 6,000 new Yukoners to know where this government stands on the issue of housing as a human right, so I will ask the question again, Mr. Speaker: Will the Premier tell this House if he recognizes housing as a human right?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: This government definitely understands the importance of housing issues here in the Yukon. If you look at our record over the past few years, we see a continued investment all across the housing continuum — in excess of \$100 million in the last few years in housing projects here in the Yukon. We continue to work with First Nation governments, NGOs — lots of different organizations throughout the Yukon — to work on ways to better house all individuals.

We have programs through Yukon Housing Corporation to help homeowners, to help landlords and tenants. We continue to work very hard. We do understand the importance of housing in this great territory. We know the work is not completed but we continue to do the good work and the hard work that's needed to help as many Yukoners as we can.

Question re: Pelly Crossing airfield

Mr. Tredger: For years, residents of Pelly Crossing and I have been raising concerns about the Pelly Crossing airfield and its inability to handle medevac flights. Currently,

patients being evacuated from Pelly Crossing are taken by ambulance from Pelly to Stewart Crossing, where they are then transferred to the Mayo ambulance, which takes them to Mayo. From there they are finally medevaced to Whitehorse. This continues to be an unacceptable standard for the Yukon. We have heard several commitments from this government regarding the airfield, none of which have been followed through on. Once again, this year's budget does not have sufficient money allocated to upgrade the airstrip to be medevac-capable.

Why has this government once again failed to provide the necessary funds to allow safe, medevac flights from the Pelly Crossing airfield?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I believe this issue actually came up in Highways and Public Works debate with the critic opposite. For the MLA for Mayo-Tatchun, I will repeat what I told her during debate. A project to resurface the existing runway in Pelly is underway, with materials moved to the site in the fall of last year. Resurfacing is scheduled to begin in the summer of 2016, subject of course to budget approval in this Legislature. The department plans to investigate the cost benefit of additional improvements such as extending the runway by approximately 1,000 feet, which would make it a gravel airstrip of 4,300 feet from its current 3,300-foot length. We are working with Health Services, the medevac carrier, and other users during the upcoming Yukon aviation system review that is currently underway to determine the best way to move forward in improving the Pelly Crossing airstrip.

Mr. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, after all these years, the airfield will still not be medevac-capable. Pelly Crossing is not alone in having problems with aerodrome capabilities. Other rural communities have raised concerns about medevac flights to this government and have been ignored. The people of Pelly want a straight answer from this government when it comes to medevacs from Pelly. They don't want any more empty commitments from ministers looking into it. Families often make it to Whitehorse before the patient because of the required ambulance transfer in Mayo before being medevaced to Whitehorse. This is unacceptable.

Why is providing a medevac-capable airfield to the people of Pelly Crossing not a priority of this government?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my previous response, the department plans to investigate the cost benefit of additional improvements such as extending the runway. We are working with Health Services, the medevac carrier, and other users during the upcoming Yukon aviation system review that will begin in 2016.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to medevacs, the carrier requires runway surface condition reports before they consider using the runway. Presently there is no program or trained staff available to provide inspection services on a routine basis in Pelly. In the wintertime, snow removal standards would also have to change to accommodate medevac flights.

As I mentioned, we will certainly work with all of the stakeholders, including the community. We don't want to see any unfortunate incidents occur because no medevac flights

are available in Pelly. We are working right now to — as the member opposite mentioned, we do transfer patients right now from Pelly to Mayo for medevac services. Again, we are doing our best with the resources that we have. We will look to make improvements if we can and if it makes sense for Yukon taxpayers to upgrade the Pelly Crossing airstrip so that we can accommodate medevac flights.

Mr. Tredger: Safety incidents have occurred and they continue to occur. This lack of action on the airfield is not lost on the people of Pelly. The pile of gravel waiting to be spread on the airfield has sat there so long that locals now refer to it as "Mount Paz".

When I first raised this issue four years ago, the previous Minister of Highways and Public Works said that they were looking at what needs to be done. Now we are hearing the same answers again. The people of Pelly are beginning to wonder what they did to deserve this government indifference.

Why is this government incapable of meeting the basic safety needs of a community seeking safe and reliable air medevac services?

Hon. Mr. Kent: One of the other issues with respect to the Pelly aerodrome that does not allow for medevac services — the site does not have certified weather observers or automated weather observation equipment available to provide aircraft with weather data normally available at fully supported medevac sites like Mayo. Mayo has a 24-hour human observation program and staffed presence that can support aircraft activity.

Mr. Speaker, all of the issues that I have identified with respect to the Pelly aerodrome that don't allow us to provide medevac service to that community will be considered in the system review that's just getting underway. I believe we have 28 or 29 airports and aerodromes throughout the territory. All of those aerodromes will be considered. We're making a number of improvements to aerodromes throughout the Yukon, including what I mentioned with respect to the Pelly aerodrome, which is scheduled to have resurfacing completed in the summer of this year.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in welcoming to the Assembly this afternoon the northern regional vice-president of the Public Service Alliance of Canada — Jack Bourassa.

Applause

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 1136

Clerk: Motion No. 1136, standing in the name of Ms. McLeod.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Watson Lake:

THAT this House urges the Governor of the Bank of Canada to:

(1) in featuring iconic Canadian women on new banknotes, consider Martha Louise Black, known as “Yukon’s First Lady”;

(2) ensure Canadian women will be featured on Canadian banknotes in recognition of their many contributions to shaping history and life in Canada; and

(3) ensure Yukon and northern perspectives are taken into account by expanding the Bank of Canada’s Independent Bank Note Advisory Council to include representation from Yukon and northern women.

Ms. McLeod: I’m honoured today to rise in support of this motion. On International Women’s Day this year, the federal government announced that the Bank of Canada would engage the public in consultation to select an iconic Canadian woman to be featured on a bank note in their next series to be issued in 2018.

Prior to the tabling of this motion, the Premier did write a letter to the Bank of Canada Governor Stephen Poloz in support of having Yukon trailblazer Martha Louise Black portrayed on a bank note. Our government recognizes that there have been many, many Yukon women throughout our history who have contributed to Yukon and Canada in immeasurable ways, making it very difficult to make one recommendation.

One of the great things about this consultation is that it was entirely open to the public, so I’m sure that Yukoners took notice and put forward the names of other notable Yukon women.

Although Martha Black was not Canadian by birth, she was a staunch champion for the Yukon as part of Canada’s identity and went on to become a permanent figure in Yukon’s history. She was born Martha Louise Munger on February 24, 1866 in Mercer, Pennsylvania. Martha and her first husband, William Amon Purdy, were drawn to the north during the Klondike Gold Rush in 1898.

William and a pregnant Martha set off from Chicago, leaving their two small boys in Kansas with her family. Her family made the journey as far as Seattle when his plans fell through for the business he was going to open in the north and he opted to head south, presumably leaving Martha with the choice of returning home to her family in Kansas or following William. Truly a woman before her time, Martha wished to carry on with the group heading for the Klondike, which included her brother and a cousin. She joined thousands of other homesteaders, frontier men and women, and want-to-be

goldminers in the stampede to the Klondike. Like others who went before and after her, Martha hiked the infamous Chilkoot Trail with her party and floated down the Yukon River to Dawson City in a homemade boat.

Martha was recorded as the 631st woman in 1898 to have arrived at the North-West Mounted Police checkpoint in Tagish. Their group arrived in Dawson City on August 5, 1898. Martha went on to give birth to her third son in Dawson City on January 31, 1899. Upon having her baby, Martha’s father arrived to take them both back to Kansas in the summer of 1899. She wasted no time in presenting a lecture about the far north to interested community members and she went on to write her first paper, entitled *A Few Dawson Prices* and read it before the Eureka, Kansas farmers’ institute. This would begin Martha’s life of lecturing and presenting about the Klondike and the north and becoming an unofficial tourism promoter for Dawson City and the Yukon.

Her next project was publishing a booklet entitled *Letters from Alaska and the Northwest*, using excerpts from letters she had sent home while on her Klondike journey.

With the Klondike still calling her name, Martha returned to Dawson City in the summer of 1900. Her parents and two of her sons followed in 1901 with all of the supplies and machinery needed to set up a sawmill and a two-stamp quartz mill. Martha’s father set her up as the manager of the businesses, ensuring that she would be able to make a go of it alone in the Klondike with her young sons.

By 1904, Martha had met a young Dawson City lawyer named George Black, and they were married on August 1, 1904. George had become active in Yukon politics and helped form the first Conservative Party in the Yukon in 1904. During this time, Martha carried on being an ambassador for all that is Yukon.

Martha’s love for gathering Yukon wildflowers led to her amassing a collection of over 460 different specimens. In a practice she called “artistic botany”, Martha liked to press the flowers and fill in the backgrounds with watercolours. She went on to win a horticultural contest for best exhibit of native wildflowers, which was then displayed at the Yukon pavilion at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in Seattle in 1909.

George Black was appointed the seventh Commissioner of the Yukon in 1912, allowing the couple to move into what we know today as the Commissioner’s Residence in Dawson City. Martha dedicated herself to the citizens and opened the doors of the Commissioner’s Residence to anyone, regardless of their social position, earning her widespread affection and the title “Yukon’s first lady”. She went on to establish the first chapter of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire in Dawson City and assisted in organizing two more chapters. The IODE in the Yukon was instrumental in incredible fundraising efforts focused on World War I. Martha also helped organize the Patriotic Service League of Dawson City, which was affiliated with the Toronto Red Cross.

George Black established a contingent of Yukon men to go overseas to fight for England in World War I. When those men, including Martha’s youngest son, and George went off to Victoria to take their place in basic training, Martha, of

course, went with them. While in Victoria, she split her time between lecturing about the Yukon and taking lessons under the St. John Ambulance Brigade. When the Yukon company was ready to ship off from Halifax, Martha managed to meet them there. Once in Halifax, she was able to convince the general in command of the Canadian transport that she should be able to go along with the transport ship bound for the UK, the sole woman with 1,500 men. The general's concerns that Martha would be unwelcome or not courageous enough for the journey were soon shown to be unfounded. They arrived in Liverpool in February of 1917.

Martha worked steadily in the Prisoners of War Department and, of course, kept up her volunteer work for the YMCA, the Red Cross, the Yukon comfort fund and many other causes. She continued to give lectures on the Klondike — sometimes two or three a day — under the Royal Geographical Society. During this time, Martha found herself the war correspondent for both the *Dawson Daily News* and the *Whitehorse Star*. Martha was so dedicated to the Yukon that even on the other side of the world, in the middle of World War I, she continued to market the Yukon to all.

Returning to Canada in 1919, Martha carried on giving lectures throughout Canada and the United States for many years. George Black was elected as Yukon's Member of Parliament in 1921 and went on to become Speaker of the House of Commons in Ottawa. When George became ill in 1935 and had to resign his seat as the Speaker, Martha carried on helping with his constituency issues.

Later that same year, Martha was nominated to represent the Yukon as an independent Conservative. She was elected on February 6, 1936 as the Yukon's Member of Parliament, making her the first American-born woman and only the second Canadian woman to be elected to Parliament. This also made her the Yukon's first female MP. Martha held that seat until 1940, when her husband returned to politics and won the Yukon riding once again. Martha Louise Black was a trailblazer for Yukon female politicians and her service to her community, the Yukon and Canada as a whole went far beyond Yukon's borders. This is something I'm sure we can all appreciate, regardless of political stripe.

We would also like to see the Bank of Canada ensure that Canadian women are featured on Canadian bank notes going forward. In the past, the only people who have been featured individually on Canadian bank notes have been past Prime Ministers or members of the Royal Family such as Queen Elizabeth II and King George VI. These bills have also featured Canadian landscapes, birds and, most recently, examples of Canada's culture, history and achievements.

While I do think that the most recent series of notes is an improvement and a better example of what Canada really is and what has influenced our culture, I also think that we're ready to shake some of this tradition and could feature Canadian women on bank notes and even Canadian men who are not Prime Ministers. There are so many notable Canadians in our history who have done so much for Canada and have worked so hard to help shape our country into what it is today. We have women in our history who have pioneered in their

fields from medicine to politics to aboriginal leadership. We have had artists and educators and businesswomen who have changed the place of women in the Canadian landscape.

Mr. Speaker, the last aspect of this motion, which is very important, is to urge the Bank of Canada to ensure that Yukon and northern perspectives are taken into account by expanding the Bank of Canada's independent bank note advisory council to include representation from Yukon and northern women.

I do think that the north is sometimes overlooked on these boards and advisory councils. We know that life in the north is somewhat more isolating and rural than life in most parts of the south. We're faced with different challenges and have different perspectives on life in Canada. When it comes to our history of the Yukon and northern Canada, ours is not well-known in southern provinces — that's for sure. Having a Yukon or northern woman on this board would provide valuable input, not only in decisions surrounding this specific call for input on women on bank notes, but going forward in helping inform future decisions regarding bank notes. The north has a rich history, but a lot of it goes unknown outside of our borders.

As Martha Black's history indicates, Yukoners are a tough, pioneering bunch. We persevered then as we do now. Admittedly, life in the Yukon is much more modern these days, but we still like to think that we're tougher than our southern counterparts. From 40 below to fly-in communities to trips by dog-sled, Canada's north is a unique place with unique history, rich in arts, culture and tradition.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all members to support this motion today in the spirit of Yukon women — past, present and future.

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to stand here today and to speak to this motion. I want to thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing this forward. It has certainly been in the news with regard to choices and recognizing women's contributions from across Canada and their recognition on the dollars.

The member opposite gave us a very good description of Martha Black and her accomplishments here in the Yukon and I would agree they are wonderful. I know that her biography — one was edited by Flo Whyard — is certainly popular. When it's in my bookstore it is always a good seller.

She wrote other books also, but to me one of my favourite treasures of hers is a very small, little book of maybe 30 pages of flowers of the Yukon. Some of the drawings are done by her — they're all black and white, so it kind of makes it difficult to identify them, but it's just a small treasure and any of the photographs in it were taken by George Black himself. Whenever I come across one of those, it's very popular. It's just one of those sweet little books that are nice to own. I am pleased to support — we're pleased to see that Martha Black's name is put forward.

Just before we came in to the House though, I thought I would go and look at the Bank of Canada and just read up on how this is all going to work in choosing women hopefully for the currency. It went on to describe how they were

undertaking public consultation and anyone could put forward names for consideration. The call for nominations closed on April 15 and they had a list. It is like some of those things we see on Facebook, like: “How many books have you read?” or “How many of these TV shows have you seen?” I thought I would go have a look. They did mention that there were over 26,000 submissions, and I wasn’t going to go through it, but the list they had on Facebook probably was over 100 but under 200, so I just thought I would cruise through and see who I knew.

There were many familiar names of women who we have known across the history of Yukon and Canada, but I was surprised there were other Yukon women on that list. The two who popped out that I immediately recognized was Angela Sidney and the other was Kate Carmack. I read this and I thought, “Wow, on this short list we have three Yukon women.” I’m not sure how we distinguish between supporting one and not the others. So I did a little research and thank goodness for Wikipedia and for having a bookstore and knowing some of these things.

Angela Sidney was a Tagish storyteller and she was born in 1902 and died in 1991. I’m pretty sure everyone here would be familiar with who Angela Sidney was and what she did. Interestingly enough, she received the Order of Canada, becoming the first First Nation woman from the Yukon to be so honoured. She was very instrumental in helping to create the Yukon International Storytelling Festival, which began in 1988 and ran for a number of years and she was always front and centre. She always had a story to share and made wonderful contributions to that festival. I wish it was still going on.

One of the biggest quotes from Angela Sidney is, “Well, I have no money to leave for my grandchildren. My stories are my wealth!” and I love that because that’s what she did. There were numerous books that were listed that she contributed to, and they include: *Place Names of the Tagish Region, Southern Yukon* and credit is given to her for that one; *Haa Shag’oon: Our Family History* — this one she did along with Julie Cruikshank; *Tagish Tlaagú: Tagish Stories* — another one with Julie Cruikshank; and probably one of the best reads on Yukon First Nation history and women would be *My Stories Are My Wealth*, which is a wonderful read. I highly recommend it to everyone and, again, available at my bookstore.

Going on, Kate Carmack — I will talk about her because she’s important too in the whole history of the Yukon, which, we will acknowledge, started long before the gold rush. Kate Carmack was a Tagish First Nation woman — another Tagish one — born near Bennett Lake, where she grew up with her parents, seven sisters and brothers. In 1887, along with her brother Keish — Skookum Jim Mason — and her nephew Dawson Charlie, they started a packing, hunting and prospecting partnership with George Washington Carmack, an American who had come to the Yukon and was a prospector and a trader. Within a year of coming to know George Carmack, Kate became his common-law wife and took the name Kate Carmack. Before then she went by Shaaw Tláa.

It was Kate and her husband fishing for salmon at the mouth of the Klondike River in August 1896, and it was with a party led by her brother and including two nephews who came looking for her and discovered gold in Rabbit Creek. Some would say it was actually Kate Carmack herself who found the first gold. Others will argue yes or no, and I wasn’t there so I can’t confirm or deny that.

But I think it’s great. I think it’s wonderful that we have three Yukon women who have been nominated and are on a list on a website to become one of the first women on our paper currency. I think that, if I was given a choice, I couldn’t make that — between the three. Maybe I could, but I will just leave it at that. I think all three deserve recognition and I believe that, in light of reconciliation and recognition of the contribution of First Nations to the whole history of the Yukon, these names should be included.

I didn’t have the chance to speak with others before this, but I would like to make what I believe is a friendly amendment.

Amendment proposed

Ms. Stick: I move:

THAT Motion No. 1136 be amended by adding the phrase, “Shaaw Tláa (Kate Carmack), and Angela Sidney, Tagish storyteller,” immediately after the phrase, “consider Martha Louise Black, known as ‘Yukon’s First Lady.’”

Speaker: Order, please.

The amendment is in order. It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale South:

THAT Motion No. 1136 be amended by adding the phrase, “Shaaw Tláa (Kate Carmack), and Angela Sidney, Tagish storyteller,” immediately after the phrase, “consider Martha Louise Black, known as ‘Yukon’s First Lady.’”

Ms. Stick: I will just read the first line or first two lines of the motion, so it is:

“THAT this House urges the Governor of the Bank of Canada to:

“(1) in featuring iconic Canadian women on new bank notes, consider Martha Louise Black, known as ‘Yukon’s First Lady,’ Shaaw Tláa (Kate Carmack), and Angela Sidney, Tagish storyteller.”

Then the other two clauses in the motion would follow. The second one is to ensure that Canadian women will be featured on Canadian banknotes in recognition of their many contributions to shaping history and life in Canada. I think all three women are deserving of this consideration by the Bank of Canada. I think it’s an honour that, on the list that we see on the website for the Bank of Canada, there are at least three Yukon women’s names. There may be more I didn’t recognize, but those were certainly the ones I did.

I think it’s important that we give them three options — that we recognize that there are many, many Yukon women whose names could be on that list. We have three right now. Let’s honour all of them by encouraging the Bank of Canada to consider all three.

Speaker: Does any other member wish to be heard on the amendment? Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. Stick: Agree.

Ms. Moorcroft: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 17 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the amendment carried.

Amendment to Motion No. 1136 agreed to

Speaker: Minister of Environment, on the motion as amended.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: It is an honour for me to rise today in support of the motion as amended. As we know, on International Women's Day this year, the federal government announced that the Bank of Canada would engage the public in consultation to select a great Canadian woman to be featured on a bank note in their next series to be issued in 2018.

Prior to the tabling of this motion, we know that the Premier did write a letter to the Governor of the Bank of Canada in support of having the Yukon trailblazer Martha Louise Black portrayed on the bank note. I recognize that many Yukon women throughout our history have contributed to the Yukon and our great country, and it's hard to make just one recommendation. The consultation was entirely open to the public so I'm sure that Yukoners took notice and put forward names — I think we've spoken a little bit about that in the House today — and I will speak of a couple of other notable women later, Mr. Speaker.

We know Martha Louise Munger was born on February 24, 1866, in Mercer, Pennsylvania. It didn't take her long, with her husband, William, to find a love for the Yukon and travel here in 1898. She joined other gold miners and

stampedeers to the Klondike, hiking the Chilkoot Trail and floating down the Yukon River to Dawson. Can you just imagine, Mr. Speaker, how hard and challenging that was with the technologies that we have today and what they didn't have back then? She fell in love with the Klondike and would travel south to tell all she could about the north. This would begin Martha's life of lecturing and presenting about the Klondike and the north to become — she was like our unofficial tourism promoter for Dawson City and the Yukon back then.

With the Klondike still calling her name, she did return in 1900, when she met a young Dawson City lawyer named George Black. They were married in 1904. George had become active in Yukon politics and helped form the first Conservative Party in the Yukon in 1904. I know my fellow colleague spoke a little bit about this, but I want to highlight a few things out of there.

During this time, Martha carried on being an ambassador for all things Yukon. I was amazed at some of her accomplishments, such as the gathering of wildflowers. When George was appointed the seventh Commissioner of the Yukon in 1912, she dedicated herself to the citizens and opened the doors of the residence to anyone, regardless of their social position, earning her widespread affection and her title, "Yukon's First Lady".

She established the first Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire in Dawson City, and she also assisted in organizing a couple more chapters and was instrumental in incredible fundraising efforts focused on World War I. That's what tweaked my interest about Martha Black years ago — the fact that she helped organize the Patriotic Service League of Dawson City, and that was affiliated with the Toronto Red Cross, but this would come into play more when she went overseas.

George Black established a contingent of Yukon men to go overseas to fight for England in World War I. This year, Mr. Speaker, we were talking about this earlier — about the 100th anniversary of Joe Boyle and the team and the contribution of Yukoners who went to war. When those men, including Martha's young son, George, went off to Victoria to take part in the basic training, Martha went with them. Once they made it to Victoria, she began taking lessons under the St. John Ambulance Brigade and, when they shipped to Halifax, she managed to convince the general in command of Canadian transport — which is amazing — that she should go along and transport by ship — the sole woman in 1,500 men going across there. The general's concerns that Martha would be unwelcome or not courageous enough for the journey were soon shown to be unfounded. They arrived in Liverpool in 1917.

Martha worked steadily, as my fellow colleague said, in the Prisoner of War Department and kept up her volunteer work for the YMCA and the Red Cross and the Yukon comfort fund, and many other causes. She was so dedicated to the Yukon that, even on the other side of the world, in the middle of World War I, she continued to market the Yukon to all. Returning to Canada in 1919, Martha carried on giving

lectures throughout Canada and the United States for many years.

George Black was elected as Yukon's Member of Parliament in 1921 and went on to become Speaker of the House of Commons. When George became ill in 1935, Mr. Speaker, and had to resign his seat as the Speaker, Martha carried on in helping with his constituency business, and later the same year, Martha was nominated and represented the Yukon as an independent Conservative. She was elected on February 6, 1936 as the Yukon's Member of Parliament, making her the first American-born woman and only the second Canadian woman to be elected to Parliament. This also made her Yukon's first MP. She held the seat until the 1940 election when her husband returned to politics and won the Yukon riding once again.

Martha Louise Black was a trailblazer for Yukon female politicians, and her service to her community, Yukon and Canada as a whole went far beyond Yukon's borders. This is something that I'm sure we can all appreciate in this House, regardless of the political stripe, and she sure did pave the way.

I want to take a little time to talk about my grandmother, Hilda Pauline Watson. Hilda was a Canadian schoolteacher — and she came from the south for the love of the Yukon — and a politician from the Yukon Territory. She was the first woman in Canadian history to lead a political party that was successful in having its members elected. First elected to the Yukon Territorial Council in the 1970 election to represent the district of Carmacks-Kluane — now my riding, which is just Kluane — she was one of the first two councillors to be appointed to the new executive committee. This gave her ministerial responsibilities over education in the territory. She and her fellow executive councillor, Norm Chamberlist, built a voting bloc with two other non-executive councillors, which gave them effective control over virtually all council business.

My grandma was re-elected in the 1974 election, but the validity of the election was challenged in court by a former executive councillor, John Livesey, on the basis of allegations that 26 ineligible voters had cast ballots in the district — a number larger than her margin of victory over Livesey. So she resigned the seat and re-contested it in a by-election in which Livesey ran as her main challenger but, of course, my grandma won the by-election.

After the legislation authorizing the creation of the Legislative Assembly of the Yukon and the resulting establishment of political parties in the Yukon was passed in 1977, she won the leadership of the new Progressive Conservative Party over federal Member of Parliament Erik Nielsen. She did lead the party to victory in the 1978 territorial election, in which she was the party's candidate in the Electoral District of Kluane; however, she did lose her seat to Liberal opponent Alice McGuire and, therefore, did not become the government leader.

Mr. Speaker, another Yukon woman I would like to talk about a little bit — she's a public servant, a businesswoman and she was also the Commissioner of the Yukon. I want to talk a little bit about a friend of mine, Geraldine Van Bibber.

She was born in Dawson. She became a business partner in the family tourism company. She played a pivotal role in the development of Yukon's travel industry. She was also instrumental in the formation of the Yukon First Nations Tourism Association. She has been a member of a number of territorial and national tourism and small business-related boards, including the Canadian Tourism Commission, the Yukon tourism education council and the Yukon government's business development fund board. She has been a guest speaker, of course, at northern tourism symposiums in Canada, the US, Sweden and Finland. She has also been quite active with the Yukon Human Rights Commission, the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues, the Gathering of Traditions Potlach Society and the cancer care clinic where she also works with the Speaker.

She acted as an ambassador for Yukon and First Nation people and was the first native-born Yukoner to welcome Prince Charles on his visit to this region in April 2001. Of course, we all know that she became the Commissioner of Yukon in December of 2005.

Those are just two Yukon women — we could go on and on, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say that Martha Black paved the way for Yukon women like my grandmother, Hilda Watson, and like Geraldine Van Bibber, who in turn passed that way on for many other women in politics. We see proof of that by the members serving in this House today — on both sides, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to see the Bank of Canada ensure that our Canadian women are featured on Canadian bank notes. There are also many great Canadians in our past who have done so much for Canada. We have women in our history who have pioneered in their fields. We have politicians, artists, educators, business women — too many to list — who have changed the place of women in the Canadian landscape.

I think it was key that the Premier pushed this forward. It was very important to urge the Bank of Canada to ensure that the Yukon and the northern perspective are taken into account by expanding the Bank of Canada's independent bank note advisory council. That is just so we can include the representation from the Yukon and northern women.

The Yukon and northern Canada's history is not as well-known in some of our southern provinces, and that is a fact. The north does have a very rich history, but a lot of it is not known also in the south. To quote what my fellow colleagues said a little earlier today, as Martha Black's history indicates, Yukoners are a tough, pioneering bunch. We persevered then as we do now. Admittedly, life in the Yukon is much more modern these days, but we do still like to think that we are just a little bit tougher than our southern counterparts. I am pretty sure that goes for all of us when we have the opportunity to talk to people from the south.

Like the Member for Watson Lake said, from 40 below to fly-in communities to trips by dog-sled, Canada's north is a unique place with a unique history, rich in arts, culture and tradition. I do hope all members support this motion. I am glad it was brought forward. The friendly amendment was also good. I want to thank everybody for this opportunity.

Mr. Silver: It is a pleasure to rise to speak on this motion as amended. I did reach out to a lot of folks in the Klondike to get some content for today's motion. I did get most of the content on Martha Black because, of course, we didn't know it would be amended at this time. I do share the Member for Riverdale South's voice for the many other women who clearly should be on this list as well for consideration. I was happy to hear that amendment.

I have a long list of quotes and honours and things to put on the record for Martha Black that come from information in my community. I would like to start — just for the Member for Kluane, I think he might have failed to mention that Mount Martha Black was named in her honour in August 1990. That is in the St. Elias mountain range west of Haines Junction. On June 18, 1917, in London, she was elected a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society — a notable honour for a woman at that time.

In the Dominion Day Honours of 1948, Martha Black was awarded the OBE, which is the Order of the British Empire, for cultural and social contributions to the Yukon. A coast guard ship — a high-endurance, mid-tasked vessel — *Martha L. Black* was named in her honour in 1986. It was her quote — and I'm quoting here: "It is better to wear out than to rust out."

While in London she and George visited the British House of Commons. She — and I quote: "found it the greatest difficulty getting into the House of Commons", and when she did, the unfeeling officials dragged her — her husband who was in khaki was given a privileged place while she was borne away to a stuffy cell concealed behind iron gatherings. This was in the day before the famous grill was removed. Regarding the performance she remarked, "It's rather curious how in Dawson you have to protect the women from the men; while over here they apparently find it necessary to protect the men from our women." She had a lot of gusto.

A Canadian postage stamp also honoured Martha Black. It was released in September 26, 1997. On November 5, 1987 Martha Louise Black was deemed of natural historic significance by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. A plaque in her honour mounted on a rock of the Commissioner's Residence in Dawson City was unveiled on July 17, 1993.

Just moving on to some more points here, Martha Black was an American who came to the Yukon during the Klondike Gold Rush as many others. She embraced her new country and became a prominent figure in the social life and community in Yukon. She was a staunch champion for Yukon as part of the Canadian northern identity, speaking out about her beloved adopted home whenever she had the opportunity. In her later years, her identity and that of the Yukon seemed to become one and the same. Constantly defying convention, she had the common touch that made her as comfortable with people at the bottom of the social scale as with those at the top. She was active in politics, becoming only the second woman and the first immigrant woman elected in the House of Commons.

An active collector of Yukon wildflowers, she was recognized for her work by the Royal Geographical Society — as mentioned as well — and of course the award from the Order of the British Empire.

She was born in Pennsylvania and her father made a fortune in the laundry business. My father was also in the laundry business — did not make a fortune.

Martha departed Seattle for the Klondike with her brothers and five others in 1898. Like thousands of others in the stampede to the Klondike, she hiked the iconic Chilkoot Trail with her party and floated down the Yukon River to Dawson City in a homemade boat made at Bennett Lake. She was recorded as the 631st woman to arrive at the NWMP post at Tagish in 1898. Her party arrived in Dawson City August 5 of the same year.

The party she was with built a small log cabin on the hillside overlooking Klondike City, otherwise known as Lousetown, and she gave birth to her third son, Lyman, there on January 31, 1899. She returned to her family in Kansas later in 1899, but in the summer of 1900, she returned to Dawson. Her parents and two of her sons followed in 1901, bringing the machinery to establish a sawmill and a two-stamp quartz mill, which she managed. Although her father owned the business, he established Martha as manager so that she could have an income as single mother, raising her young sons alone in the far north.

She divorced her first husband, Will Purdy, in the fall of 1903. When the divorce became final in June 1904, she married a Dawson lawyer named George Black, who she had met through her business. The marriage took place on August 1, 1904 at Millhouse, near the Ogilvie bridge, Dawson City. Martha said about her marriage to George Black — and I quote: "I am a firm believer in the principle that married couples, from the beginning, should be in complete harmony in religion, in country, and in politics. So immediately after my marriage, without compunction, I became an Anglican, an Imperialist and a Conservative." There was a quote back then of the day, Mr. Speaker, that in the town, there were Liberals and then there were the Blacks.

Martha became an active participant in the social life in Dawson City for many years. George became active in Yukon politics and helped establish the Conservative Party in Yukon in 1904. Martha supported him all the way. Martha's favourite hobby was gathering wildflowers, as mentioned, and she collected over 460 different specimens. She developed a method for preserving and displaying them, called "artistic botany." After winning a Yukon government contest for the best exhibit of native wildflowers, she had them displayed at the Arctic Yukon's Pacific Exposition in Seattle in 1909 and also at the Yukon Pavilion. She went on to receive a commission from the Canadian Pacific Railway to gather and display wildflowers of the Rocky Mountains.

In 1912, George Black was appointed seventh Commissioner to the Yukon. It was the first time that the government had chosen a long-time resident of the community and not someone outside from the government. They became the most famous residents of the Commissioner's Residence

with Martha as its chatelaine. She embarked upon fixing up a “house of the people” as she described it. At the first reception they threw open the doors of the Commissioner’s Residence to anyone who wanted to attend, irrespective of their social position.

She was instrumental in establishing the first three IODE chapters in Dawson — the first one in February 1913 — was known as the George M. Dawson Chapter. In January 1914, she helped organize the Inspector F.J. Fitzgerald Chapter. The IODE, which of course of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire, as it was known at the time — the Yukon was instrumental in the incredible fundraising efforts for the patriotic efforts of World War I. A third chapter, the Klondike Chapter, was organized in January 1950. A fourth chapter was named in her honour.

Ms. Black also helped organize the Patriotic Services League in Dawson, which was affiliated with the Toronto Red Cross. She was patron of the first corps of the Girl Guides in Yukon, established in March 1914, in Dawson City. During World War I, Martha accompanied her husband and 225 other men from the Yukon Infantry Company to England aboard the SS Canada in February 1917. She was the only woman among 1,500 men on that voyage. While her husband George was preparing for war, she was actively volunteering her services with the Red Cross, she visited wounded and homesick Yukon soldiers and she administered the Yukon comfort fund.

Mr. Speaker, while she was in London during the war, she continued to write letters to friends in Dawson and submitted articles to the *Dawson Daily News* and the *Whitehorse Star*. When George was unable to run in the 1935 election, Martha ran in his place and was elected. She was only the second woman to be elected to the House of Commons as mentioned — quite impressive with her immigrant status as well.

Ms. Black wrote numerous articles for newspapers and magazines over the years. She also produced a book on Yukon wildflowers with her husband George and a series of small booklets and an autobiography — *My Seventy Years* — in 1938 that was later reprinted with an update by Flo Whyard, which was called *My Ninety Years*. Martha Black died on October 31, 1957 and she was buried in the Whitehorse cemetery on 6th Avenue.

There’s more I could go on here with and I have a whole bunch of pages, but I’m sure my time is running out. I did really want to mention my support for this motion. I certainly believe that Martha Black is a fine selection for this type of national recognition. It is worthy of note that we should be talking to all Yukoners to get names to bring forward. During this afternoon alone, we’ve heard some fantastic names. I understand that they have to be deceased to be considered for putting their face on a bill, but we do have an awful lot of more-than-worthy women in the Yukon that we should be talking about, not just Martha Black; however, seeing as I represent the Klondike, it would be a great opportunity for me to inform the House today of the wonderful achievements and the absolute support that I have for Martha Black being on one of our Canadian bills.

Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. With that, I will support this motion as amended.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, I’m honoured to rise today in support of this motion. I would like to acknowledge and thank our Member for Watson Lake for bringing it forward.

It’s wonderful to hear some of the stories that we have heard. I learned a few things more about Martha Black today and I also want to acknowledge the amended motion and what the Member for Riverdale South stated — that while it has been amended to three names, there are many other women who would be duly worthy of such recognition as well.

I will be brief — I was disappointed that the Member for Klondike stole a bit of my thunder with the Liberals and the Black comment. It was interesting at the time and I think she described herself as a pinch-hitter for George Black at the time, and there was one other quote I found interesting as well.

She mentioned some of her troubles, and she said that when she was going to put her name forward, there were younger women who said, “What can this damn old woman do for us in Ottawa?” That was hard to take, and she hurled back, “You’ll be lucky when you reach my age if you have my sturdy legs, my good stomach, my strong heart and what I call my headpiece.”

I thought that was an interesting comment from her as well.

I truly would like to see women who have made a significant historical contribution to our country featured on Canadian bank notes. I think that’s unanimous here within the House. We’ve had women throughout our history as a country who have helped us to define what it means to be Canadian. Canada is reflected by the notable achievements of leaders and role models today as well. It’s one thing to be born into royalty or elected into office, but being featured as a worthy individual on bank notes, based on one’s historical national contributions and dedication is another thing entirely. It reflects the country’s appreciation of a person for reasons that go beyond birthright or title.

I was pleased to nominate Martha Black as an outstanding individual and encouraged the Bank of Canada to not only continue the practice of placing notable Canadian women on bank notes, but to ensure to give consideration to women in the far reaches of Canada, such as here in the north. The north has been home to a great number of women with a broad range of historical contributions to Canada as we know it today.

For the record, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to include the letter that I did send to Governor Stephen Poloz of the Bank of Canada, which was dated February 25, 2016, and was an open letter on adding women to Canadian bank notes.

I wrote: “I am writing you in follow-up to Federal Finance Minister Bill Morneau’s recent comments in support of portraying notable women on Canadian bank notes. As Premier of Yukon, I would like to express my strong support for this initiative. Given that our territory is currently

celebrating our annual Sourdough Rendezvous festival in which we commemorate our heritage and local heroes, I would also like to provide my own recommendation for a notable Yukoner.

“Martha Louise Black, a staunch champion for the territory as part of Canada’s identity, was a trailblazer and prominent figure in Yukon history. Her influence in shaping the course of events in the territory along with her undying passion for Yukon make her a strong candidate for portrayal on our Canadian banknotes.

“Martha immigrated to Canada and visited Yukon in 1898 during the rise of the Klondike Gold Rush. She immediately fell in love with the North, writing numerous publications on its beauty and charm, and it was not long after that she decided to make Yukon her permanent home.

“Martha was a kind and passionate woman, incredibly devoted to the service of her community. In 1912, while her husband George served as the Commissioner of Yukon, Martha dedicated herself to the citizens and opened the doors of the Commissioner’s Residence in Dawson City to anyone, regardless of their social position, earning her widespread affection and the title ‘Yukon’s first lady’.

“During the First World War, Martha helped establish a number of supports for the Canadian troops, including the organization of a Patriotic Service League in Dawson City, and the development of a fund to provide relief to deployed soldiers and their families. When her family was sent overseas for the war, Martha took that as an opportunity to continue her service to the country from abroad. Martha committed herself to numerous volunteer organizations such as the British Red Cross and the YMCA, and spent her free time giving lectures about Canada and Yukon. When Martha returned to Canada, she continued her lectures and published a variety of articles about her beloved Yukon.

“In 1935, she continued to pursue her passion for public service and was elected Member of Parliament for Yukon. Not only was she just the second woman elected to Parliament but she holds the distinction of being the first foreign-born woman elected into the House of Commons.

“Martha passed away in 1957 but not before leaving a lasting mark on Yukon and Canada as a whole. She was made a Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society, awarded an Order of the British Empire for her contributions to Yukon, and deemed of National Historical Significance by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. In addition, both a mountain and a large Canadian Coast Guard vessel have been named after her.

“These are but a few of the great things Mrs. Black has accomplished. Beyond commemorating an outstanding Canadian, I believe that featuring her on Canadian banknotes would give all Canadians the opportunity to appreciate the importance of individuals like Martha and the important role women have played in shaping our country and the North.

“I hope you take the time to consider my recommendation as she certainly deserves the recognition.”

It is signed by me, and a copy of this letter was also sent to the Minister of Finance, the Hon. Bill Morneau.

As we have heard, there certainly are a number of people who would be worthy. It is also important to note that all Canadians had the opportunity to put forward names for possible recognition or distinction in this manner.

I would again like to thank the Member for Watson Lake for putting forward this motion, which has now been amended. I am very happy and proud to be supporting it today.

Ms. Hanson: I am happy to stand here today to indicate support for the motion as amended. I think that the amended motion recognizes three women of distinction in the Yukon. I think the amended motion actually offers us a real opportunity as legislators, as Yukoners, to recognize and to build on the elements of reconciliation that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada called on us to do. I think we have heard today and acknowledged that Martha Black represents and really emphasises Yukon’s colonial history, and so the notion of inclusion of First Nation women into this nomination, or suggestion, to the Bank of Canada really does do a lot to begin to acknowledge, as the TRCC said — I am just going to quote, Mr. Speaker, that one of the things that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada pointed out is that typically we are taught that the history of Canada began when the first European explorers set foot in the new world. Nation-building had been the main theme of Canada’s history curricula for a long time. Aboriginal peoples, with few notable exceptions, were portrayed as bystanders, if not obstacles, to that enterprise.

I think that it is really interesting to see the juxtaposition in terms of the women that the Member for Riverdale South suggested be included in this recommendation to the Bank of Canada and the fact that both Angela Sidney and Shaaw Tláa — Kate Carmack — actually were part of that post-colonial history and have done much to contribute from a First Nation perspective, and both in their different and unique ways. They are linked in an interesting way and I want to talk about that in a bit.

Again, just to set the context for why I really do support this is — one of the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is number 79, which talks about revising the policies and the criteria of national programs of commemoration to integrate indigenous history and values and memory practices into what we would call our national history and heritage and history. That, in my mind, is epitomized or exemplified by the potential presence of an aboriginal woman on our currency.

When we speak about Angela Sidney — she came from a very traditional background. She was, as we all know, one of the last fluent speakers of the Tagish language. She really took it to heart to preserve those languages and the stories. I think many people in this Legislative Assembly will be familiar with — whether the stories or the books that she was part of. I have a personal affinity for some of these stories because one of the stories — as a Tagish matriarch, she told a story of Skookum Jim, who was her father’s cousin. These are all names familiar to Yukoners. He was one of the people

credited with starting the gold rush — so again, this goes back to why Martha Black even came up here in the Yukon.

In one of Angela Sidney's stories, Skookum Jim — and this story is apparently situated at Crag Lake, so the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes and I have been told this story by elders who would say that this is where the real origin of the gold rush occurred. It sounds kind of weird, but it goes like this: in one of her stories, Skookum Jim rescued a frog trapped in a ditch — and I have even been shown where that ditch was supposed to be — and the frog in turn heals Skookum Jim when he became injured. The spirit of the frog later came to Jim in a dream in the form of a beautiful woman, and she told him that he will find his luck down the Yukon River. A year later, Skookum Jim went down the river and discovered gold.

Now, Angela Sidney and her stories were the inspiration of many, many things, including a number of books, *My Stories are My Wealth* — and she said that: I don't have any money; my stories are my wealth. She worked with really well-known author and anthropologist Julie Cruikshank and also Catharine McClellan in the books *Life Lived Like a Story* and *My Stories Are My Wealth* — what I've just mentioned. She was the inspiration behind the Yukon Storytelling Festival, which she helped create almost 20 years ago.

One of the other, sort of prescient things that is interesting about Angela Sidney — when she was asked to give the new Whitehorse campus at the Yukon College a First Nation name, she began by describing how her father's people had built killer whale houses on the banks of the river. If you'll recall, Mr. Speaker, where was the original Yukon College? The old vocational school was on the banks of the Yukon River. Her father, when the whale house was there, had to move it when they realized that the house was too close to the riverbank. She saw the similarity between the killer whale house, the old Yukon vocational college, and the main campus, and so she named the college Ayamdigut, a Tlingit name for "she got up and went" — pretty straightforward.

I think that it's important — as we look at the trials and tribulations of these First Nation women as they made their place and, in one case, maintained the strong, strong commitment to the language and the history and the oral traditions of First Nation people — that we try to encourage the Governor of the Bank of Canada to look perhaps at — if we have to do an ascending priority, maybe we should be looking at ensuring that our original peoples are recognized first — our original women — and then those of us who have come to join Canada as settlers are represented on our currency.

I also just wanted to make a comment, as a woman and as a feminist, that it strikes me as unfortunate that, in 2016, we make a reference to a person being a "First Lady", which, in my mind, in this case is really a reference to her husband's position as Commissioner and MP. Martha Black was a Member of Parliament, she was a writer — we have heard so much today about her accomplishments as a naturalist. She was a businessperson, she was a survivor, and I think we should be emphasizing her own accomplishments. She's not

an add-on. She's not the auxiliary. She was a Member of Parliament in her own right; she was not an auxiliary to her husband. So I find it — the legacy of being Yukon's First Lady — it's Martha Black, Yukon Member of Parliament. We should be proud of that.

I stand in support of this motion, Mr. Speaker.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Ms. McLeod: I want to thank people for the comments — those who provided some.

I believe the motion, as I presented it originally, was very inclusive. I think that we could subamend this motion for the rest of the session if we went around the room and everybody put in a few names of everybody they thought worthy of this honour, but I take what the Member for Riverdale-South said. Clearly these women are very worthy in their own right — absolutely.

I guess that's all I wanted to say on this, other than to thank all the members for their support. I hope that Martha Black's name makes the short list at the end of the day and we see some forward action.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the motion as amended?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. Stick: Agree.

Ms. Moorcroft: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 17 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion, as amended, carried.

Motion No. 1136, as amended, agreed to

Mr. Elias: I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 202, *Act to Amend the Education Act*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

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

Bill No. 202: *Act to Amend the Education Act*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 202, *Act to Amend the Education Act*.

Hon. Mr. Graham: During second reading of this act, a number of questions were raised, so I thought, as an opening to the Committee of the Whole debate, I would attempt to answer the questions raised as best I can.

The first question was around the election process. The *Education Act* states that the Minister of Education will negotiate with each First Nation the number of guaranteed representatives, the process for appointing or electing the guaranteed representatives, and the length of term for the guaranteed representation to apply. All guaranteed representatives are currently appointed by the First Nation, and all terms expire at the end of the regular school council's term.

Some governments select an individual as their guaranteed representative — for example, the education director. Others solicit applications from their membership. I have in fact seen a couple of advertisements in the paper where a First Nation is advertising for a number of different boards and committees for which they are seeking members. They then pick a representative from those people who express interest. It is really up to the First Nation to determine an appropriate means of selecting their representative. There are any number of ways, I guess, that they could do it, because a Yukon First Nation could hold elections for its guaranteed representative if it was interested in doing so. If a First Nation government advised me that they were so interested, then I would discuss with either the Elections Office or with the First Nation government themselves how that election process would take place and when. There is a possibility that the

election of a First Nation guaranteed representative could coincide with the election of the regular members.

I guess the final thing is that the guaranteed representative seat is for an indefinite period of time unless the Yukon First Nation and the Minister of Education at the time agree to remove it from the school council.

There was also a question asked around funding for school councils. Honoraria for school council members and school board trustees are set out in the payments to members and trustees regulation under the *Education Act*. According to the regulation, members of school councils who attend a meeting of the council for not less than one hour shall be paid a per-meeting rate determined by the council. The rate is set by regulation as no more than \$62.50 for the chair and no more than \$50 for the council member. The department does provide funding on the basis of an anticipated 10 meetings per year per council.

If there was an interest from any school council in increasing the honoraria, we would be happy to discuss it. To date, to the best of my knowledge, we have not had that request. The department also provides school councils with an annual budget for operation and maintenance. It's on a sliding scale with the larger amount going to school councils with more than 200 students. Two examples I was given were: F.H. Collins, which is the largest school in the territory and gets approximately \$8,600; and Nelnah Bessie John School, which is one of the smaller schools in the territory and gets approximately \$4,600.

The other question that was raised was: How do we ensure parity of members? Also, is there a need to set a limit on the guaranteed representatives for First Nations? This question speaks to the representation of First Nation governments as well as people such as parents, former educators and community members who have an interest in how schools are operating. Currently 17 of the 26 school councils have guaranteed First Nation representatives.

Of those 17, five school councils have one guaranteed representative and, at the other end of the scale, five school councils have an equal number of elected members and guaranteed representatives.

First Nation citizens who are not guaranteed representatives — as I said during the second reading debate — are also welcome to run for elected positions on the school council in their area. On some school councils in the territory, all of the elected members and guaranteed representatives are First Nation citizens. If a school council or a First Nation government have concerns about the makeup of a school council, we have told everyone that we would be more than happy to discuss the matter with them and to make accommodations, if accommodations are called for or are necessary.

The next question: Are there current limits on the number of guaranteed representatives? Currently there are no limits on the number of guaranteed representatives; it's determined through negotiations between the Department of Education and the First Nation government and in consultation with the existing school council. At the present time, F.H. Collins has

the largest number of guaranteed representatives. They have four — three from Kwanlin Dün and one from Ta'an Kwäch'än' Council. In addition to the four guaranteed representatives, they have 11 elected school representatives.

The final question was: Will the amendments change how guaranteed representatives are appointed? The answer to that, quite simply, is no. The process for how guaranteed representatives are appointed will remain the same. As with the current act, if a First Nation government wants to change the process for the appointment of guaranteed representatives, I would be only too happy to sit down and discuss it with them.

That concludes the information regarding questions during second reading. I look forward to going through the legislation with members opposite and answering any further questions they have.

Mr. Tredger: Madam Chair, I thank the representatives for attending to this and for assisting the minister in bringing forth this act. I thank the minister for his comments and answering the questions. Again he's stolen a bit of my thunder — I'm not sure where we go now.

I want to thank also the Yukon Chief Electoral Officer as well as the departments of Education and Justice for bringing this forward. I think it's a fairly important issue; it resolves some ambiguity for our school councils and boards, which are such important parts of our system going forward.

The minister mentioned a bit about the process and he answered a couple of my questions. I believe he indicated that the terms of the guaranteed representatives are concurrent with the school council so that they would serve at the same time, and that this process is negotiated with each First Nation.

I'm not sure that my experience — and that was a number of years ago. But there was no formal process for that and some of the First Nations weren't sure exactly how many representatives they had and whether or not it was important to put it forward. I'm wondering if the minister would commit to an annual report or instigation of the process with the First Nations so that annually they would be informed of their rights, the numbers that they currently have, and whether or not they want to renegotiate that. The reason for that is, quite often the personnel involved change, and over a couple of years we end up relying on hearsay and what we think the process is. I have seen situations where there have been two guaranteed representatives filled and so they assume that it is how many that they have — so if the minister can identify or commit to having an annual process that would inform the First Nations and the school councils of that process.

Hon. Mr. Graham: To the best of my knowledge, the member opposite is correct in that we don't do an information exchange, shall we say, with First Nations each time there is a school council election. It seems to me to be a reasonable idea. We do advertise; we make sure that the public is aware, as much as possible, that the elections are taking place. We kind of assume, I think, many times that everyone knows, including First Nations. I will undertake, as the current minister anyway, that the department will reach out in the

future as just part of the outreach process that they normally do to First Nations to remind them that school elections are on and that their guaranteed representatives — or they should indicate to the department who their guaranteed representatives are. That way, hopefully, we'll have no confusion.

I have to tell you though that I receive, on a pretty regular basis, information from First Nations that let me know that they have this person who has been the guaranteed representative and they are no longer in the community, so they are replacing them with this person. We process those requests as soon as we get the letters from First Nations. It appears to me that many First Nations are on top of it but, just to be sure, this is a process that it wouldn't hurt us to implement.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that. It wasn't an implication that school councils or First Nations aren't aware of it, but sometimes a reminder as personnel changes — because if we're trying to do away with some of the ambiguity around school councils, that certainly would help — just a reminder of the process.

We're referring to anywhere between three and seven members on a school council or board — those are the elected members. How is that determined?

Have there been any redeterminations? Is the school community informed of the number — well, they would be in an election period, but how is that developed and is it clear for all schools or can that vary with time? I have been on school councils and, as I mentioned, last time — when a parent shows up and expresses an interest in being part of the school community, the school council has sent a request to the minister requesting that the person then be appointed to the school council. Is any school able to go to the maximum of seven or are there limits set in each school? Can that be changed?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, the number of members of a school council is set by the department after consultation with the school community and usually with the existing school council.

To give you an idea, Eliza Van Bibber School has always had, in the past, five members. They communicated with the department and requested that the number be reduced to three. We did that this year by regulation so there will only be three members at Eliza Van Bibber School.

I believe rural schools have — I will tell you: Old Crow school, five members, one guaranteed; Christ the King Elementary School, five members; Del Van Gorder School, five members; Elijah Smith Elementary School, three elected and three appointed; F.H. Collins Secondary School has seven and four, as I said before; Eliza Van Bibber School, three and two — and all five are First Nation because the three elected members are First Nation people as well; Ghùch Tlà community school has five elected and three appointed; Golden Horn Elementary School, five elected; Grey Mountain Primary School, five; Hidden Valley School, five elected, one KDFN member; Holy Family School, five elected; J.V. Clark School, three elected — and so that's the only other school

that has three elected, but J.V. Clark School has three elected and three appointed or guaranteed representatives; Jack Hulland Elementary School has seven; Kluane Lake School has five and one guaranteed representative; Nelnah Bessie John has three and one from White River First Nation; Porter Creek Secondary School has seven and one guaranteed from KDFN, one guaranteed from Ta'an Kwäch'än; Robert Service School for some reason has six and two; Ross River School, five elected, two guaranteed; Selkirk Elementary School, five elected; St. Elias Community School, three elected and three appointed; Takhini Elementary School, five and one KDFN; Tantalus School in Carmacks, three elected and three appointed; Teslin School, three elected and three appointed; Vanier Catholic Secondary School, five elected; Watson Lake Secondary School has seven elected, two Liard First Nation and one Daylu Dena First Nation; Whitehorse Elementary School has five elected.

That's the whole list. They do vary between three and seven, and most of the communities where there is a strong First Nation presence, as well as non-First Nation, are three and three.

It seems to be working fairly well with taking the recommendation from the existing school council and putting that in regulation.

Mr. Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that. Do the changes affect in any way — or do they contemplate the ability or what happens when a school council or community wants to move from a school council to a school board?

Hon. Mr. Graham: That's an altogether different process, and it's clearly outlined in the *Education Act*, but it has nothing to do with this change at all. This one deals strictly with school councils and guaranteed representatives.

Mr. Tredger: So it doesn't affect if a school district or school wanted to move to a school board or, in the case of École Émilie Tremblay, this has no effect on school trustees.

Hon. Mr. Graham: That's correct, Madam Chair. We were very clear, hopefully, in pointing that out with EET — that this in no way has an impact on the school board.

Mr. Tredger: Could these changes raise potential issues regarding the number of guaranteed reps who can sit on a school council, whether it is desirable to legislate their maximum number, or is that entirely through negotiations? I believe that's how you answered it. Do you anticipate — or have you had conversations with various First Nations — that the legislation could lead to any significant growth or involvement of guaranteed representative appointments after clarifying that they don't count toward the ceiling for elected council members?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Yes, the member opposite is correct that the number of guaranteed representatives is completely open to negotiation between the minister and the First Nation. To date, all negotiations have gone well and we have never had a problem, to the best of my knowledge.

To go back to the francophone school board, there are currently no guaranteed First Nation representatives on the Yukon francophone school board and, as a result, this will not have an impact. But should a First Nation seek a guaranteed

representation on the francophone school board, it would then require me, as minister, to negotiate both with the First Nation and the school board, prior to determining what, if any, guaranteed representation there could be. Because it's a very hypothetical situation, we haven't addressed it any further than that.

It would require me to negotiate with both groups to determine if guaranteed representation should take place.

Mr. Tredger: I guess my concern was not so much with École Émilie Tremblay but whether a First Nation wanted to move to school board status.

I know that when the act was written it was assumed that many of the school councils would rapidly change to school boards. That was what the vision was, and in fact, that is not what has happened. Most of the school areas have stayed as school councils and have been quite content with that. I just wondered whether this had been contemplated — whether a First Nation or whether an area would take advantage of moving to a school board and what affect this would have on it. But the minister did answer that by saying that, to the best of his knowledge, it would not affect it.

Aside from the concerns raised by the Chief Electoral Officer, have there been any practical cases of ambiguity regarding the status of the guaranteed representatives where a council had more than seven members? Have there been concerns raised by others, other than the Chief Electoral Officer?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I have visited most school councils in the territory and not a single one of those school councils have brought this forward as a problem. To the best of my knowledge, after speaking with as many First Nations as I have in many of those communities, it isn't a problem for them either. They are very well aware of the fact that they can approach the department and increase the number of guaranteed representatives through negotiation, but as many First Nations have told me, they have enough trouble finding people to sit on the individual councils and committees as it is and they don't need more.

Mr. Tredger: That's all the questions I had. I would again thank the minister and both the departments of Education and Justice for bringing forth this bill. Having said that — thank you.

Chair: Does any other member wish to speak in general debate? If not, we are going to proceed to clause-by-clause reading.

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Clause 3

Clause 3 agreed to

On Clause 4

Clause 4 agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, I move that Bill No. 202, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be reported without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Graham that Bill No. 202, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be reported without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Mr. Elias: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Elias that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 202, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 202: *Act to Amend the Education Act* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 202, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Graham.

Hon. Mr. Graham: I move that Bill No. 202, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Education that Bill No. 202, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Graham: This bill came about as a result of a concern by the Chief Electoral Officer about the legality of appointing guaranteed representatives over the maximum number of school council members in the *Education Act*. As a result, we brought forward this act and we appreciate the fact that the Chief Electoral Officer brought forward her concerns. I also appreciate the cooperation of members opposite, because the reason we're bringing this forward here today for third reading is because the school council elections will take place next week and we would like to have it in place, even though I believe there were provisions that we could have extended further beyond — this is much cleaner and much simpler. I appreciate the cooperation of members opposite and I appreciate the concerns of the Chief Electoral Officer and, more than ever, Mr. Speaker, I just want to congratulate my

department and Justice drafters in their quick response to this issue.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for his introduction. As I have stated before, by acting on the Yukon Chief Electoral Officer's suggestions regarding the separate but equally important role of guaranteed representatives from First Nation communities on school council, Bill No. 202 supports a robust school system and ensures an ongoing role for First Nation school council representatives.

Again I compliment the Department of Education as well as the Department of Justice and the minister for acting on this expeditiously and thank them for that. I think it's important that we ensure First Nation participation and that their voice on the school council helps to achieve a balance in our communities. The minister alluded to this during Committee of the Whole, but anything we can do to ensure or to encourage parent and community involvement on our school councils and in our schools is welcomed by the NDP Official Opposition as well as the minister through his actions. I encourage this and thank the minister for bringing it forward and this act does have our support.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. Stick: Agree.

Ms. Moorcroft: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 202 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 202 has passed this House.

Mr. Elias: I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission in Bill No. 23, *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

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

Bill No. 23: *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission, in Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Public Service Commission

Hon. Mr. Dixon: It's a pleasure to rise and speak today to the Public Service Commission's 2016-17 budget.

I'm joined today by our Public Service Commissioner Jim Connell, who is no stranger to the House.

I will start by talking a little bit about some of the budget points and then some of the more general context to the budget today, and then we'll have some time for questions and some discussion throughout the rest of the day.

The Public Service Commission — as members know — is the employer on behalf of the Yukon government under the *Public Service Act*. The department provides human resource direction, advice and support services to Yukon government departments and employees. PSC works with departments to uphold the key staffing principles of merit and employment equity while maintaining agreements that delegate hiring decisions to departmental deputy ministers.

In this role, the Public Service Commission delivers strategic human resource services, including the processes governing recruitment, classification and employee compensation, data analysis and human resource management systems, professional development and learning programs, labour relations, initiatives to achieve a representative public service, initiatives to promote respectful workplaces,

corporate human resource planning and policies, corporate health and safety and disability management services.

I will now provide an overview of both the operation and maintenance and capital budgets for the Public Service Commission. The Public Service Commission's estimated budget for 2016-17 is \$46,846,000. This reflects a total increase of over \$2 million, or 5.4 percent, from the 2015-16 main estimates. This increase is largely in the operation and maintenance vote. The Public Service Commission received \$635,000 under the capital budget for the completion of development of an automated time, labour and leave system, and rolling it out government-wide. That is something we can discuss more specifically later on as well.

A phased approach to implementing the system government-wide is planned, with all employees anticipated to be using the online tool by March 31, 2017. As I said, that is something I look forward to discussing further later today. Some key benefits of this new system include up-to-date leave balances at any given time, which will eliminate the instances of wage recoveries from employees due to overpayments while on leave. It will also reduce data-entry workload, and it will strengthen Yukon government's time and leave management system as a whole. In 2015-16, this project was funded by a reallocation of funds within the department from the operation and maintenance vote to the capital vote. Branches affected include: Human Resource Management Systems, Organizational Development and Health, Safety and Disability Management. Reallocated funds have been reinstated to the branches in 2016-17.

As one turns the pages and looks at the various program areas, aside from the items just mentioned, most changes are small and reflect only the planned cost for the current staff complement. I will also note that the budget book provides comparison to the previous year's budget for both the main estimates and forecast. I will speak to the changes between the two years' main estimates. The workers' compensation fund shows a decrease of \$325,000, or six percent from previous estimates. This decrease is due to a reduction in WCB premium rates effective January 1, 2016. Our new premium rate is \$1.41 per \$100 of insurable earnings, down from \$1.52 per \$100 of insurable earnings the previous year. At the same time, the maximum assessable earnings for 2016 remain the same as 2015 at \$84,837. The employee future benefits budget is the largest line item in the Public Service Commission's budget. This item totals just about \$25 million and represents 53 percent of the Public Service Commission's budget. It is determined by an actuarial review of the estimated future obligations due to employees when they leave the government or retire. The amount reflected in each year's budget is the increase required for the liability. The estimate reflects a variety of actuarial factors such as demographics, accumulated service, wages, rates and the applicable discount rate. Change in the discount rate was a large factor in the budget increase for 2016-17. Essentially, when interest rates go down, you require more money today in order to meet your future obligations.

That covers off that piece of the budget that I wanted to discuss. I want to provide a little bit of context to the operations of the Public Service Commission.

We are in the last year of our five-year plan that spans from 2011 to 2016. That plan is something that has guided the department for the last number of years and we will be looking at reviewing and developing for the next number of years in the coming months and year.

The focus of the Public Service Commission's strategic plan has been to improve key areas of human resource management across the Yukon government. Ongoing efforts to retool the human resource function with the Yukon government are profiled in this year's plan and will continue to be a strategic focus of the commission in future years.

In addition, we are advancing priorities on several fronts that seek innovative ways to: attract, develop and engage talented people; promote a representative and diverse public service; support healthy, safe and respectful workplaces; and provide collaborative client-focused corporate human resource services and supporting systems.

Priority initiatives that the Public Service Commission is committed to pursue this year include the timely labour and leave management system I discussed earlier, but they also include the negotiation renewal of the collective agreement with the Public Service Alliance of Canada, the Yukon Employees Union and, as well, the fielding of and reporting on a government-wide employee engagement survey. They also include the continued collaboration with Yukon First Nations and Yukon government departments to implement the strategies of the final agreement representative of the public service plan.

Furthermore, our priorities for this year include piloting new online respectful workplace training. That's something that we can discuss later today as well.

Also, they include the development and delivery of: training on diversity and discrimination, including gender-diversity training and learning events that promote and support client-centred innovation in the public service; integration of the new core-competency framework into leadership development training; and the finalization of updates to the disability management framework are also a part of this year's priorities.

We will also begin the development of a methodology for conducting job hazard analysis of Yukon government positions and we'll continue to work with the French Language Services Directorate and departments to develop and implement a corporate bilingual staffing plan.

Finally, we will initiate a review of the conditions of employment for managers, legal officers and deputy ministers.

Those are just a few of the priorities that we have and that we will be moving on in this coming year.

I think it's worth also covering some of the strategic contexts within which the department operates. As members are probably aware, human resource management in a large organization like Yukon government is always a balancing act. Some of the challenges that Yukon government faces are

common to governments across Canada while others are unique to our northern jurisdiction.

As I will outline through the course of the day, and perhaps in future days, we have some significant factors that have influenced the development and direction of the department's plans. Those of course include demographics. As members will know, Yukon has a relatively older population. The number of retirements across the country and in Yukon is starting to increase, as more of the baby-boomer generation turns 65 years of age. Nationally there are pressures on pensions, owing in part to the economic downturn that followed the financial sector crisis of 2008. Some older workers are delaying retirement, while others who have already retired are returning to the workforce for life satisfaction or for economic reasons.

Another important influence on the operations of the department is the labour market. In addition to shortages due to projected increases in retirement, a strong Yukon economy and Canadian economy will steepen demand and competition for labour. Youth are a key source of new employees for government, and Yukon government may need to change some of its recruitment and employment practices to attract and retain this labour market segment.

Other new sources of workers may be found through immigration, as well as strategies to recruit and engage those with historically low workforce participation rates, such as First Nation people and people with disabilities. Another influencing factor is wellness and disabilities. Implications of the aging workforce and more retirements include increasing costs of benefit plans, including those for retirees, and disability insurance.

Yukon has a greater prevalence rate of higher cost disability claims. Better disability management, improved occupational safety practices and more effort aimed at prevention and wellness could all help to reduce injury, illness and disability among YG employees.

As well, Madam Chair, we're always focused on attraction and retention of employees. Not surprisingly, given the prevailing demographic and labour market trends, the top human capital challenges across Canada are attracting and retaining talent, optimizing performance and building capacity. Employee engagement is a key strategy to meet these challenges, thus will be an enduring human resource priority for Yukon government over the short and long term. Attracting new talent to the north will also be aided by quicker and more effective recruitment processes and improved supply of affordable rental and ownership housing in Whitehorse and in the rural communities.

Also, Madam Chair, we are always striving to be aware of and engage in the most recent technology and systems. As well as being an essential component for the working environment for staff, the use of technology can increase service quality and reduce the cost of government. Many governments across Canada are moving aggressively to the provision of government services through electronic portals. Automation of transactional activities frees staff to provide higher value services and perform more satisfying work.

We've seen examples of this throughout the departments — and I think it's worth highlighting the Department of Environment in particular for the work they've done around the movement of services to the electronic, or online, realm. They have had great success with hunting licences and other licences they issue being offered online, and we've heard very positive feedback not only from the officials who previously did that work, but from Yukoners who seek those types of services.

Also a key factor influencing the strategic context of the department is the need for diversity. Governments across Canada continue to emphasize the value of building a diverse public service that is representative of the population it serves. It certainly is a key feature here in the Yukon as well. Such a workforce provides a wider variety of perspectives and experience and has an increased ability to understand and empathize with clients and colleagues. In the Yukon, the drive to achieve a representative public service is reinforced by obligations set out in chapter 22 of First Nation final agreements. Implementation of a new final agreement representative public service plan, which was developed jointly with Yukon First Nations in 2011, is advancing this shared interest and commitment.

Madam Chair, women are highly represented in the Yukon public service, although there is still room for improvement at the most senior levels and in certain occupations. Yukon government is considered a leader in Canada in terms of hiring people with disabilities and boosting their representation levels; however, as with women, there are gaps to address at the higher classification levels and across the spectrum of occupational groups.

Finally, one of the important influencing features of our plan for the year is developing a strong organizational culture. There is a call from within Yukon government's human resource community from the Public Service Commission to adopt a more collaborative and client-centred approach, with an emphasis on problem-solving. The Public Service Commission is responsible for administering the *Public Service Act*, but has delegated many of its human resource functions to the departments. For this delegation to work well, the Public Service Commission must be responsive to constructive feedback on its leadership style and central agency role. That is something that we are always very well aware of in the Public Service Commission and we try to engage with those client departments and the officials within each of them as best we can and as positively as we can.

While there certainly are challenges that lie ahead for the Yukon public service — they include an aging workforce, labour market pressures and organizational culture issues — each of these require new approaches to human resource management. The Public Service Commission is committed to addressing these challenges and, in the process, finding ways to build on existing strengths as it explores new solutions through technology, service orientation, internal coordination and workforce diversity.

Madam Chair, I hope I have provided a good overview of the Public Service Commission and the context within which

we work and some of the priorities we have for the coming year, as well as some of the highlights that are in the budget for us, and I look forward to fielding questions from members at this time.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that overview. It was helpful. I welcome the official to the Chamber as well.

Madam Chair, I couldn't agree more with the minister about the importance of the Public Service Commission as one of the key central agencies of the Government of Yukon. It has an incredibly important role to play to ensure that those individuals who choose to offer their services as members of the public service of Yukon do so in a work environment that is merit-based; that recognizes that public servants are selected based on merit; that they have a work environment that respects them as individuals and respects their professional integrity; and that provides a workplace free from intimidation and political interference.

I have a long history of working in the public service at the provincial, federal and municipal levels — aboriginal organizations — so I take very seriously the role of the public service. When I approach and ask the minister and his officials questions about the Public Service Commission, it's done in the context of how very important that role is and how, as he said, they need to be open to suggestions and sometimes criticisms from both within and without about how the public service is managed because the impact is ultimately felt by citizens. Public service implies service to the public. Public servants do not serve political masters; they serve the public by definition, so how we create the conditions for them to be able to serve with a sense of self-respect and integrity is really critical.

There a number of areas that I want to explore with the minister as we go through this budget of the Public Service Commission. He outlined some of the aspects of the five-year plan with respect to 2011 to 2016 and some of the areas that the Public Service Commission has been working toward improving in key areas. I have a number of questions with respect to those.

I would like to start with a couple of questions. It's unfortunate — I know that the officials intended to follow up, but the collapsing of the time frame meant that perhaps the information we requested during the briefing wasn't able to be provided. When we talk about the Public Service Commission, the minister mentioned the five-year plan, which spanned 2011-16.

One of the first questions I would ask is that to have an understanding of the changes in that workforce — if the minister could provide us with the actual FTE complement in 2011-12 when this government assumed power and what the current full-time equivalents, as of the end of March 31, 2015-16 — we just finished March 31, 2016 — including the auxiliaries-on-call and casual positions that are in the employ of the Yukon government. As my colleague for Copperbelt South is so fond of saying, we can't manage —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Ms. Hanson: Riverdale South — sorry. We can't manage what we can't measure so we need to know the

numbers in order to be able to measure and manage the effectiveness of what we're doing and to know the scope of what we're dealing with.

Along that line, within that complement, the number of aboriginal employees who are currently employed by the Yukon government — certainly we will come back in more detail to the representative workforce provisions under chapter 22 and I will have a number of questions with respect to that.

He made reference to the reality that senior management levels — and particularly at deputy ministerial levels and certainly with some changes that have occurred over the last couple of years. The most senior ranks seem to be rather male-dominated at this stage. I would be interested if the minister could tell the House how many of the deputy ministers currently in place are women and how that compares to the number of women who were deputy ministers in 2011-12. We do know that the minister is unable to release the specific information with respect to the individual costs for severances paid out to all deputy ministers who have been let go over the past several years, but I would ask the minister to tell the House how many deputy ministers have been released from their duties since 2011-12.

I will leave it at that, Madam Chair, so that we can get started on some of the questions.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Just a point of clarification, perhaps, from the member opposite — when she asked for the numbers from 2011 to now for FTEs, was she referring specifically to the Public Service Commission or just across government?

Ms. Hanson: I was asking because the Public Service Commission has the corporate central agency function, so I do know the number of FTEs directly with the Public Service Commission — I understand it's 90. I do know there are 90 HR specialists dispersed through government. What I am most interested in is that the Public Service Commission, in its central agency role, plans for and manages the whole of the public service, so I'm looking for that complement with respect to all government employees.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Just for expediency, I'll deal with these questions one by one, instead of trying to answer them all at once. I'll start with the question about the growth of the FTEs from 2011.

In terms of full-time equivalent workers, or FTEs, the Yukon government workforce grew by 6.6 percent from the fall of 2011 to the most recent data that we have in the fall of 2015. The increase in Yukon government FTEs is slightly higher than the growth rate of the Yukon population as a whole. From September 2011 to September 2015, the number of Yukoners increased by 4.2 percent. The overall increase from that time in 2011 to the fall of 2015 was 266.2 FTEs. I did want to note that, last year on June 1, I provided the most recent information I had at that date to both parties in a letter of June 1, which categorized those by department and demonstrated the FTE counts for Q1 of each year since 2011. There is that information available and it has been shared already.

With regard to AOCs, or auxiliary-on-call counts, the sum of department counts for AOC use in 2011 in Q1 was

679, and then for 2015, the auxiliary-on-call count for Q1 was 789. You see an increase there from the fall of 2011 to 2015. Again, that's taken from information that I provided to members six or seven months ago.

I guess we can turn back to these other questions. I have kind of forgotten the order, so I'll let the member opposite go.

Ms. Hanson: I had asked for the number of aboriginal employees employed by the Government of Yukon in all of the categories, as well as the number of deputy ministers who are currently deputy ministers versus the number of positions that were filled by women in 2011-12.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: With regard to the representative public service plan, in 2011, the Public Service Commission and eight Yukon First Nations worked collaboratively to develop a new representative public service plan to begin to meet chapter 22 obligations of the Yukon First Nation final agreements. The plan is entering its fifth year of implementation and continues to be a Yukon government priority.

Noticeable progress has been made on each of the objectives and performance measures, including the use of recruitment options such as: preferential hiring; restricted competitions and exemptions; provision of training and capacity development opportunities for aboriginal employees; and making Yukon government a desirable place for aboriginal employees to work.

With regard to the percentages, I don't have the overall number here but I have the percentage so perhaps we can glean the answer from that.

According to the 2011 National Household Survey, aboriginal people represented approximately 23 percent of the Yukon population. Five years earlier in 2006, aboriginal people comprised 25 percent of Yukoners. Current aboriginal representation in the Yukon government workforce is approximately 14 percent. That's according to the most recent stats from the Yukon government workforce census, which relies on voluntary participation and self-identification.

I should note that those numbers do fluctuate through the year. We've had a number of discussions within the department but also with our partners at the table with First Nation governments about finding an appropriate target. To help us in that, we did conduct a labour market analysis a few years ago and have been sharing that information with First Nation governments.

Basically, I guess the 14 percent is obviously lower than the overall population of aboriginal people in Yukon. Therefore we have more work to do. But in terms of what work we need to do, that's something we continue to engage with First Nation governments on. The new plan for the representative public service plan that will come forward for the next set of years will help set a path for that.

With regard to female deputy ministers, I don't have the number for 2011 but, off the top of my head, I believe the deputy ministers of Education, Finance, Yukon Housing Corporation, Women's Directorate, Workers' Compensation — the president of the Workers' Compensation was up until recently a woman. I guess that changed now. I correct myself

— that switched over. Until July, the president of the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board is a woman and then Mr. Dieckmann will take over.

I think maybe that could be it for female deputies. I stand to be corrected if I'm wrong, but I would have to check on what the case was in 2011.

Ms. Hanson: I appreciate the minister's undertaking to get that information.

One of the challenges in public service — and certainly it's not unique to the territorial government but, because of the unique arrangements we have with respect to representative public service for aboriginal population — as he mentioned, it arises out of chapter 22 — is ensuring that the representative public service also represents the strata within the public service. I'm interested in — of the 14 percent who are currently aboriginal, if we were to do a vertical slice of the public service, would we see that 14 percent at all levels, or is it skewed to any particular level and any particular occupation group within the Public Service Commission?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: With regard to the First Nations' *Final Agreement Representative Public Service Plan*, there is an annual report published that details the activities of the Public Service Commission in implementing that plan annually. I will provide the member a copy of that because it does lay out an overview of the actions taken and reports on some of the details. It doesn't have the breakdown that she is looking for, but I can look into that as well — separate from that report.

I did want to note that the report is excellent. I think it does a great job of providing an overview of the actions that we are doing. It is something that I am very proud of. I know that it gets highlighted every year at the Aboriginal Employees Forum. Obviously, the Aboriginal Employees Forum is about the employees themselves and celebrating their contributions, but it is also an opportunity to really take stock of the implementation of that *Final Agreement Representative Public Service Plan*. I think it is well worth considering, so I will make sure to provide a copy of that annual report to the Leader of the Official Opposition and will endeavour to get a segment-by-segment breakdown. I don't have that here. I know that we have made some strides recently with regard to some of our deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers and directors taking on those roles — having people of aboriginal descent taking on those roles. We can talk about that at some point as well.

Madam Chair, recognizing the time, I move that you report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

Mr. Elias: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Elias that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

We are now prepared to receive the Commissioner of Yukon, in his capacity as Lieutenant Governor, to grant assent to certain bills which have passed this House.

Commissioner Phillips enters the Chamber, announced by the Sergeant-at-Arms

ASSENT TO BILLS

Commissioner: Please be seated.

Speaker: Mr. Commissioner, the Assembly has, at its present session, passed certain bills to which, in the name and on behalf of the Assembly, I respectfully request your assent.

Clerk: *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17; Act to Amend the Education Act.*

Commissioner: I hereby assent to the bills as enumerated by the Clerk.

Before I leave today, I had a first sign of spring — a real strong sign of spring today. When I arrived at my office, there appeared to be a flock of flamingos that were decorating my lawn. Fortunately, I arrived just as the culprits were departing and the rumour is that they appeared to be wearing RMCP uniforms — some of them — and so I immediately contacted Chief Superintendent Clark, and he assured me that he is going to carry out a thorough investigation and the culprits will be apprehended and prosecuted. I'm pleased that we'll finally get to the end of this.

I understand that, after my office, the flamingos ended up in front of the Justice building and I have no idea how they got there, but it was for a good cause for the Rotary Club, and I guess these birds have been making their way all around the Yukon, so it's a great cause.

I would like to remind members that the fourth annual Speaker's and Yukoners cancer care fundraiser is tomorrow evening at 5:30 p.m. I believe in the foyer of this building. It's a great fund that helps all Yukoners and I encourage all Yukoners to try and attend that event. Thank you.

Commissioner leaves the Chamber

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:02 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 262

1st Session

33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, April 28, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER — Hon. David Laxton, MLA, Porter Creek Centre

DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Darrell Pasloski	Mountainview	Premier Minister responsible for Finance; Executive Council Office
Hon. Elaine Taylor	Whitehorse West	Deputy Premier Minister responsible for Tourism and Culture; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Justice; Yukon Development Corporation/ Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Doug Graham	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Education
Hon. Scott Kent	Riverdale North	Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources; Highways and Public Works
Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Community Services; Public Service Commission
Hon. Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Minister responsible for Environment
Hon. Mike Nixon	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin	Minister responsible for Economic Development; Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Party

Darius Elias	Government House Leader Vuntut Gwitchin
Hon. David Laxton	Porter Creek Centre
Patti McLeod	Watson Lake

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

New Democratic Party

Elizabeth Hanson	Leader of the Official Opposition Whitehorse Centre
Jan Stick	Official Opposition House Leader Riverdale South
Kevin Barr	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes
Lois Moorcroft	Copperbelt South
Jim Tredger	Mayo-Tatchun
Kate White	Takhini-Kopper King

Liberal Party

Sandy Silver	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Rudy Couture
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Doris McLean
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, April 28, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Yukoners cancer care fund

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I rise today on behalf of all members to tribute the Yukon Hospital Foundation's Yukoners cancer care fund.

In 2013, the Yukon Hospital Foundation established the Yukoners cancer care fund to raise awareness and funds to support both Yukoners who are fighting cancer and their families who help care for them. The advantage of a local fund like this is that all of the money it raises stays in Yukon, assisting our neighbours, family, colleagues and our friends. Like many other local organizations, the fund is supported by events led by volunteers who devote time, energy and passion to ensure that the fund can help as many Yukoners as possible.

Mr. Speaker, the fund has been operating for four years now and it has continued to increase the amount raised each year. So far, it has been able to support over 65 families across the territory, with hopes of helping many more each year.

As I spoke about earlier, one of those volunteer-led events is happening tonight. The Speaker's reception will be held tonight at 5:30 p.m. in the lobby of the main administration building. There will be both silent and live auctions, with items donated from many local businesses. Additionally, there will be live music and appetizers provided by Yukon College. All money raised at the reception will be put toward the fund and used for Yukoners. Come for some great food, some drinks and entertainment and to support a great cause.

I certainly hope to see everyone there and, Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my appreciation and thanks to you as a key driver behind this initiative. I would also ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in welcoming another key volunteer for this fund to the gallery today — Ms. Geraldine Van Bibber. Welcome.

Applause

In recognition of National Day of Mourning

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon government in recognition of the National Day of Mourning. Since 1984, the year that Canada officially began to observe this day, 63 Yukon workers have died on the job. That's an average of two Yukoners lost each year to their work — two

families now missing a loved one — but don't lose heart, Mr. Speaker — that's an average, not a regular pattern.

Last year, for example, no worker died on the job in Yukon — not one. Let's take some solace in that fact. Let's recognize that our goal as a community — the goal of zero worker deaths — is not as far-fetched as it might seem because, for one precious calendar year, we achieved it. We have demonstrated that bringing all of our loved ones home from work — our friends and our colleagues — is indeed possible. We can take comfort in this, but we cannot grow complacent.

Although no worker died in Yukon last year, there were still 434 injured. On average, that is at least one worker removed from a Yukon workplace every day. That makes our success seem fragile, but we still must rally around it. After all, we are not dealing with numbers; we are talking about people — people in our homes, people at the office, people on the jobsite, people in stores and people we see on the street. Don't forget that person who we see every morning in the mirror, because that is where safety in the workplace begins. Each of us has the right to be safe and healthy, but we also share in the responsibility to make that true for everyone.

Ms. White: I rise today on behalf of the NDP Official Opposition to pay tribute to the National Day of Mourning for workers injured or killed on the job. This tribute is never easy. It is personal in a way that I wish no one ever has to experience.

It is not comfortable to share these feelings or these emotions — especially in such a public way — but I want you to understand that this isn't just another day. It hurts me to my core that people across the country and here at home are wrestling with the feelings of loss and heartache. I am relieved that, during today's ceremony, we didn't need to add another black floating candle to the fountain; that today we didn't need to bring one more family into the fold.

I have a hard time wrapping my head around the 63 lives lost to workplace injuries in the Yukon since 1984 — 63 stories that never got finished, thousands of bedtime stories that never got read, the tens of thousands of sunsets that never got marked.

That we gather once a year as a community, as a country, to remember those who were lost or those lives that were forever changed by workplace accidents rings bitter. I'm grateful for the sense of community. I'm grateful for the beautiful ceremony. I'm grateful that my friends and others are remembered with floating black candles in the memorial fountain, but underneath it all I'm angry.

I had a hard time dealing with my anger leading up to today. I lash out with the least amount of provocation. I overreact. Sometimes I don't even realize that I'm picking a fight until it's over. It's like the anger that I feel over the futility of these losses permeates the rest of my life and I'm powerless to stop it.

I'm furious — furious because, despite all we know, despite our pledges to do better, despite everything, there is no guarantee that your loved one will make it home at the end of

a workday. Across the country, good people still — despite our best efforts — continue to lose their lives every year to workplace accidents.

This week, this year, has been particularly hard. I woke up on Monday morning not being able to remember if his eyes were blue or green. I remember the light that they held and the way they twinkled when he laughed, but I couldn't remember their colour. I looked at a picture on my mantel before leaving for work because I needed to know. Today marks the 10-year anniversary that we lost my friend Jean-François Pagé.

I remember the day we met like it was yesterday. It was at the Kopper King on a Thursday night and he was wearing his signature insulated Green River boots, his floppy leather hat and his hair was in braided pigtails. I don't remember what we talked about, but I know that there was lots of laughter because JF loved to laugh — he could find the humour in any situation.

I remember beer-blurred dance parties and taking hundreds of photos of our friends with disposable cameras. I remember that at night when the temperature really dropped, he, his dog Nobu and his massive cellphone battery charger thing would show up at my parents' house — because although he loved living in his cabin, he appreciated the comforts provided by electricity and a furnace. I remember the barbecues with the smallest fish proudly caught or the caribou or moose meat from this fall's harvest. I remember driving out to his cabin for quiet Sunday morning brunches to watch the world wake up from his bluff. I remember how much he loved his family and his friends.

I remember the confusion on that April morning when my dad called and told me that I needed to get home to listen to a message on the answering machine. It was his mother Ginette, but I couldn't understand what she was saying and the number she left wasn't clear. I remember trying to call him and then driving out to his cabin to leave a note on his door, asking him to call his mom, because she sounded upset. I remember going home and listening to the message again, and then dialing the number over and over again, with mounting panic, changing the last digit until I got it right.

I remember the sound of her voice and the words that she whispered when I finally understood what had happened. He was gone. I remember being driven back out to his cabin, taking the note down off his door, sitting in the stillness of his space, trying to make sense of the impossible. I remember being driven back home, thinking how beautiful the sun piercing the clouds was and realizing he was never going to see another cloudburst.

On the morning of April 28, 2006, Jean-François got dropped off at the start of his staking line. It was a day just like any other, until he neared the end of his line when he met the grizzly. Even after all this time, the irony still doesn't escape me — to be killed on the day that commemorates workers injured or killed on the job.

I think he would see the dark humour in it; he would slowly shake his head and he would chuckle. I take comfort knowing that he was doing something that he loved in the land

that he loved so much that he had chosen to make his home. He was 28 years old when he died on April 28, 2006.

Mr. Speaker, there will be a celebration for Jean-François this weekend in Bonsecours, Quebec. What his family said in the invitation rings true: it has been 10 years since we've learned to live without him in our daily lives, 10 years of having him live in our thoughts, 10 years of remembering the happy memories and regretting that there haven't been new ones, 10 years of "why" and "what if" and "I wish I could", 10 years of loving him despite his absence. We miss him.

We have all gotten through the last 10 years in our own way and it's a good time to come together to remember together, to have him live on in us. We'll visit his tree; we'll make a fire; we'll raise a glass, maybe two; we'll drink to his health and to our own.

Mr. Speaker, you don't ever get over the sudden and unexpected death of a loved one to a workplace injury but you do get better at living alongside it.

Today, I remember my friend, Jean-François — a lover of life, an adventurer and an incredible human with a beautiful soul. On this National Day of Mourning, we honour the memory of those we've lost and we honour those left behind.

Mr. Silver: Today, I rise on behalf of the Liberal caucus to also pay tribute to the National Day of Mourning. On April 28 every year, we come together and we remember the workers whose lives have been lost and those who have been injured while on the job and to renew our collective commitment to occupational health and safety.

Today, we join the rest of Canada and countries around the world to honour the millions of lives that have been forever changed by workplace injuries. Although we continue to make gains forward together for stronger health and safety regulations, workplace injuries and related deaths are still far too common. One workplace injury is one too many injuries in the workplace, Mr. Speaker.

Since 1984, 63 Yukoners have not returned home from work. The Day of Mourning reminds us how critical it is to enforce and follow all health and safety regulations. All workers should have the right to workplace safety and a healthy work environment, and no one should ever become a victim of unsafe workplaces.

Mr. Speaker, workplace health and safety is a shared responsibility. It is up to both the employer and the employee to follow workplace safety procedures and to report any unsafe conditions immediately. Even something that may seem small can become catastrophic if left ignored. By working together, then — and only then — can we hope not only to reduce but to prevent and eliminate workplace injuries.

As we gather to renew our commitment to preventing further workplace injuries, we also pause to reflect on and honour all workers who have been injured or killed on the job and mourn with the families and the friends they have left behind. As we pay our respects, we must not allow the memory or suffering of those workers to be forgotten. We remember the tragedies suffered and we also unite in the triumphs that are achieved.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: It is indeed my honour to recognize the Premier of the Northwest Territories, the Hon. Robert R. McLeod; the Premier of Nunavut, the Hon. Peter Taptuna; and Peter's lovely wife is here as well — Joanne Taptuna.

I cannot also go without recognizing my lovely wife Tammie, who is here as well.

Mr. Speaker, they are here to join us today for the beginning of the 2016 Northern Premiers' Forum. This is an annual meeting of Canada's territorial premiers. This is the 14th time that northern premiers will meet to discuss issues in common in our jurisdictions. I am pleased to share with the House that this year's forum will be held in Dawson City and in Old Crow. Not only is the forum an opportunity for the territories to work collaboratively on northern issues, including tourism, health care, climate change and infrastructure, but it is also an opportunity to showcase our territory and build connections between northern communities.

On behalf of all Yukoners, I am pleased to welcome them here today, and I would encourage all members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in collectively welcoming them.

Applause

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I am very privileged also to help introduce Robert C. McLeod, who is the Deputy Premier for the Government of the Northwest Territories, the Minister of Finance, Minister of Lands, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, as well as Minister with Lead Responsibility for Infrastructure.

I have had the privilege of working with Minister McLeod over the years in many different capacities, but primarily as a previous minister responsible for Community Services. I really enjoyed the opportunity to further many shared priorities among our respective territories and, in particular, our work when it came to the Arctic Winter Games and working together.

I have to share a quick story though — because I would be very remiss if I did not share this — and I know he knows it is coming. In 2012, when Yukon hosted the 2012 Arctic Winter Games, we had a little bit of friendly rivalry and a bit of a friendly wager that took place over a gold-medal hockey game. The wager was that if Minister McLeod, my counterpart, was to win, I would don one of the hockey jerseys from the Northwest Territories, and vice versa. Fortunately — and, of course, with our skill, expertise and talent in the Yukon — we did succeed with gold in midget boys hockey. As a result, he did don a beautiful Yukon jersey — the Whitehorse Mustangs jersey — and it had the name "Taylor" on the back of the jersey. He had to not only wear that with great pride but actually wear it in the Legislative

Assembly for the Northwest Territories. I just want to say thank you for being a great sport and welcome to Yukon.

Applause

Speaker: I would like to take this opportunity to introduce a very good friend, Ruth Abercrombie, who is up visiting from Kelowna — a former, long-time Yukoner and lifelong friend of my wife, Leslie Goring. She is here visiting us for a little while. Thanks for joining us today, Ruth.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to use the 2016-17 budget to allocate \$100,000 for Nahanni Range Road highway surface restoration.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to use the 2016-17 budget to invest \$150,000 for walkway design and option study for the Takhini River bridge on the Mayo Road.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to consult with Yukoners ahead of the 2016 First Ministers' meeting in order to determine the next steps toward developing a low-carbon economy that promotes fiscal prosperity and environmental sustainability from coast to coast to coast.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to follow through with its commitment to restrict the use of solitary confinement in federal prisons.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Justice to implement the recommendations of the United Nations special rapporteur to abolish the use of separate confinement in Yukon's corrections system for people with FASD, cognitive impairment, addictions issues and mental health difficulties.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD**Question re: Corrections Act amendments**

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, two years ago, this House passed a motion introduced by the Official Opposition to endorse a federal bill to amend the *Criminal Code* to include a definition of “fetal alcohol spectrum disorder” and to consider it a mitigating factor during sentencing. In its original format, the motion also urged amendments to Yukon’s *Corrections Act* in order to better meet the needs of individuals with FASD. However, this Yukon Party government opposed making changes to Yukon’s *Corrections Act*, saying it had already done enough. The preliminary results from the FASD prevalence study show that, at minimum, 17.5 percent of inmates in the study were diagnosed with FASD.

Mr. Speaker, given the evidence that has been presented at an international conference by this government, will this government now support the proposed changes to Yukon’s *Corrections Act*?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I would remind the member that the member is referring back to several years ago when a new *Corrections Act* was introduced by a previous minister, as following the correctional reform process. I believe the section that the member is referring to is section 10 of the act. While we will not rule out considering amendments at some point in the future, it is our view that — as I believe the minister of the day expressed — that act is enabling enough to allow the correctional system to implement programming that recognizes and supports the needs of persons with FASD who have come into contact with the justice system. As well, it should be noted that steps taken to recognize issues related to FASD as well as addictions issues have been done through the Community Wellness Court and there have been great steps taken across several Yukon government departments, as well as work in partnership with the court system, to improve how the Yukon system deals with and supports persons with FASD, as well as implementing programming that is aimed at having them avoid reoffending in the future if they have come into contact through the court system.

Ms. Hanson: The minister may have misheard me. I was speaking about a debate in 2014. Once again, we are hearing this government think that the status quo is good enough for those who are suffering from permanent brain injury.

It is important to note that government numbers only include those actually diagnosed with FASD. It doesn’t include those deemed as probable — individuals who showed all the symptoms, but a confirmation of maternal consumption of alcohol could not be made. If those cases are included, the number would even be higher. Federal legislation is currently being considered that will allow judges to treat fetal alcohol spectrum disorder as a mitigating factor understanding that the offender’s disability is a source of their behaviour, but how does our correctional system accommodate that person’s disability when they arrive in jail?

What immediate changes to corrections policy is the minister prepared to implement to reflect the needs of individuals with FASD?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, what the Leader of the NDP is not recognizing is the significant work that has been done by not only the Yukon government but partner NGOs — including the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon, Options for Independence and the Child Development Centre — all of which are important partners in implementing our five-step FASD action plan. They have built on the work that has been done over the last number of years, which has made the Yukon one of the leaders not only in Canada but, in fact, the world, in terms of better addressing fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and better supporting people who have that.

Again, as I stated in a previous Question Period, great work has been done. We believe that people in the departments, including and especially Justice and Health and Social Services, should be congratulated and commended for the good work to date. In fact, we are committed to continuing to build on the great work that has been done to date and continuing to build on the excellent programming that has been done. This is, in fact, exactly why we had this study done — to better provide us with information to enable us to take the next steps in improving and continuing to enhance the programming at not only the Whitehorse Correctional Centre but in after-care.

Again, I would point out to the member the preliminary results. The preliminary reports showed 17.5 percent with FASD, and one should not suggest that number is over 90 percent as the member’s colleague did the other day.

Ms. Hanson: The minister can try to deflect. We’re talking about his responsibility and accountability as minister responsible for Corrections.

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is a permanent brain injury acquired before birth. When we fail to make fundamental changes to our *Corrections Act* we continue to punish individuals for failure to meet a standard of behaviour that their disability prevents them from meeting. Our system is recriminalizing individuals with FASD because of their disability. If one-fifth of inmates at WCC were in a wheelchair with no ramp to accommodate them, Mr. Speaker, you can bet the changes would happen pretty quickly, but when it comes to accommodating FASD this government refuses to act.

How can the minister continue to stand by legislation that does not recognize the consequences of treating individuals with permanent brain injuries the same as someone who responds to —

Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I need a lot longer than 90 seconds to list the long list of steps that this government has taken to improve programming for FASD in partnership with the NGOs that I mentioned earlier. I would remind the member to look only to her left and ask her colleague what the programming was like when the NDP was last in power and that member was Minister of Justice.

We’ve taken significant steps to improve the programming. We recognize that more work is necessary, but, in fact, the Yukon government is very proud of the investments we’ve made both supporting non-governmental

organizations and directly within our system through the departments of Justice and Health and Social Services primarily — also through areas — as my colleague reminded me during Question Period — of supports like the family supports for children with disabilities program, which is part of what the government is doing in a broader sense of supporting people who have disabilities, whether physical or cognitive.

In the area of FASD, this specific study is aimed at helping us take the next steps to continue to improve programming at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and in after-care. Great work has been done to date and we are committed to building on that work.

Question re: Mental health services

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, the Minister of Health and Social Services told us that the most urgent mental health patients may wait up to 48 hours to be seen. These are patients who are — and I quote: "... potentially suicidal and have deteriorated so significantly they are virtually not functioning and have minimal or no supports." Other patients with a high risk of self-harm may wait two weeks to be seen.

Does the Minister of Health and Social Services acknowledge that any wait times for patients at risk for self-harm or suicide are unacceptable?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: In addressing the member opposite, the department currently provides a range of services and supports to individuals with mental illnesses, mental health challenges and concurrent disorders and addictions, as well as to their families. The Yukon is placing a greater focus on child and youth needs through its policies, structures and mental health services and we have access to a child psychiatrist.

We are challenged by the large geographical area and the inability to provide services to all people in all communities, but I also identify that this government has made significant investments over the last number of years in the area of mental health and we will continue on with those investments.

I would extend my appreciation and thanks to those working in mental health with the Yukon government at the Hospital Corporation and with NGOs throughout the territory.

Ms. Stick: These citizens, these Yukoners, are individuals who are at highest risk. Hopefully, there will be something in this mental health strategy to address these wait times.

On Tuesday, the Minister of Health and Social Services told us that, after an intake screening, individuals who require comprehensive mental health assessment may be on a wait-list for up to eight months. While these individuals wait, their mental health conditions may deteriorate, resulting in the need for more complex interventions at a later date. Communities and families are left to cope with loved ones they do not know how to help.

Mr. Speaker, what concrete action is this government taking to reduce mental health treatment wait times?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I think the member opposite is talking about one tool in the toolbox. Within government, we have a number of tools at our disposal, both within Yukon

government and the Hospital Corporation. I believe it was yesterday when we signed a new contract with a psychiatrist who will be providing services at Whitehorse General Hospital, and we look forward to the continued relationship we have with that individual.

Yukon currently has two resident psychiatrists; as well, we have an itinerant psychiatrist, as I indicated earlier, for children, youth and seniors, who provides services for our residents.

This Yukon Party government is proud of the investments we've made in the area of mental health. We're very proud of the partnerships we have with First Nations, with corporations — such as Northwestel and Bell, through the Bell Let's Talk program — and we'll continue down that path, making those investments and caring for Yukoners at a point in time in their life when they need that support.

Ms. Stick: There are still wait times, Mr. Speaker. Individuals awaiting mental health assessment can access group services, such as skills courses and anxiety management, while they wait for individual services. Others may be referred directly to group services after an initial assessment. But depending upon when the referral is made, a patient may go immediately into a course or have to wait for when the course is offered next — apparently not offered at all in the summer. The wait-list for group services can be up to three months or longer.

Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Health and Social Services recognize that these extended wait times in our mental health system are failing Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the member opposite for her question. It gives me an opportunity to highlight some of the great work that is being done in the territory. Mental Health Services delivers a host of programs to our residents and Many Rivers, our partner NGO, also provides a variety of services to our residents to help ensure their mental well-being.

We're working together with the resident psychiatrist, management from the Yukon Hospital Corporation and members from the Yukon Medical Association to address gaps in service that have been identified. Work is underway to address these gaps on a short-, medium- and long-term basis.

We continue our relationship with the Yukon Medical Association with a number of other NGOs and are very excited about the opening of the Sarah Steele Building — which will address a number of these gaps — in the fall and we look forward to the members supporting those investments when it comes time to vote on this budget.

Question re: Stewart-Keno transmission line

Mr. Silver: So far this Sitting, we've heard about several projects that the government said that it's proceeding with and they all have one thing in common: the government has no idea how they're going to pay for them. The proposed fibre optic line is one; the Whistle Bend continuing care facility and also the paving of the Dawson runway are also on the list as well.

I would like to add one more to that — the Keno-Stewart Crossing transmission line. First announced in 2014, the government has spent more than \$5 million on this project to date. It is currently before YESAB for review. Originally pegged at about \$40 million, the cost of this project has now ballooned to over \$80 million before it has even started.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister confirm that the price tag is now at \$86 million?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: The work on the Stewart-Keno transmission line — some of the numbers are being finalized. The member is correct that the initial estimate before the detailed work was done on that had the cost estimate lower. The current cost estimate is roughly \$86 million.

As I've indicated previously, we are currently looking at this project. We're also currently considering options for phasing-in repairs because that line itself is one of the oldest pieces of line in Yukon Energy's systems. A significant portion of power outages affect that section, but we are looking at options for doing the project differently from what was originally conceived and comparing those cost options to long-term needs.

Mr. Silver: It's worth noting that the last time Yukon Energy Corporation did a major capital project under this government's watch, it was the LNG facility — and that was \$6.4 million or 18-percent overbudget.

Earlier this year, the Government of Yukon sent a wish list to the new Government of Canada for projects that it wants Ottawa to help fund. The proposed Stewart-Keno power line wasn't on that list. The Government of Yukon said that it would pay \$22 million and was looking for Ottawa to provide \$64 million. We've learned recently that the minister's colleagues haven't actually asked Ottawa for the funding of their project.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister confirm that no application has been made to Ottawa for the Stewart-Keno line either?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: In fact, we've looked into whether the opportunities for federal funding for the Stewart-Keno transmission line — the indications we've received from the federal government were not initially clear about whether we could apply under Building Canada. We now understand that does not appear to be a pathway forward, so it was not part of the formal applications to date; however, the new federal Liberal government has made promises in terms of increased investment in green energy infrastructure. Depending on whether they actually follow through on those promises and the details of how they put in place a federal funding program, that may be a potential avenue for investment in this project.

Of course, we're also looking at the options within the territory, which include funding the project within the rate base or funding it through a combination of putting it into the rate base and an investment from the Yukon government. No final decisions have been made and the costs themselves are not finalized because there is more engineering work that needs to be done.

I would point out to the member that the line itself is in fact in need of repair and replacement. What I have back from the Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development

Corporation is that the cost difference between putting in place a 69-kilovolt line and a 138 kV — is about a 10-percent difference in total project cost. Both options are still being explored.

Mr. Silver: Just for review, the last time the Yukon Energy Corporation built a big project it was almost 20-percent overbudget. \$5 million has already been spent on the Stewart-to-Keno project. Cost estimates have jumped from \$40 million to \$86 million before the project has even started — the largest federal transfer in Yukon history and it is still “blame Ottawa”.

We know that the Yukon Party government hasn't even applied for funding for Ottawa to help in the cost of this project. All this adds up to another poorly planned capital project from a government that is well known for these. We know that the money from Ottawa has not even been asked for.

Let's turn to the Yukon's \$22-million share of this project. Will we be borrowing this money? Because it sure isn't in this budget that we're currently debating.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Unfortunately, it appears that the member did not adjust his supplementary question after I answered that question during my previous response.

Again, the decisions for how this project will be funded and the exact scope of the project have not been finalized. What the member does not seem to recognize also is that, in fact, this Yukon Energy Corporation is a board that is governed by appointees who are made to that board, and the member sits on the all-party committee that reviews nominees to that board. They in turn answer to their parent corporation and are accountable to the Yukon government through an annual protocol and letter of expectations.

What I should again remind the member of with this project is that we do need to invest in repairs to the line to Keno, which is one of the oldest ones on Yukon Energy Corporation's grids and is responsible for a high proportion of power outages and is actually slightly past end of life.

As I indicated to the member previously, we are considering options for reducing the cost, but the numbers that I have from Yukon Energy Corporation as recently as this morning — is that the cost difference between putting in place a 69-kV line and 138-kilovolt line is roughly 10 percent difference in the cost. But again, we are considering both options at this point in time, considering phasing it and looking at financing models.

The bottom line is that some investment does need to be made in the line to improve reliability in this area.

Question re: COR certification

Ms. Moorcroft: April 28 is National Day of Mourning, which commemorates workers who have been killed, injured or suffered illnesses due to workplace hazards and incidents. Injuries and deaths continue to be a matter of important concern across Canada as today we see our flags at half-mast and hold remembrance ceremonies.

In 2009, the government announced the certificate of recognition — COR — safety certification requirements for

Yukon government construction contracts. In order to make it easier for companies, the program was introduced in three phases: 2009 for contracts over \$500,000; 2010 for contracts over \$100,000; and 2011-12 for contracts of any value. Phase 3 has not been implemented.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Highways and Public Works explain why this government has stopped COR implementation?

Hon. Mr. Kent: We're very proud of the COR program. It certainly has led to a number of companies getting the certification that is required for COR. We have made some alterations with respect to the thresholds for the COR requirements.

I personally have heard from many of the contractors who are COR-certified and some of them would like to see the COR certification aspects expanded to other potential products and services that this government contracts. With respect to the member opposite's question, I will get back to her with further details at a later date. The COR certification program is something that we've had in place for a number of years. We're proud of it and it's recognized not only territorially for what it has done, but also by companies outside of the Yukon.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, many Canadians work hard each day in an effort to minimize accidents. The objectives of COR are to provide industry employers with an effective safety and health management system to reduce accidents and injuries. To help smaller businesses, the small employer certificate of recognition was created for businesses with less than 10 employees during peak times. There is also the owner-operator certificate of proficiency certification program for the Yukon owner-operator businesses.

The minister has just said that he has heard from companies that they would like to see the program expanded. Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works provide a valid reason to this House for why the COR program was not completed to apply to all government contracts?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* requires all companies employing 20 or more workers to have safety programs in place. The certificate of recognition program certainly helps employers comply with Yukon health and safety regulations. The Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board supports the efforts of the Northern Safety Network Yukon and contractors committed to building safe and healthy workplaces. Studies in Alberta, Manitoba and Nova Scotia and other provinces have shown that safety measures and return-to-work programs save businesses money and protect their workers.

I thank the member opposite for her question and certainly thank those at Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board for their continued efforts in ensuring that Yukon workers return home safely.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, I don't appreciate being thanked for a question that the minister won't answer.

Risk is an inherent element of many jobs and this is why safety should be one of the core values in any workplace. We need to develop a better culture of safety. Safety doesn't only

apply to Yukon government's contracts, but to other government programs such as the owner-build loan program from Yukon Housing Corporation.

The Procurement Support Centre's website proclaims, "Because safety is everyone's responsibility" in bold, red letters. Absolutely — safety programs help reduce the injury rate for Yukon workers, those who get up every day to go to work and provide for their families. It can create a culture of safety and reduce the costs of workers' compensation.

Mr. Speaker, will this government now set a date for applying COR safety training responsibility to construction contracts under \$100,000?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Of course, our government is focused on safety — the safety of those workers. We heard some very passionate speeches from both sides of the House today with respect to April 28, National Day of Mourning, and I should recognize the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for her speech as well. She did a very exemplary job of delivering a speech under difficult circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of work underway across government. There is interdepartmental work. Highways and Public Works is working with the Public Service Commission on a contractor safety management program. We have also, through Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, engaged the Northern Safety Network Yukon to provide training and raise awareness. When it comes to workplace safety, we'll continue to look for other ways to explore this. We certainly don't want to overburden some of the smaller contractors when it comes to the requirements for this type of thing.

Then again, we could look for other ways for them to become COR- or SECOR-compliant. We will continue to focus on a number of different programs within Highways and Public Works and other departments of government working with our partner, the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, to make sure that our workplaces are as safe as they can be on a day-to-day basis.

Question re: Waste management strategy

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, this winter, Yukon's path toward zero waste was brought into focus by a pan-northern conference for stakeholders and governments to discuss how we can reduce the waste we generate. Yukon is at a crossroads when it comes to waste management. As a growing northern community, we are producing more waste while dealing with the special challenges of northern diversion and recycling. But there is an important aspect of zero waste that we should look at more closely — that is of extended producer responsibility. That is the idea that manufacturers are responsible for reducing the environmental consequences of what they make.

Has the Yukon government taken steps to work with its municipal partners and community stakeholders to implement the principles of extended producer responsibility as part of a Yukon-wide waste management plan?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, we have discussed the EPR model numerous times over the years. I should note that a few years ago we amended the *Environment Act* to allow for

the possibility of the development of an EPR system here in Yukon. Beyond that, we haven't gone down the EPR road necessarily. We have been focused on improving our current system as it stands now. We have a stewardship-based program that is in place for some products. We are looking at expanding that system to include new products very soon, and that is what we have been working on to date.

When it comes to recycling, obviously we have made considerable investments in recycling throughout the territory. We fund the depots that are throughout Yukon communities. We fund the transportation of those recyclable goods to Whitehorse to be processed and then, once they are here in Whitehorse, we fund the processors themselves through diversion credits and through the beverage container regulation. We are certainly investing considerably in the recycling system. That is one component of our overarching solid waste action plan, and it is one that we have been working very closely on with municipalities over the past number of years.

Going forward, we intend to make improvements to our stewardship program to expand and enhance it and make it more encompassing for other products. That is the path we are on today.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, Yukon municipalities and community partners have been asking this government to do more to help divert waste for a very long time. Yukon's designated materials regulation currently only lists one item, and that is tires, and we are waiting for those regulation changes to add to that list. By comparison, there are over 20 items on British Columbia's registry.

The registry is important because it applies the principles of zero waste to products with potential harmful environmental consequences when they end their usable lives. The City of Whitehorse has asked the territorial government about adding a number of other materials to our registry including e-waste, household hazardous waste and products containing mercury.

Has the government agreed to implement the City of Whitehorse's proposed designated materials regulation expansion and, if so, when will it begin implementation?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, the City of Whitehorse, as well as the Association of Yukon Communities, has communicated to the Yukon government that they would like to see the number of products included in the designated materials regulations increased. They have provided a list of possible materials in addition to some that the member suggested. We have indicated that we do plan to bring forward regulation changes to increase the number of products. We hope to do so in the coming weeks, and those products, as we have consulted with Yukoners about, include e-waste and the expansion of a range of rubber tires.

We do intend to expand that list of products, and we do intend to respond to the requests of Yukon municipalities and the Association of Yukon Communities. We've been working with them collaboratively to date and we look forward to unveiling those changes to the regulations in the coming weeks.

Question re: Corrections programming, First Nation consultation

Ms. Moorcroft: The 2015 Auditor General report on the state of corrections in Yukon found that the department was not meeting its obligations under the *Corrections Act* to incorporate the cultural heritage and needs of Yukon First Nations into its programs and services. While some First Nation cultural programs are provided to inmates at WCC, none of the department's core rehabilitation programs incorporate First Nation cultural heritage.

This March, the government sent out a letter to Yukon First Nation governments to seek their input on incorporating First Nation cultural heritage into corrections programming — more than a year after the Auditor General's report.

Why did it take this government more than a year to address this significant component of the Auditor General's report on corrections in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: What the member is failing to understand is the other work that has been done by the department, including the work in assessing and responding to the audit, as well as considering what steps should be made to change programming here. We are consulting with First Nations on this specific area, and I would remind the member again of the significant work that has been done to date in improving correctional programming.

What the member is also failing to acknowledge in her question is the fact that one area that the Auditor General found WCC was lacking in, in 2012 — during the period they reviewed — was in meeting the new standard that we had set out for ourselves as the new raised bar for the standard of programming. The department is, of course, working on addressing that as well as where there were issues in gaps in programming being provided. They are working on addressing those specific issues.

Ms. Moorcroft: You would think that addressing the Auditor General's recommendations on First Nation cultural programming would be a priority for this government — with such a disproportionately high number of First Nation inmates in our system.

The 2009 *Corrections Act* sets out a number of principles of corrections. I quote the previous Minister of Justice, who said: "High on this list is collaboration with First Nations, who make up a majority of inmates held at the Correctional Centre or on probation. There is an onus on government to provide programming that is culturally relevant for Yukon First Nations." This is from April 30, 2014.

Since 2009, the Yukon Party has asserted a commitment to these principles but only now are they taking action. Mr. Speaker, why has this government only in March of this year reached out to First Nation governments to seek their input on how best to incorporate First Nation culture into the Whitehorse Correctional Centre programming?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I'm not sure if the member actually read the letters that were sent out and understands this, because, in fact, what is happening is that some of the programs that were put in place at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre were programs that were developed based

on programs used in other jurisdictions successfully — the intention behind that, of course, is having an evidence-based program to meet the needs for First Nation cultural programming within the Whitehorse Correctional Centre

In addition to that — through the work of the elders committee — there have been other elements to offer specific cultural programming to First Nations within Whitehorse Correctional Centre, but part of what is occurring right now is consultation with First Nations to talk about where those modules that we imported from other jurisdictions may not be culturally relevant to Yukon First Nations, and to get their input on that.

What the member is either failing to understand or conveniently missing in her question is the good work that has been done, not only in designing the new facility to incorporate First Nation culture but, through the help of the elders committee, to better incorporate a number of cultural and craft programs within Whitehorse Correctional Centre. This specific part is simply building on the good work that has been done. We will continue to build on the excellent work that has been done to improve the standard of programming at WCC —

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Moorcroft: The Auditor General is not a lone voice in finding fault with the Yukon Party approach to corrections. This Yukon Party government hasn't met all the provisions of the *Corrections Act*, a law that they take pride in but fail to observe. The *Corrections Act* says that the director of corrections must establish a strategic plan for community involvement in the correctional system. This has not happened.

What this government can't seem to understand is that people at Whitehorse Correctional Centre will ultimately be released and return to their homes in Yukon communities. Rehabilitating people who have done something wrong makes us all safer.

Mr. Speaker, why has this government consistently failed to implement the provisions of the *Corrections Act*, like First Nation programming and the community involvement, that would improve rehabilitation outcomes?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, what the member is conveniently missing in her question is the fact that, first of all — several facts. First of all, the period that the Auditor General reviewed was a snapshot in time that also occurred when there was transition between the two facilities: the old facility and the new Whitehorse Correctional Centre. There were gaps in implementation as that occurred, and that is something that steps were taken to address in several of those areas, even prior to receiving that report from the Auditor General that covered the time period in 2012.

There have been significant steps taken to improve programming there. The standard set out in the *Corrections Act* is a standard that this government implemented, raising the bar from the level at which it stood, when the member herself was Minister of Justice.

We've significantly improved the programming, including First Nation cultural programming, in cooperation

with Yukon First Nations and the elders committee. We are committed to doing more and we are committed to meeting the standard set out in the *Corrections Act*. We are committed to doing just what we are doing right now, which is seeking input from all Yukon First Nations on how we can continue to improve the First Nation programming at Whitehorse Correctional Centre to ensure that it's culturally relevant and effective. We are continuing to do that good work in strengthening the program we have in place.

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. 97: *Chartered Professional Accountants Act* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 97, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Dixon.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I move that Bill No. 97, entitled *Chartered Professional Accountants Act*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 97, entitled *Chartered Professional Accountants Act*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to this bill at second reading. Of course, this is Bill No. 97, the *Chartered Professional Accountants Act* which is intended to modernize the regulation and overview of the accounting profession in Yukon.

I want to begin by thanking those members of the accounting community who have provided significant feedback to the Yukon government over the years and, more recently and more specifically, over the past number of months. This initiative has been led by the Department of Community Services, but it has certainly been supported by Justice and other departments in bringing it forward.

In particular, while there are a number of individuals in the accounting world who deserve to be thanked for their input, I did want to note three in particular: first, the presidents of the three existing organizations — the chartered accountants, the CGA organization and the CMA organization. Those are Jason Bilsky, Robert Fendrick and Kelly Steele respectively. Those groups and those individuals provided significant input on the development of this bill and I wanted to extend my thanks to them and their members for their input. Obviously, more than just the presidents or the heads of the organizations provided input, but those are the representatives so I highlighted those three individuals.

Mr. Speaker, moving on now, I should note that the bill before us today supports this government's priority to create a business and legislative environment that supports and encourages economic growth. Bill No. 97 is the outcome of significant consultation and collaboration with Yukon's

regulated accountants. It is also the outcome of extensive work and consultation done in British Columbia and many other provinces across Canada. This bill will bring Yukon in line with other Canadian jurisdictions, modernizing our legislation and enabling Yukon's three regulated accounting professions to unify under an internationally recognized professional designation. The regulatory regime for Yukon's professional accounting industry will be consistent with those in other Canadian jurisdictions in accordance with the *Agreement on Internal Trade*.

Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, this bill will better protect the public's interest and simplify the selection process for consumers when hiring accountants. This bill repeals the *Chartered Accountants Act*, the *Certified General Accountants Act*, and the *Certified Management Accountants Act* — replacing them all with the single bill that we have before us, the *Chartered Professional Accountants Act*.

Under this bill, the three regulatory bodies responsible for each of the current accounting designations will be combined into a new single organization: the Chartered Professional Accountants of the Yukon, or CPA Yukon for short. This bill also sets out the legislative framework for the newly established CPA Yukon to regulate its members.

CPA Yukon's regulatory authority will cover essential aspects of the accounting profession, including the ability to: (1) establish and enforce ethical and professional standards among Yukon's unified regulated accountants; (2) increase the professional competence of members through comprehensive and ongoing professional development requirements; and (3) provide a transparent, fair and effective mechanism for investigating and resolving complaints against any of its members.

While the list above is not exhaustive, these are very important functions, Mr. Speaker, and the legislative framework in this bill will ensure a high standard of professional regulation.

One central aspect of this bill is that it enables CPA Yukon to ensure flexibility and adaptability to changing circumstances because it allows the members to develop bylaws. This approach is similar to that taken in British Columbia and other Canadian jurisdictions. In fact, it is consistent with the approach taken under the three existing accounting acts here in Yukon.

The fact that it is similar to British Columbia's approach is significant. Yukon's cooperative relationship with British Columbia has been a long and successful one, and both jurisdictions certainly wish to see this continue.

As with the current three accounting acts, the bill before us enables CPA Yukon to delegate many of its functions to another provincial body that regulates charter professional accounts, which at this time is CPA British Columbia.

Affiliation with accounting professionals in British Columbia has served Yukon's accountants very well for many years. It gives them access to required specialized training and extensive professional resources in collaboration with their accounting colleagues to the south.

The CPA Yukon board, comprised of elected members, is authorized in legislation to make the bylaws I have previously mentioned — bylaws that relate to the functions and purposes of the organization. In order to facilitate the process of creating these necessary bylaws, an interim board of CPA Yukon will be appointed. This will be done upon passage of this bill in the coming weeks and during this Sitting to enable important work by CPA Yukon before the act would come into force.

This interim board would be comprised of two members from each of the three current accounting bodies: the Institute of Chartered Accountants of the Yukon, the Certified Management Accountants Society of the Yukon, and the Certified General Accountants' Association of Yukon. Composition of the interim board in this way would ensure that the perspectives of each of the three current designations will be incorporated into the bylaws of the new organization, as has been the case in the development of this bill. Upon completion of the bylaws and once the act has come into force, the interim board would be replaced by a new board. This new board would be elected from the members of CPA Yukon by the members of CPA Yukon.

While this bill combines the best practices from the three current accounting acts and, in many cases, maintains the status quo, this bill also introduces some new and important features that will help to better regulate accountants and ultimately better serve the public interest.

One new feature I should note is regarding the use of professional designations. Use of the designation "chartered professional accountant" — or CPA, for short — and the designation "professional accountant" are reserved for members of CPA Yukon. This will help simplify the process for those seeking accounting services from a regulated accounting professional.

As in other jurisdictions, Yukon's regulated accountants would be required to use the new chartered professional accountant designation alongside their current designation of either chartered accountant, certified general accountant or certified managerial accountant referred to in this bill as a legacy designation for a period of 10 years.

By using the new CPA designation and their legacy designation throughout this transition period, Yukon's regulated accountants would be showing the path they took to become a chartered professional accountant. It will also serve to significantly clutter their respective business cards.

Another new feature in this bill is the inclusion of professional accounting services. As defined in this bill, professional accounting services refer to a narrow set of high-level accounting functions. As in the case in other jurisdictions, the public interest will be better protected if only chartered professional accountants are permitted to certify that an auditor's report or financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the standards of the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada.

Another new aspect in this bill is the concept of custodianship. Under this bill, CPA Yukon would have the ability to apply for a court order to appoint a custodian of the

accounting practice of a member of CPA Yukon in some very limited circumstances. Some of these limited circumstances include situations where an illness or a disability leaves an accountant unable to continue his or her practice. If a custodian is appointed, he or she would then be able to ensure the accounting practice is continued, taking care of the needs of clients as required. While this is an unlikely occurrence, it is an important new regulatory aspect introduced by this bill that will help enhance public protection.

In conclusion, I should also note that, as I referenced at the beginning of my speech today, this is the result of significant contribution and feedback from the regulated accountants in Yukon — from the three respective organizations. I would also like to thank the Department of Community Services and the Department of Justice who helped develop this very important bill.

The accounting function is an essential service here in Yukon and elsewhere in Canada. These highly trained and respected professionals play an essential role, often behind the scenes, in many areas of public and private enterprise. I know there are a number of details in this bill that I am sure we will get into in Committee of the Whole.

I am sure there will be questions as to why there are some particular references, including specific references to the country of Bermuda, as well as some questions around why we have chosen British Columbia as a model jurisdiction to base our legislation on. I will be happy to describe and answer those questions as best I can once we get into Committee of the Whole.

With that, I will conclude my second reading speech and commend this bill to the House. I look forward to hearing from members of the Legislature further about this bill.

Ms. Moorcroft: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP Official Opposition in support of Bill No. 97, entitled *Chartered Professional Accountants Act*, at second reading. I want to thank the minister and his officials for providing information to members of the opposition at a briefing.

This bill results from a national trend to unify three accounting designations: chartered accountant, certified general accountant and certified management accountant into one designation of chartered professional accountant — the CPA designation. Currently there are three accounting designations in Yukon. The CA, the CGA and the CMA will over time change to one designation — CPA, chartered professional accountant.

This bill establishes a new organization, known as Chartered Professional Accountants of the Yukon, CPA Yukon, which will be formed by amalgamating the three current accounting bodies. Section 57 sets out the bylaw-making process. Yukon accountants are a small, self-regulating group of professionals who work closely with the Chartered Professional Accountants of British Columbia in order to take advantage of economies of scale for administering the regulatory process.

Under the act, the minister has the ability to require or disallow bylaws for a number of the components

contemplated under the act. We heard in the briefing that many of the rules that will be set out will be done through bylaw, rather than through regulation or legislation — specifically the training and standards for education to receive the CPA designation will be set out in the bylaws.

Internationally, there is a growing understanding of the challenges that professionals face in maintaining and expanding their knowledge and skills after they have been licensed, especially in the face of an escalating pace of technological change. This has resulted in a growing investment of regulatory effort into continuing competency. Here the professions will set the standard for continuing competency.

The minister noted too that the regulatory body will be comprised of members of the present three accounting designation boards. I would like to ask the minister to think about a role for lay people on governing boards of professionals when he's looking at this bill.

The Yukon *Chartered Professional Accountants Act* will allow BC and Yukon to continue to have similar regulatory frameworks. This legislation will also harmonize us with much of the rest of Canada.

The minister spoke about custodial powers, which allow CPA Yukon to apply for a custodial order from a court that allows the custodian to take control of an accountant's affairs, property and business. These are new provisions. This means that, in the case of a death or a revoked licence, the affairs can be taken over by CPA Yukon and carried on.

This bill also introduces different legal structures for regulating firms, professional accounting corporations and partnerships. It is based on the Chartered Professional Accountants Canada national regulatory framework. This bill also amends the fine levels and increases them, as they are dated in the older bills that will be replaced. We support this work to conform to national initiatives and we look forward to debate in Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Silver: I'll be very brief in my second reading speech to Bill No. 97, entitled *Chartered Professional Accountants Act*. I'm happy to rise today and speak to the proposed changes. I am relieved to see that the Yukon government is catching up with the industry and national standards for accounting designations.

The addition of the single act, in replacement of three, is much more efficient and coincides with the all-encompassing chartered professional accounting designation.

The new act creates a parallel with the BC Legislature as well and also national standards. I'm happy to see a 10-year transition period as well to allow those with legacy designations to identify themselves as such and to receive the professional development and training necessary to bring them to the bar set by the CPA designation.

I do want to thank all the people who have put the long hard hours into bringing this act to fruition. I will be voting in favour of Bill No. 97, entitled *Chartered Professional Accountants Act*, and I also want to take this opportunity to plug two of my ex-students who are both back in Whitehorse

working on their designation for CPA. One is Janelle Favron and the other one is Julia Spriggs — just in time for new regulations, Mr. Speaker.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 97 agreed to

Bill No. 98: Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016 — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 98, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Cathers.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 98, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 98, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I'm pleased to rise here today to introduce Bill No. 98, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*. It's common practice for government to bring forward a miscellaneous statute law amendment act from time to time. Acts of this type are used to make minor corrections, typically to a series of Yukon acts. Those amendments can, in some cases, be as simple as punctuation, or the addition or deletion of a letter. In some cases they refer to errors in an original bill that may be referencing the wrong clause.

The practice of the Legislative Assembly is that the amendments in this type of act not be associated with any policy changes or be controversial, but rather be technical in nature, correcting things such as language errors, grammatical and numbering errors, removal of incorrect references, correction of the French version of the law if it isn't matching the English version or vice versa, and ensuring that all consequential amendments resulting from previous changes have been made. In keeping with that practice, the bill before the Assembly today is not making any changes that are significant in nature from a policy perspective.

In September of last year, the Department of Justice policy unit issued a government-wide call for items that departments might need to be added to a miscellaneous statute amendment bill for the spring legislative Sitting and, based on the feedback and the specific requests from nine departments, three corporations, the Legislative Assembly and Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, these minor housekeeping amendments make changes to 53 different pieces of legislation. But, as members will have seen from the briefing as well as through reading through the act, the actual amendments themselves, though important, are not substantive in nature nor do they have any major policy implications.

The correction of errors in legislation enables greater clarity in Yukon law and the public, of course, expects that although our government identifies technical issues or errors in law or in the references to other sections, steps be taken to make those amendments. This is a rather large miscellaneous statute law amendment act. The last miscellaneous statute law amendment act was made passed in the fall of 2012 in that

Sitting of the Legislative Assembly. Routinely, when legislative drafters are working on legislation or identify issues after dealing with the interpretation of legislation, they keep a list of changes that are needed and bring them forward at that point in time the next time a miscellaneous statute law amendment act is presented to the Assembly.

I hope this act will give comfort to members that government is doing as we do and as is expected in taking the responsible approach to ensure legislation is up to date and accurate.

Mr. Speaker, for the information of members, I would like to provide some explanation about the specific acts being amended. I will go through them in alphabetical order: (1) the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*; (2) the *Assessment and Taxation Act*; (3) the *Builders Lien Act*; (4) the *Business Corporations Act*; (5) the *Cabinet and Caucus Employees Act*; (6) the *Canadian Blood Services Indemnification Act*; (7) the *Care Consent Act, 2003* in Schedule B; (8) the *Cemeteries and Burial Sites Act*; (9) a change to the *Child and Family Services Act*; (10) a change to the *Child Care Act*; (11) *Children's Law Act*; (12) *Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act*; (13) *Coroners Act*; (14) *Corporate Governance Act*; (15) *Corrections Act, 2009*; (16) *Education Act*; (17) *Education Labour Relations Act*; (18) *Elections Act*; (19) *Act to Amend the Elections Act and Electoral District Boundaries Act*; (20) *Enforcement of Canadian Judgements and Decrees Act*; (21) *Act to Amend the Environment Act, 2014*; (22) *Environment Act*; (23) *Evidence Act*; (24) *Family Property and Support Act*; (25) *Health Professions Act*; (26) *Housing Corporation Act*; (27) *Human Rights Act*; (28) *Insurance Act*; (29) *Interpretation Act*; (30) *Land Titles Act, 2015*; (31) *Languages Act*; (32) *Legal Profession Act*; (33) *Legislative Assembly Act*; (34) *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*; (35) *Liquor Act*; (36) *Medical Profession Act*; (37) *Municipal Act*; (38) *Municipal Finance and Community Grants Act*; (39) *Oil and Gas Act*; (40) *Ombudsman Act*; (41) *Partnership and Business Names Act*; (42) *Placer Mining Act*; (43) *Public Guardian and Trustee Act, Schedule C*; (44) *Public Service Labour Relations Act*; (45) *Quartz Mining Act*; (46) *Real Estate Agents Act*; (47) *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*; (48) *Small Claims Court Act*; (49) *Statistics Act*; (50) *Supreme Court Act*; (51) *Workers' Compensation Act*; (52) *Young Persons Offences Act*; and last, but not least, (53) *Yukon Development Corporation Act*.

In my speech at second reading, I will not go through the details at this point, but would be happy to discuss those specific details in debate in Committee of the Whole later this afternoon. Again, as I noted for members and for anyone listening to debate here in the Assembly today, this legislation, when it's in its full version — the English and French version — is about 17 pages in length. As Yukoners will see, they will note that a number of these changes are simply correcting things including, for example: in the *Builders Lien Act*, a spacing error between words; in the *Cabinet and Caucus Employees Act*, replacing the reference to "Government Leader" with the reference "Premier"; and again

in the *Cabinet and Caucus Employees Act*, putting in apostrophes in the term “Members’ Services Board” and replacing the term “Legislature” with the proper term “Legislative Assembly”.

With that, I will wrap up my comments. I am just trying to illustrate for people who are wondering about the nature of these changes that, as you will see through a detailed read of the bill, they are themselves quite technical and grammatical in nature, as well as including some corrections to referencing sections in other acts and correcting either the English or the French version of language.

With that, I commend this legislation to the House.

Ms. Moorcroft: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP Official Opposition. We will be supporting Bill No. 98, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*.

I want to again express my thanks to the minister for making his officials available to go through these 54 amendments. As the minister has indicated they correct editorial mistakes, and they remove outdated provisions and make other minor changes to ensure that the acts operate as intended.

One of the items that we discussed related to a bill that we have debated in the House previously. Often commitments are made to revisit legislation when it is going to be opened at a later date and then forgotten or deemed not important enough. My colleague from Takhini-Kopper King noted that the *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016* failed to include language changes that the former minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation said would be included when the act was next opened up.

On March 22, 2012, the Member for Riverdale North sent a letter to the Chief of Na Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation and the Mayor of the Village of Mayo regarding amendments to the *Liquor Act* that were requested jointly by Na Cho Nyäk Dun and the Village of Mayo to request a public drinking ban in Galena Park.

The minister stated — and I quote: “On a related matter, you will note that the amendment to the *Liquor Act* retains the somewhat outdated terms of ‘Indian band’ and ‘band community’, for consistency in the *Act*. Similarly, the term ‘hamlet’ has also not been updated. These revisions can be made in future, when other terminology in the *Act* is modernized.”

Mr. Speaker, we did raise this question at the technical briefing on the bill before us and were told that the term “band” is still legal because it still applies to three First Nations in the Yukon that have not completed a final agreement. Further, we heard that the miscellaneous statutes don’t deal with any policy matters.

I did, however, want to put on the record that this is a commitment that was made and that we think should have attention soon.

With that, I will conclude my remarks and say that we will be voting in support of Bill No. 98, the *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*.

Mr. Silver: I will be very brief but I am happy to rise today and speak to the *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*.

I am happy to see the editorial changes made on a regular basis. They are critical for the clarity of legislative documents, and it does show the commitment to regularly reviewing legislation that our public service has. I would like to thank all of those who have contributed to making these changes and those who are making notes of corrections to be made on a regular basis.

I have one question on consistency of these changes — amendment 5(4) is replacing “Legislature” with “Legislative Assembly”, whereas amendment 31(4) is the reverse — replacing “Legislative Assembly” with “Legislature”. The question is: Is there a reason specific to the definition of the term — “Legislature” versus “Legislative Assembly” — that these changes are being made, or are these terms interchangeable? If they are interchangeable, then why are we not remaining consistent across the acts? That would be one question and I look forward to further debate in Committee of the Whole.

I will be supporting this amendment.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I thank the Member for Copperbelt South and the Leader of the Third Party for their comments and their indication that they will be supporting this legislation.

In answering the Member for Copperbelt South’s question, I can advise the member that I did ask the Department of Justice about the possibility of addressing those amendments within the *Liquor Act* and what we heard back was that, to change and update that line and to move away from outdated language that refers to “Indian” or to “bands” in legislation with more common language — that was a larger project and affects more pieces of legislation than the *Liquor Act* itself.

I should note that both the government and the courts interpret any language of that nature as referencing First Nations. We are interested in updating that legislation at a future date, but the reason that it was not included in this specific bill was because of the number of pieces of legislation that would need to be addressed and the wording also — from what I heard from officials — got to, in some cases, a level of detail and the addition of language that arguably could have put it outside of the normal scope of *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016* into a change to update language while also inserting and adjusting the scope of certain clauses.

With that, I hope that has provided an explanation to the Leader of the Third Party’s question regarding the change to the *Cabinet and Caucus Employees Act* — to replace the term “Legislature” with “Legislative Assembly” and the other change in section 31 of the *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*, which refers to replacing “Legislative Assembly” with “Legislature”. I think the member will also

see that in the *Languages Act* there are references to replacing the definition “journals of the Assembly” with capitalized “Journals of the Assembly” and that, in the case of the difference between “Legislative Assembly” and “Legislature” — I will just confirm my understanding with the officials before providing it, but I think that it relates to the difference between whether it is being referenced in the context of legislation, or whether it is being referenced in the context of the body and the members who form part of that body. I think that is the clarification of the definition, but I will double-check with officials on that before stating that definitively.

I’m sure the Leader of the Third Party is listening to my explanation here, but I’ll be happy to provide it again later.

With that, I commend this legislation to the House and thank members for their support.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 98 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 98, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

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

Bill No. 98: *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 98, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I would like to, first of all, thank the officials who are supporting me here in debate this afternoon — Lesley McCullough and Lawrence Purdy — for joining me here to help me answer any questions members may have regarding the *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*, beginning with an answer to the question asked by the Leader of the Third Party. The explanation I have for the difference between the definition of “Legislature” and “Legislative Assembly” is that, as the

Yukon Act indicates, the “Legislature” means the Legislative Assembly and the Commissioner, whereas “Legislative Assembly” means the Assembly alone. That refers to the difference — for example, a motion passed by the Legislative Assembly is not signed by the Commissioner, and so the Legislative Assembly is acting on its own; whereas, in the case of legislation, it requires that signature from the Commissioner in his capacity as the Queen’s representative.

The correct use of the two terms is important, both constitutionally and practically, as to which body is to do any particular thing or which is being referred to. Thus, for example, in referring to the leaders of parties in the House, the *Cabinet and Caucus Employees Act* means, and should say, the “Legislative Assembly”. On the other hand, section 5 of the *Languages Act* refers to courts established by statute. In that case, the Legislature as a whole is what is meant.

I will just briefly reference the *Yukon Act*, which is available on the federal Department of Justice website. The current version of the act was put into place in 2002 and there are a number of terms in it that begin with defining the *Yukon Act*. It provides for the clarification of the former act, which means the old *Yukon Act*. It makes reference to a number of terms, including the definition of “Yukon” itself, although, to my disappointment, it refers to “Yukon”, not “the Yukon” — which of course is the proper term, in my humble opinion.

It defines the government and it describes the executive power, which refers to both the creation of the Commissioner and the appointment, via order of the Governor in Council, which of course is the federal Cabinet, acting with the approval of, in that case, the Governor General of Canada as the Queen’s representative. It applies the ability of the Governor in Council to appoint an administrative act in the Commissioner’s absence or illness and to pay their salary. I won’t read that full clause there for members. It can be found under the section Executive Power in the *Yukon Act* and the sections pertaining to the Commissioner and Administrator, to which I’m referring, are sections 4, 5, 6 and 7.

It provides as well that the seat of government is in Whitehorse, but it allows the Legislature — which again means the Legislative Assembly plus the Commissioner — to designate another place in Yukon as the seat of government. Then it goes on to describe in sections 10 through 16 of the *Yukon Act* the Legislative Assembly. The council, established by the former act, is hereby continued as the Legislative Assembly of Yukon. Each member of the Legislative Assembly is elected to represent an electoral district in Yukon. It provides for the duration of the Legislative Assembly being five years. Again, noting the difference in terms, section 11(1) of the *Yukon Act* prescribes that “No Legislative Assembly shall continue for longer than five years after the date of return of the writs for a general election, but the Commissioner may dissolve it before then.”

The Commissioner, as part of the body collectively referred to as the Legislature, of course continues to serve in their capacity and is the one who provides writs for the election of members of the Legislative Assembly — and shall

be issued by the Chief Electoral Officer, but under the instruction of the Commissioner, I believe.

It provides, as well, in section 17 of the *Yukon Act*, clarification that the institution referred to in the former act as the Commissioner in Council and which consisted of the Commissioner and Council of Yukon Territory is hereby continued as the Legislature of Yukon, consisting of the Commissioner and the Legislative Assembly. The Legislative Assembly, of course, is described in the *Yukon Act* as those of us who are members standing here today as well as those who would normally be present in this Assembly.

Madam Chair, I think that probably provides an adequate explanation. If the Leader of the Third Party or other members wish any more detailed explanation, I would be happy to provide it.

There are a couple of other things I just want to point to in the *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*. Just in reference, I'll refer to a few pieces of legislation that have sometimes been more common topics of debate or of interest to the public, and I would just provide clarification about the amendments being made to those acts.

In the case of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, the amendment being brought forward in clause 1 is a very simple amendment. "In the English version of subsection 64(1) of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, the expression 'categories of or records' is replaced with the expression 'categories of records.'" That is the sole change to that piece of legislation that is being made by this bill that we're debating here this afternoon.

As well, in the case of the *Assessment and Taxation Act*, "In the English version of paragraph 57(12)(b) of the *Assessment and Taxation Act*, the expression 'an improprement shall be determine' is replaced with the expression 'an improvement shall be determined.'" That, of course, is simply replacing what was a typographical error and a non-word with the correct word "improvement." For Hansard, you'll see the exact wording of this in the act. The first word was, as it sounded, a non-word, so perhaps you might want to check the text of the bill itself.

In the *Builders Lien Act*, that was the example I gave where literally the only change is the insertion — pardon me, not the insertion of a space; this one was a correction of literally one letter, replacing the letter "y" with the letter "e" to provide the expression of "may be".

In the *Cabinet and Caucus Employees Act*, as I briefly mentioned before, the only change being made is to replace the expression "Government Leader" with the expression "Premier". At the time that act was brought in, "Government Leader" was the common terminology and, after some years of debate and governments going back and forth on whether they referred to the leader as "the Government Leader" or "the Premier", for the last — I think this will be the fifth Legislative Assembly and government in a row where we've called the leader "the Premier".

I think it's commonly accepted now in the territory that, rather than being, as it was once seen — for the first person to take on the title of "Premier" instead of "Government Leader"

— at the time it was seen as perhaps putting on airs by Yukon citizens. I think it's probably fair to say that most would agree now that "Premier" helps, when we're in federal, provincial and territorial meetings and on the national stage, to clarify that the leaders of the territories are premiers and have them not seen as being a lower rung of leader than the premiers of provinces.

Again, the other changes in the *Cabinet and Caucus Employees Act* are very minor in nature: the insertion of an apostrophe in Members' Services Board; the change from the reference of "Legislature" to "Legislative Assembly" — though as the officials with me helpfully explained, it is quite an important one in the fact that, since it's referring to the ability of party leaders related to the staffing of those caucus offices, it's important to distinguish that it's "Legislative Assembly" and not "Legislature" — and there's a change updating the definitions in the French version of that legislation as well.

Again, I will skip over most of these but I do want to touch on a few that are more likely to be of interest to people. In the *Child and Family Services Act*, for example, the only change being made in this legislation is in the French version of subsections 198(3), 199(2), 199(3) and 199(4) of the *Child and Family Services Act*. The expression — and apologies to any francophones for my pronunciation of this — the expression "la Loi sur les services à la famille et à l'enfance" is replaced with the expression "la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille". I hope I don't get kicked out of Quebec the next time I try to enter for any mispronunciation. It's the same in the *Children's Law Act*. I won't attempt to read it again, but the same basic term is being replaced in the French version.

Again, another one of the acts that can be of interest is the *Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act*. The amendments to the *Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act* are simply to replace the expression "Government Leader" with "Premier", replace the expression "clerk of the Legislative Assembly" with the capitalized term "Clerk of the Legislative Assembly", and to insert an apostrophe in "Members' Services Board".

Let's see — what else do we have of significant interest here? The changes being made to the *Education Act* are replacing the French version of the *Education Act*. I'm not going to attempt to read the clause as it is lengthy in nature, but it is referring to parts including the reference to the age at which somebody is qualified to stand for election to school council.

The amendments being made to the *Elections Act* are themselves quite minor in nature: the re-numbering of section 105 is 105(1) and renumbering subsection 3 as subsection 2; in the French version, replacing expressions with the proper French expressions; in the French version of subsection 224, doing the same, as well as in 291 and 423 replacing those expressions with the proper French terms; the *Act to Amend the Elections Act and Electoral District Boundaries Act*, which amends section 12 of the *Elections Act*, the expression — and this is a numbering error — 'subsection 12.01(1) of the

Elections Act is replaced with the expression ‘section 12.01 of the Elections Act’ — and that is the only amendment being made to that piece of legislation.

There are also some other minor changes, including to the *Land Titles Act, 2015*. There were errors around capitalization of the “Queen in Right of Canada” and the insertion of the word “means” to the current phrase “approving authority” — replaced with the expression “‘approving authority’ means” in the English version of subsection (1). In the English version of section 1, in paragraph (d), “the expression ‘survey plan’ is replaced with the term ‘plan of survey’”. In section 1, in paragraph (g), and the definition of “Yukon First Nation”, the spelling of “Nacho” as in Na Cho Nyäk Dun is corrected because of a typographical error. There are a few other ones, primarily the insertion of the word “and” after a semicolon, the insertion of the word “the” in a different spot, the correction of a French expression, and the addition of the letter “f” to the word “sheriff” where it was inadvertently left off due to a typographical error.

Moving on to the *Legislative Assembly Act*, there are minor changes here as well. In the English version, the expression “clerk of the Legislative Assembly” is replaced with the capitalized version of that title. In the French version, the expression — I don’t think I can pronounce that word, so I am not going to attempt that one — is replaced with the expression “vice-président”. There are changes to a punctuation correction in the reference to the *Elections Act* in the English version: a correction to the French wording describing the electoral boundaries act; correcting the expression “any province” with the expression “any province or territory”; the correction in the English version of section 14, replacing the expression “who order” with the expression “who shall order”; in subsection 13(2) and section 17, capitalizing the term “Journals” in the phrase “Journals of the Legislative Assembly”; in sections 14, 15 and 17, changing “chief electoral officer” to the capitalized version of that title; in section 16, replacing “an oath of allegiance” with the term “the oath of allegiance”; in the English version of section 27, capitalizing the term “Standing Orders”, as it refers to Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly; in the English version of subsections 32(1) and 35(2), correcting the expression “judgement”, which has an “e” in it that should not be there; and in sections 34, 35 and 36, the expression “journals, votes, and proceedings” is replaced with the capitalized version of those titles. There are some renumbering changes as well and a correction of the heading before section 41 with “Executive Council” and the heading before section 42 is replaced with “Premier”. In section 42(3), the expression “Premier-elect” is replaced with the expression “Premier-designate”. Section 44 is renumbered 44(1).

The expression “Members Services Board” is replaced with another insertion of an apostrophe in that term. In the English version of the heading before section 52, the expression “Workers Compensation Act” is replaced with the typographically correct version of that term. As well, subsections of that are replaced with references to the Workers’ Compensation Board and Workers’ Compensation

Health and Safety Board. The expression “the Executive Council” is replaced with the expression “or the Executive Council”. The heading “Review of salaries and benefits of members” is added before section 54.

Those are the only amendments being made to that piece of legislation, which is very important to the function of this territory. The only change being made to the legislative assembly retirement is to replace — the expression “Premier-elect” is replaced with the expression “Premier-designate”. Madam Chair, I should have referenced the proper name of that act, which is the *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*.

That wraps up my introductory remarks.

Ms. Moorcroft: I too would like to welcome the officials, Lesley McCullough and Lawrence Purdy, to the Assembly again to support the minister in the debate on Bill No. 98, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*. It is important to correct these small errors, whether they are editorial, spelling mistakes or other minor changes.

I want to acknowledge the officials across government for their diligence in identifying these errors and the officials at the Department of Justice for preparing the amendments. At second reading, the Minister of Justice read into the record that the 53 statutes would have small amendments, and followed up with further detail in Committee of the Whole. I note one of these changes is the use of the term “Premier” — which at one time, the Yukon Party was opposed to using and preferred the term “Government Leader”, but now this government accepts and uses the term “Premier” and, accordingly, has amended miscellaneous statutes.

I also noted that the *Education Labour Relations Act* and the *Public Service Labour Relations Act* were amended to use the name of the new federal act, which is the *Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board Act (Canada)*.

I have no questions related to these corrections and, accordingly, Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 98 —

Chair: Prior to moving all the clauses, I would like to check with the members to see if any other member would like to speak in general debate on this bill.

Since there will be no further general debate, we will proceed to line-by-line reading.

Ms. Moorcroft: Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 98, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*, read, and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses of Bill No. 98 read and agreed to

Chair: Ms. Moorcroft has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 98, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*, read, and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.
Clauses 1 to 53 deemed read and agreed to
On Title
Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Madam Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 98, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Cathers that the Chair report Bill No. 98, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*, without amendment.
Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Cathers that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.
Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 98, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 200: *Technical Amendments Act, 2016* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 200, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Cathers.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 200, entitled *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 200, entitled *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The people of the Yukon elected this government to ensure good governance by practising open, accountable and fiscally responsible government, and one of the ways government achieves this is through regularly reviewing its operations. Achieving efficiency sometimes requires overhauling existing legislation and, at other times, requires minor adjustments to ensure that Legislation meets the current needs and that any errors have been corrected.

While this legislation is somewhat similar in nature to that of the *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*, the reason it is a separate bill is the convention of having miscellaneous statutes acts not make any policy changes, whereas the *Technical Amendments Act, 2016* does make changes that could be considered policy changes, though relatively minor ones.

While we discussed and considered whether it was in the line of being a miscellaneous statute law amendment act, we decided it was better to present it as a separate piece of legislation to distinguish the fact that there are, in fact, some minor policy changes being made to legislation through the *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*.

The bill before us today deals with several of those minor amendments, which are intended to improve efficiency and ensure legislation is aligned with best practices that guide the work of department staff and align with current needs.

Mr. Speaker, the bill before us today, through minor changes, will increase access to the child support administrative recalculation service, if passed by the Legislative Assembly, and will clarify as well processes in the new *Land Titles Act, 2015* and the amended *Summary Convictions Act*.

Although, as I mentioned, these amendments are minor in scope, I do want to explain them so that members understand how the bill improves existing legislation. The amendments have been drafted together in one bill to make the best use of legislative development resources and because, although we decided they were larger than should be in a miscellaneous statute law amendment act, they are fairly technical in nature in most cases.

Explaining those specific changes, the amendments to the *Child Support Administrative Recalculation Act*, will allow Yukoners expanded access to the child support administrative recalculation service, which, of course, is something that has only been in place for a few years now. This is based on feedback after the legislation was passed, that the Department of Justice heard from members of the local law community, based on the current trends when it comes to matters related to child support. Currently, if child support orders include special expenses for things like sports costs, for example, parents cannot use the administrative recalculation services and must go back to court to include things like sports costs in that order.

Family orders have told us that many child support orders now include special expenses such as sports costs and so this has now become commonplace, rather than the exception as it was understood to be when the law was first put into place. By expanding the service, families will now be able to avoid going to court and in doing so, save time as well as money on legal costs and also freeing up time in the court that can be spent on dealing with other matters more expeditiously.

The proposed amendments contained in this bill to the *Land Titles Act, 2015* reference the appropriate sections of Yukon First Nation final agreements, as recommended by First Nations. The amendments are responsive to advice received from First Nations, as we continue to engage with

First Nation governments, as work continues on the land titles regulations that are currently expected to be completed in June 2016, or late spring, early summer.

The regulations that are being developed will guide implementation of the *Land Titles Act, 2015* and the first package of regulations, as I have explained to this Assembly previously, include regulations to allow First Nations to register category A and category B settlement lands in the Land Titles Office if they choose to do so and if they have entered into an agreement with the Government of Yukon for that purpose.

I should also note that the ability to register First Nation land in the Land Titles Office without losing First Nation title to that property is new within Canada. It is a new type of title — the first of its kind — and we believe, in doing that, we've struck the balance between providing opportunity for First Nations to take advantage of this while ensuring that someone who purchases property or purchases an interest in that property has a clear understanding of the legal rights pertaining to that property.

As I have previously explained to this Assembly, if a First Nation chooses to register category A or B settlement land in the Land Titles Office, it does provide the ability for someone to get a mortgage on that property or financing related to it, and while any encumbrances exist on that property, the First Nation is not able to deregister that property from being in the Land Titles Office. However, once they have cleared up any financial encumbrances on it, they have the ability at any time they choose to withdraw that land from being registered in the Land Titles Office if they consider that something they wish to do at that point in time.

Additionally, the amendments to the *Land Titles Act, 2015* allow the registrar to create and modify forms and establish processes for registration of documents as required, thereby achieving efficiency in the Land Titles Office and speeding up the implementation of the new *Land Titles Act, 2015*. That is a change from the legislation that we passed in this Assembly last fall. It did require those forms to be established by regulation, which, of course, is more time-consuming and allows less flexibility for the registrar. Based on further consideration since the bill was passed, the decision was made to request the Legislative Assembly to make an amendment to that act to allow the registrar to create and modify those forms and establish the process for registration of documents as required without having to go to Cabinet to seek approval of minor form changes.

Amendments to the *Summary Convictions Act* will create efficiencies for police registries that administer summary convictions and police officers who issue tickets. In reviewing the new *Summary Convictions Act* with our stakeholder group, they noticed some processes that could be further improved on before the act is brought into force. For example, the RCMP currently sends a court liaison officer to swear complaints in tickets in court, but this practice is not supported by the *Act to Amend the Summary Convictions Act*, which requires this to be done by the enforcement officer who issued the ticket. That change would pose an additional administrative burden both

on the issuing enforcement officer as well as Justice officials who may have to spend an inordinate amount of time tracking down the issuing officer rather than allowing another officer to appear on their behalf.

The amended proposal will allow enforcement agencies to send one officer to swear all complaints before the court that day instead of every officer who issued a ticket having to be available and wait until their time to appear before the court. This change does not negate the need for an officer who is a witness to be available for trial if the matter proceeds to trial.

We are committed to having legislation that works for the public and for public servants. In conclusion, we believe that this bill supports the Yukon government's commitment to ensure good governance by practising open, accountable and fiscally responsible government as well as the Department of Justice's commitment to ensuring access to high quality justice services. Together, these amendments show that government is consistently attending not only to the big picture, but to the details that allow the function of government to be improved by realizing efficiencies that save time and cost and provide benefits for staff as well as for all Yukoners.

With that, I will conclude my introductory remarks and look forward to comments from other members.

Ms. Moorcroft: I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP Official Opposition. We support Bill No. 200, entitled *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*. These are important acts. While these are small changes, they are important changes that deal with policy matters.

The minister has spoken about the changes to the *Child Support Administrative Recalculation Act*. This is an act that allows for the use of administrative recalculation of support orders in order to save court costs. However, it also ensures that if there are special expenses and if the orders are having a wider scope, then they must go before a judge.

In the *Land Titles Act, 2015*, the amendments deal with the First Nations' registration of lands and clarify register equivalents.

In the *Summary Convictions Act*, it highlights the importance of, in writing statutes, accurate language. The inadvertent use of the word "the" instead of the word "an" in relation to an enforcement officer created a barrier and an inefficiency for dealing with tickets, and so that has been corrected.

We do support these technical amendments. The one other matter that I would again draw to the minister's attention to — which we have discussed before in the Assembly — is the clarification of the definition of "spouse" across all statutes. There have been changes to the *Marriage Act* and there have recently been changes to the *Vital Statistics Act* to ensure that same-sex parents were able to adopt children.

There are, however, other areas of law where the family law subsection of the Yukon chapter of the Canadian Bar Association has indicated they have concerns related to the definition of "spouse". I wanted to draw to the minister's

attention that the *Family Property and Support Act* and the *Estate Administration Act* are among those statutes where this question has come up.

We also have a motion on the Order Paper in the name of my colleague, the Member for Riverdale South, urging the Government of Yukon to introduce amendments to the *Married Women's Property Act* to reflect marriage equality for same-sex couples.

Perhaps the minister could indicate whether amendments to the *Land Titles Act* would still need to be made to reflect equality for same-sex couples.

Mr. Speaker, that concludes my remarks on second reading, and we are in support of Bill No. 200, entitled *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 200 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 200, entitled *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

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

Bill No. 200: *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 200, entitled *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: In rising here, I would like to begin by thanking Lesley McCullough for joining me here this afternoon to assist me with technical questions on Bill No. 200, entitled *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*. I just would touch on a few other things that I did not mention in my introductory remarks at second reading of this bill.

The bill amends the *Child Support Administrative Recalculation Act*, it amends the *Land Titles Act, 2015*, and it amends the *Summary Convictions Act*.

The amendments to the *Child Support Administrative Recalculation Act* allow for child support orders with special

or extraordinary expenses to be recalculated administratively rather than requiring that the parents go to court.

In the *Land Titles Act, 2015*, as mentioned, it clarifies provisions related to the correct reference to Yukon First Nation final agreements and it also makes changes to allow the registrar to amend the forms without having to go to Cabinet because of forms being prescribed in regulations.

As mentioned, the *Summary Convictions Act* allows the enforcement officer to swear a complaint on a ticket issued by another officer and allows the court registry to set a time for the trial of a charge contained in a ticket before the complaint is sworn. That again, as I mentioned, is just to avoid the situation where every single officer who filled out a ticket would have to appear in front of a judge when being filed in court.

I should just actually add, Madam Chair, for the reference of people who are unfamiliar with it, the *Summary Convictions Act* typically refers to matters that can be typically addressed through the payment of a fine. For example, in the case of a speeding ticket or rolling through a stop sign — those matters — if someone does not request a trial or enter a plea of not guilty, they are then deemed or dealt with by the court in their absence if they do not show up to contest it. In the case of a ticket — although there is a requirement for them to be sworn in court — those matters can be resolved by the payment of a fine under the *Summary Convictions Act*.

Before we go into line-by-line reading, some of the specific changes in the *Child Support Administrative Recalculation Act* include: amendments to sections 2 and 3 amend the *Child Support Administrative Recalculation Act* in subparagraph 7(1)(b)(i). Clause B is replaced with the following: “(B) on the basis of any special or extraordinary expense, unless the order includes an amount of child support determined using the guidelines and that amount is expressed separately from the amount determined on the basis of the special or extraordinary expense.” The clause is added immediately after: “(B.01) on the basis of any undue hardship.”

Secondly, section 3 adds the following subsection immediately after subsection 11(2): “(2.01) For greater certainty in determining under subsection (1) the amount of child support payable under an eligible child support order that is described in clause 7(1)(b)(i)(B), the recalculation officer is not empowered to modify the amount of child support determined on the basis of any special or extraordinary expense.” That is to preserve, as well, the ability that they can't change a court order that has been made with respect to special expenses.

Additionally, Madam Chair, moving on to the changes under the *Land Titles Act* — sections 5 to 8 of the *Technical Amendments Act*, amend the *Land Titles Act, 2015*, in the following manner — subsection (14) is amended — in subsection 14(3), paragraph (a) is repealed and paragraphs (b) and (c) are renumbered to paragraphs (a) and (b) respectively.

Section 15 is also amended in the following manner: “Subsection 15(3) is replaced with the following: “(3) A

record number assigned in accordance with paragraph (2)(a) is also the title number for the certificate of title.”

Section 67 is also amended by this bill, subject, of course, to it passing the Assembly. “In paragraph 67(1)(a), the expression “section 5.4.1” is replaced with the expression “paragraph 5.4.1.1(a) or subsection 5.4.1.2”.”

Section 212 is amended. “The following section is added immediately after section 212

“Registrar may determine forms.

“212.01(1) Despite any provision of this Act that requires a form to be prescribed, the registrar may determine a form for the purposes of this Act.

“(2) If the registrar has determined a form under subsection (1), the form is deemed to be prescribed for the purposes of this Act.”

Again, that is clarifying that it doesn’t need a regulation to make it a prescribed form.

That is the extent of the amendments to the *Land Titles Act, 2015*. The changes to the *Summary Convictions Act* — pardon me, Madam Chair — I am just seeking clarification about the term. In the *Act to Amend the Summary Convictions Act*, Statutes of Yukon 2014, chapter 8, sections 10 to 12 amend that act. “In section 29 which amends section 23 of the *Summary Convictions Act*, subsection 23(2) is replaced with the following:

“(2) No trial set under subsection (1) may proceed until an enforcement officer swears, in writing and under oath or solemn affirmation before a justice, the complaint containing the charge to which the trial relates.”

That is the section that I had already explained in less legalese for members in my earlier remarks.

Section 31 is also amended. “In section 31 which amends section 25 of the *Summary Convictions Act*

“(a) in paragraph 25(2)(b), the period is replaced with the expression “; and”; and

“(b) the following paragraph is added immediately after paragraph 25(2)(b)

“(c) before the time specified in the ticket for the appearance, an enforcement officer must swear, in writing and under oath or solemn affirmation before a justice, the complaint containing the charge to which the ticket relates.”

Section 32 is also amended. “In section 32 which amends section 26 of the *Summary Convictions Act*, in subsection 26(2), the expression “the enforcement officer” is replaced with the expression “an enforcement officer”. Again, that is the section that clarifies that, rather than each officer who filled a ticket having to appear in court, it allows one officer to appear and present several tickets.

With that, I should mention that — jumping back to the changes to the *Land Titles Act*, the amendments to section 14 relate to the record-keeping function of the registrar of the Land Titles Office and will not affect clients or stakeholders, but as written, both sections 14 and 15 require that the registrar assign record numbers in chronological order. On further consideration, it was determined that leaving these provisions in the act as initially presented would be problematic because it limits the options for the registrar. The

Land Titles Office record-keeping is to ensure that the records can be tracked and ultimately verified, but eliminating the manner in which this is done removes options that might work more efficiently than a strict chronological order and the proposed amendment is intended to improve business processes in the Land Titles Office once the new act is brought into force and effect.

I should again just remind members of the age of that legislation. Madam Chair, I should just note again that the *Land Titles Act* that was replaced by the new version — or is in the process, I should say, of being replaced by the new version since the bill has been passed — is not in force until the regulations are approved later this year. The provisions of the old act, in some cases, date back to 1898, so they are being replaced with modernizations, as members know and as we discussed on several occasions last fall.

It is quite significant in nature — a major piece of legislative drafting work — and that is the reason why there are some additional adjustments and corrections that were identified after the fact simply due to the sheer volume that staff and legal drafters were dealing with at the time of getting the act ready for debate in this Assembly.

I should also just explain — under the section related to the *Summary Convictions Act* — the change I read in the amendments to section 29, which amend section 23 of the act: “(2) No trial set under subsection (1) may proceed until an enforcement officer swears, in writing and under oath or solemn affirmation before a judge, the complaint containing the charge to which the trial relates.” This change will allow court registries to set the trial dates for not guilty pleas before the enforcement officers have appeared to swear the complaints and the tickets, and this is intended to improve administrative efficiency.

Again, in the *Summary Convictions Act*, section 31, which amends section 25 of the *Summary Convictions Act*, the changes to paragraph 25(2)(b) and the addition of paragraph (c) after 25(2)(b) of the clause, “(c) before the time specified in the ticket for the appearance, an enforcement officer must swear, in writing and under oath or solemn affirmation before a justice, the complaint containing the charge to which the ticket relates.” What this amendment is about is it specifies that a complaint in a ticket must be sworn before it can go to trial. It was not specified in previous versions of the legislation and the change would increase the transparency of the court process.

Last, but not least, as I mentioned, the change from “the enforcement officer” to “an enforcement officer” allows officers other than the issuing officer to go to court, as it is a major drain on police time as well as other agencies that are covered under this, which does include the City of Whitehorse. Pardon me, Madam Chair — I am just being corrected on that point. In fact, the City of Whitehorse would be covered under a different section of the act, not under this clause, as I had previously understood. I thank the official with me for providing that correction. This section does relate to the RCMP. This does free up the time of enforcement officers as well in several other areas also.

With that, I think I have hopefully provided an introductory that is clear and explains those sections for the Official Opposition and for the Third Party leader to understand the contents of this *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*. As members will see from reading through the bill, the changes themselves are not massive policy changes, but we did feel it was appropriate to separate them from the *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016* because some of them in fact do have a minor policy effect and the tradition has been to keep miscellaneous statutes amendments acts to housekeeping and extremely technical and minor matters.

With that, I will wrap up my introductory remarks in Committee of the Whole on the *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*, and I would be happy to answer any questions that members may have on this legislation.

Ms. Moorcroft: I would like to thank the minister for his remarks in the House today explaining the *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*, which deal with, firstly, the *Child Support Administrative Recalculation Act* to allow for child support orders with special or extraordinary expenses to be recalculated administratively if certain requirements are met. Secondly, it deals with the *Land Titles Act, 2015* to allow the registrar to determine forms and to clarify references to provisions of a Yukon First Nation's final agreement.

Finally, the act amends the *Act to Amend Summary Convictions Act* to allow an enforcement officer to swear a complaint in a ticket that has been issued by another officer and to allow the court registry to set a time for trial of a charge contained in a ticket.

I again want to thank the officials who walked us through the legislation and answered questions when we had a briefing on this bill. We understand these changes and we support them.

In second reading, I did ask the minister a question related to other legislative amendments. I believe it's time to update Yukon laws to recognize the rights of common-law partners as spouses. Most other jurisdictions in Canada have done so. The minister is aware of concerns raised by members of the family law section of the Yukon chapter of the Canadian Bar Association and this is a concern of the public as well. A priority of revision to the definition of "spouse" would be the *Family Property and Support Act*. The *Family Property and Support Act* affects the lives of many families in Yukon whether they are married, whether they are same-sex couples or whether they are common-law couples.

In 2007, the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues brought to the attention of the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, who is in that position today, to ask for her help on amending legislation. The advisory council brought forward issues that had been raised by the Yukon Gay and Lesbian Alliance — GALA Yukon — and the Yukon Public Service Alliance of Canada Pride Committee. The letter referred to changes that were made to the *Marriage Act* after the Dunbar and Edge case, but pointed out that there was other legislation that needed to be amended. First on that list was the *Family Property and Support Act* as well as the

Children's Law Act the *Vital Statistics Act* and the *Land Titles Act*. I understand that there also are references to spouses that could be updated in the *Evidence Act*, the *Married Women's Property Act* and the *Spousal Compensation Act*.

The question that I have for the minister is: If he is unable to fit these amendments related to the definition of "spouse" into the *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*, can he explain why he has not addressed those concerns by some other bills?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I thank the member for Copperbelt South for the question.

I had intended to respond to her remarks at second reading when I stood up at the beginning here and I sat down and immediately realized that I had missed doing that and I apologize for that.

With the spousal and same-sex definitions, there are a number of pieces of legislation that are affected both as it pertains to common-law spouses and to same-sex couples. We are in the process of looking at changes to legislation that include that because what we're doing in part because of the availability of drafting resources is focusing on changes that have more substantive policy effect, rather than ones that are correcting outdated definitions because those outdated definitions are already read by the court and by the Yukon government of course as reflecting the modern definitions.

I can also tell the member that we are looking at and we'll likely be consulting on amendments to the *Estate Administration Act* later this year. That is in discussion and review. We felt that law probably had the most significant outstanding policy issues that needed to be addressed as it pertains to common-law couples, whether same sex or not — whether heterosexual or same-sex couples. On that basis, we're in the process of looking at amendments to the *Estate Administration Act*.

In terms of the priorities identified with the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues, I am aware that in 2007, they had identified their priorities and listed which they felt were the highest priority. I would note for the Member for Copperbelt South that the Minister for the Women's Directorate and I did meet with the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues at their quarterly meeting, I believe it was.

I met with them at their meeting in Haines Junction earlier this year and talked about issues pertaining to definitions and their effect. At that time, I explained to them what we were currently thinking, in terms of amending legislation and the reason why the Government of Yukon felt the *Estate Administration Act* was probably the one that should be the highest priority for change, and our reasoning for that. Although I don't believe they passed an official resolution on that basis, or made an official recommendation, the informal discussion at that table, members seemed to be very supportive of that and pleased to see that we were making progress on the project to update definitions in Yukon legislation.

Again, I don't want to put words into the mouths of the women who were members of the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues, but my understanding, from our discussions in January of this year in Haines Junction, was

that they did not seem to have any concerns with our view that the *Estate Administration Act* should be the first piece to be dealt with and, as I indicated to them at that time, it's one that we're planning to do public consultation on later this year.

Those changes would include updating the definitions in that area, what currently occurs — and I'll explain the reasoning to the Member for Copperbelt South. There have been several situations that have come to our attention where people who have had a long-time common-law spouse pass away, are not aware of the fact, because of common misconception, that after a period of time — anecdotally, it seems a lot of people understand — because of common practice in several other jurisdictions, they have the perception that after living together for two years, you are considered, in the eyes of the law, to be married, when in fact, under the *Estate Administration Act*, a common-law spouse — even one who has lived together with their partner for decades — currently in the situation where they are not listed on the automatic list of priority of how relatives will be considered, if someone dies without a will.

While we do encourage people to make sure they have a will, in fact, as a result of concerns we heard from several people about specific situations that came to our attention, we decided to launch the Make a Will Month project in November of last year, encouraging people to understand the importance of having a will.

We also hosted just a week or two ago a Family Law Information Centre event, which I think the member may have attended. I know a number of Yukoners did, which was explaining to people the importance of developing a will and helping them to understand what their rights currently are. It is our plan to consult on potential amendments to the *Estate Administration Act* that include putting in the ability for a common-law spouse to be considered.

At risk of getting a little ahead of myself on this — the discussions we've had to date with the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues, as well as with my colleagues, are that we are planning to seek public feedback on whether it should be an automatic situation without any legal option otherwise that, in the absence of a will, someone you've been living with for more than a certain length of time — we'll be consulting on that length of time as well — but for the sake of illustration, if the number chosen was two years, one of the options that we intend to seek feedback on from Yukoners, including YACWI and other stakeholders, and also individuals, is whether it should be an automatic situation where, after living together for, let's say, two years, you are considered to be equivalent to married, or whether there should be an option for common-law couples. In particular, the informal feedback we've heard in discussion with the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues at the meeting I referenced, was about the possibility of recognizing that it has become more common for people, including later in life, to choose to live together, but particularly for the thinking of what we're going to present for consultation is whether there should be an option and recognition that couples may have previous families and may wish to have those assets go to

children from a previous marriage, that there be potentially the possibility in the act of allowing a couple to opt out from the normal trigger, if they filled out a declaration to that effect.

That, again, is not something that is set in stone; it's simply an option we'll be presenting to Yukoners about whether it should be an automatic trigger at a period of two years, three years, et cetera, after which you're considered the same as married and assets joined, if someone dies without a will, or if there should be an option for Yukon couples who choose to live together but wish their assets to remain separate and continue to be allocated for children or other heirs, to be able to declare that for better legal protection of that separate interest.

We look forward to hearing feedback from Yukoners, once we actually begin formal consultation on that, about which path they would like us to take in this, including also the length of time after which common-law couples should be normally considered to be married.

That change is also intended to update the language in that act to recognize common-law couples, including same-sex common-law couples. I do recognize that there are other pieces of legislation that do need to be changed to update definitions to reflect current law but, again, I hope that has provided clarity to the member. I hope she might even agree with the explanation of why we are focusing drafting resources on dealing with things that seem to have the biggest effect on Yukoners' lives under the current legislative framework and then, after that, we are envisioning the other changes to update outdated definitions, as being the second part of that overall modernization project.

I think that hopefully addressed the member's questions and explains the reason for placing a priority in that area. I have a feeling the member asked another question that I may have missed. If I did, please let me know.

Ms. Moorcroft: I would like to thank the minister for his response. I did get the impression from what the minister just said that he considered outdated definitions not to be a priority. I apologize if I am mistaken in that impression. I want to point out that clear definitions are fundamental to laws. They affect policy and they affect social conditions.

I am glad to hear that the minister has announced, at least to some, that the government has a plan to update the *Estate Administration Act* as a priority and to look at the definition of "spouse". The *Family Property and Support Act* is also a significant act that does affect the lives of many families in the Yukon, whether they are married, common-law or same-sex partners. I think that both of those statutes should be a priority for revision. Also, an inclusive definition of "spouse", which could be updated for the *Estate Administration Act*, could be used consistently across other statutes.

I would like to ask the minister whether there are drafting instructions or broad policy instructions for the department to look at related statutes when they are considering the language in an updated definition of "spouse".

The minister also referred to the information session that was offered recently about married and common-law couples. I had planned to attend that and it was in my calendar;

however, the Equal Voice Yukon chapter held an event the same day and I chose to go that one and couldn't be at both events at the same time.

I would also like to ask the minister if there is a presentation that was offered, or whether there is a summary document, and if the minister could provide me with a copy of the information that was offered at the public session that I was unable to attend.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I was just seeking clarification to provide the right answer to the Member for Copperbelt South.

When it comes to the definitions, what I would note to the member is, yes, changing those is a priority but, as the member knows, there are many competing priorities in government and there are times when you have to choose what the highest priority is. In this case, our highest priority in this area has been changing the legislation that we see as having the biggest effect in its legal impact on people's lives and its financial effect on their lives, rather than focusing immediately on those definitions that are simply outdated in their language and are interpreted in a different way by government and the court from what they actually say in the act — if that language is outdated in its references to spouses or to men and women, for example.

While it would be a little premature for me to commit to making changes to other acts' definitions while we're dealing with the *Estate Administration Act* and its definition pertaining to "spouse", that's an interesting suggestion from the member. In preliminary discussion with the official with me, it's something that we could look into, but I can't quite commit to it at this point today. It is possible that if there are other acts that we determine are just as simple as updating the definition — to use the definition that is brought in through the amendments to the *Estate Administration Act* — we might be able to make some relatively simple ones at that time. We'll look into whether that is possible or whether they are more substantive in nature and affect things such as other provisions related to how those acts apply or policy provisions there.

The short answer to the members question is perhaps that we'll look into it. I do appreciate the suggestion.

The presentation that the member asked about, which was put on by the Family Law Information Centre related to common-law rights, wills, et cetera, my understanding is that it was probably not a formal presentation in the form of a document, but we'll look into what was presented — whether there is a PowerPoint presentation, a handout or something that we can share with the Member for Copperbelt South. If there is, I would be happy to share that with her, but I do not actually know the answer to that.

I do know that there is information — I believe it's on the Family Law Information Centre website — that we did present as part of the Make a Will Month campaign last year that included some of that information in short form. I think it was the Family Law Information Centre that had prepared most of that. I don't know the website off the top of my head but I could undertake to look into it for the member.

I expect it's probably fairly easy to find on the department website, but I'll ask officials to provide me with the link to where the information is that we presented as part of the Make a Will Month campaign last November — the web link — so that the member can share it with constituents or others if she would like to pass that on to people so that they can find it easily without having to search or find out where it might be on the website.

In recapping for the member, I hope the explanation provided of why the *Estate Administration Act* is the one we see as the highest priority is satisfactory, but I do want to acknowledge that there are other pieces of legislation that are in need of modernization, including, but not limited to, their definitions pertaining to common-law couples and same-sex couples. I would note that, just as we are planning to do with the *Estate Administration Act*, there are some policy questions where we think Yukoners' input would be valued and important, such as whether — for common-law couples who die without a will — the *Estate Administration Act* should automatically deem them to be equivalent to married, after living together for a period of time, or whether there should be an option for maintaining separate assets if they choose to do so and specifically declare that.

That is something that has not, to my knowledge, been done in other jurisdictions, but was something that we had heard informally from a few Yukon citizens as we were looking at the possibility of making changes to legislation such as the *Estate Administration Act*. While Yukoners may or may not choose to have that choice in final legislation, we thought it was an idea worth considering and worth presenting to Yukoners and hearing their feedback on whether they thought that was a good idea or whether it's not a good idea.

Like that, as we proceed with the project to amend other pieces of legislation and modernize them relating to things such as common-law couples, marital property, et cetera, we will also — where we see areas where there are either different approaches from across the country or policy ideas that we have heard either from the Department of Justice stakeholder groups or Yukoners and that we think are worth considering, we look forward to hearing from Yukon citizens about their views on that and believe that — as with some other pieces of legislation and policy — there is the possibility that a made-in-Yukon solution may be a better solution than what has been done in other jurisdictions. We're not intending to solely focus on what has been done in other jurisdictions, but we do want to be mindful of it and make Yukoners aware of that in the interest of ensuring that we're looking at what is and isn't working in other jurisdictions and the effect of it.

In some cases, there is arguable merit for ensuring consistency in legislation between provinces and territories. People often assume that legislation is the same from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, but the flipside of the coin is the argument that a big part of the reason that we have local government — in that successive governments of various stripes and Yukoners before — former Commissioner Jim Smith comes to mind — they worked so hard and tirelessly to give the Yukon Legislative Assembly the power it received

following the Epp letter and through devolution as that constitutional development of the territory has occurred.

It is also all about ensuring that Yukoners have the ability to make our own decisions rather than being dictated to by Ottawa or a province about what models we should use. That includes the ability for us to decide to use a different model that meets the needs of the Yukon better than the — for lack of a better characterization — off-the-shelf legislative models that we see in other provinces or territories.

I look forward to that work progressing. It isn't a simple task, in some cases, and particularly as it relates to policy questions in other pieces of legislation. Those where there are substantive changes being contemplated to modernize legislation — that's one that I personally believe very strongly about. It's important to give Yukoners the opportunity to provide their feedback and to seek the input of stakeholder groups on those potential changes so that very act of public consultation does place a limitation to how many pieces of legislation we can change at one time, while giving people, stakeholder groups and NGOs with limited resources the ability to have a chance to fully understand what we're proposing and provide us their thoughtful feedback on it.

I think that about wraps up that issue. The only other thing that I would note is that we have taken a number of steps within the past year to strengthen the ability of people within the legal system, including the creation and partnership of the Department of Justice and the Women's Directorate. The minister responsible for Women's Directorate and I announced last year the creation of the new women's legal advocate position and the ultimate awarding of the contract for that position to Skookum Jim Friendship Centre. That was something that was the last substantive outstanding recommendation from the *Sharing Common Ground Report* on Yukon's police system.

As well, work done by the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues helped define what that role should be. We appreciate the many hours that volunteers and stakeholders put into providing us with their thoughts on this. While that position is still in its first year of operation, we hope that it will achieve its intended purpose of helping women, including women who are part of a common-law couple, better understand their rights in navigating the legal system and understand what supports exist for them through other resources, including the Family Law Information Centre, the Yukon Public Legal Education Association — YPLEA — and through other resources, including the Yukon legal aid society, which provides support as well.

With that, I hope that has provided an explanation to the member about the rationale for the approach that we are looking to take on this, as well as some of the intended next steps in addressing this area of law and updating and modernizing it with the input of Yukoners.

Ms. Moorcroft: I have looked at the Family Law Information Centre website and the Make a Will Month campaign, so the minister doesn't need to send me an e-mail or a letter with that link. I am not trying to make additional work for officials. If the information that was presented at the

session about the rights of married and common-law couples is already available on the web, then there isn't a need for them to prepare a summary document. However, if officials have put that information together in a new way, and if it is something that is underlying the public consultation work the minister just spoke about in relation to updating the *Estate Administration Act*, then I would appreciate having a written response from the minister.

I want to thank the minister for providing a few details about the government's plans — which they had shared with the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues — about modernizing estate administration law. The minister spoke about a priority being to deal with situations where people's legal and financial status is affected. I agree that the *Estate Administration Act* is a priority, and I am pleased that they are making a start on that. I do argue as well, though, that there is a need to apply a consistent definition of "spouse" across all legislation — a definition of "spouse" that recognizes the rights of people who choose to live in a common-law relationship and, as well, people who choose to live in a same-sex relationship.

My view is that the *Family Property and Support Act* is a statute that affects the daily lives of many families and is one where the family law section of the Canadian Bar Association has raised concerns specifically about the definition of spouse as one that should be addressed as a priority as well.

Chair: Does any other member wish to speak in general debate?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I thank the Member for Copperbelt South for her comments. I am pleased to hear her indication that she supports modernizing the *Estate Administration Act*.

I do take her points — and appreciate them — about the importance of a consistent definition of "spouse" across legislation. As I indicated, though, it would be premature for me to make any commitments today without checking into the details of it. We will commit to taking her suggestion under consideration and, as we look at modernizing the *Estate Administration Act*, if there is the ability to modernize the *Family Property and Support Act*, as she mentioned, and if there are very simple definition changes that can be made without broader policy changes that should be consulted on, then we can consider doing that at that time, as part of that same legislative package.

I do agree that the definition of "spouse" should be consistent across Yukon legislation, even if it's currently read consistently by the court, just simply for the ease of public readability and for lack of confusion, as well as in the interest of good legislative drafting policy and ensuring clarity and consistency. There is benefit in updating that definition and standardizing it across Yukon legislation.

I should also note that, in addition to meeting with the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues, I appreciated the opportunity to attend and speak at their forum last September, along with the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, and appreciated hearing from the many people who were there at that event on issues of concern to them and hearing their priorities. That, of course, helped

inform and lead to the conversation the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate and I had with the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues earlier this year — I believe it was in January in Haines Junction.

In terms of the FLIC — Family Law Information Centre — presentation that was made, I appreciate the member's comments and that she has found the make-a-will information online. I will ask officials, as per her request, that if what was presented at that information night is new or substantively different from what we've already made available online, we'll undertake to provide it to the member. If it's similar, then we will not prepare and send her the information that she already has a second time.

I don't know the answer to the format of that, but I think the basic structure of it will likely be very similar. The law hasn't substantively changed, and I don't think they've changed — describing it differently in any large way. But I will undertake to have officials look into it and, if it is substantively different, then present it and share it with the member so she has that information as well.

Madam Chair, I know that debate, in part because of questions the member asked us, has strayed from what's in this bill, and I would just note for any Yukoners listening and recap the fact that we've strayed into other areas of law and potential legislative changes. The bill in front of us today is itself a fairly simple one, dealing with changes to the *Technical Amendments Act* to make changes to the *Child Support Administrative Recalculation Act*, the *Land Titles Act, 2015*, and the *Act to Amend the Summary Convictions Act*. Much of our discussion has actually strayed into other policy areas that are important, which is why I took the opportunity to discuss them with the Member for Copperbelt South, rather than noting that they are not in the legislation in front of us here today.

I have enjoyed the debate with the Member for Copperbelt South. If she or other members have any other questions later in general debate or line by line, I look forward to addressing them.

Ms. Moorcroft: I believe the first question that I asked the minister when we started in debate on the *Technical Amendments Act, 2016* this afternoon was whether some of the changes that were requested by the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues and that were also raised by Yukon's Gay and Lesbian Alliance and the Public Service Alliance of Canada Pride Committee could be addressed in a technical amendments bill. Perhaps that's not the case, but I would note that those requests for amendments to the *Family Property and Support Act*, the *Children's Act*, the *Vital Statistics Act* and the *Land Titles Act* to include same-sex relationships in the definition of "spouse" were made in 2007.

I would note, too, that when my colleague, the Member for Riverdale South, brought forward the difficulties a same-sex couple were having in adoption, that amendments to the *Vital Statistics Act* were brought forward to the floor of this Assembly within one Sitting in order to deal with that.

These issues I have been raising this afternoon are ones that have been drawn to the attention of government for some

time. It may have been possible to deal with some of them in a technical amendments act, and it may not. I do want to thank the minister though for engaging in debate on this today, because I believe these are important issues. They are certainly ones that we have been raising in this Assembly over the last five years.

Chair: Does any other member wish to speak in general debate?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I thank the member for restating the question she asked earlier in debate. I apologize for missing responding to it at that time.

The changes that the member is referring to — the changes related to same-sex couples, common-law couples, et cetera, and related to the rights of transgender people — are ones that would be beyond the scope of a technical amendments act, because some of those changes have a policy effect. That is something that, again as I've noted, we are very closely monitoring what is going on in other Canadian jurisdictions. I very much appreciate the concerns brought forward to us by Yukoners in this area and the suggestions.

I would note, just as a reminder to the member, that when discussion relates to specific changes to the *Vital Statistics Act* related to gender on birth certificates, that the newness of this issue and how quickly it has emerged both on — I shouldn't say it's a new issue, that's the wrong way to describe it but — the newness of this issue being a subject of major debate on the national agenda in Canada and in the United States as well, is demonstrated by the fact that, when amendments to the *Vital Statistics Act* were made earlier this term, that was not something that, at the time, was either on the government's radar screen or on the Official Opposition's. To my recollection, there was not a discussion in that debate on that bill of making additional amendments in that area.

I will stand to be corrected, if the member did, in fact, say that in Hansard — made comments at that time related to this — but I don't think that was the case.

What I would note is that, in reference to this being an emerging issue across the country, some of the activity in provinces includes changes that were made just very recently. I believe it was a few weeks ago in Newfoundland and Labrador that a bill was brought forward, and there is a story as recently as this morning from the *Globe and Mail* relating to a private member's bill presented to the BC Legislature relating to changing British Columbia's human rights code as it pertains to gender identity and expression under that province's legislation.

Again, because it's an evolving area and some of the issues that have come up are new and not all of them relate to legislation, this is an issue that government — when we had a person who had a specific concern related to a driver's licence contact us last fall, that policy was changed to allow the issuance of that licence. Also, pursuant to a commitment made by the Department of Highways and Public Works in response to that specific complaint, there was a commitment made to put in place a policy, which they have done, effective at the beginning of April, I believe it was.

The act we were debating in the Legislative Assembly earlier this month on this — I have received several e-mails from Yukoners who self-identify as transgender or who are the family members or friends of Yukoners who self-identify as transgender — I believe the member for Copperbelt South has been cc'd on some of those. I won't, of course, bring anyone's name into the Legislative Assembly, to protect their privacy, unless I know that they are comfortable with that occurring.

I would just note that, among the specific concerns and issues we've heard, they relate to things other than the *Vital Statistics Act*. One Yukoner in particular provided us with a list — I believe it was an eight-page e-mail, listing a number of concerns related to Yukon government departments. If that person is listening or reading Hansard, I would note that we'll actually be responding to that e-mail very shortly.

I apologize for not having a response to him immediately, but I can report in that area that many of the issues identified relate to operational matters affecting government departments. We appreciate the specific issues and concerns identified, since they do relate in most cases to departments other than the Department of Justice. Those issues and concerns have been passed on to the responsible departments and they have been asked to look into it. We will be replying to them.

I can also note the importance of understanding that if Yukoners have concerns — while they are, of course, welcome to send them to me or to other responsible ministers — what that one e-mail especially — as well as some of the other comments in other e-mails — notes is that this isn't as simple as just changing legislation. Some of the changes that would be required to have a government response, I should say, include things like signage. They include things like a website with a specific concern identified. Those are things that are operational in nature.

While we do appreciate those concerns and are looking into those concerns and treating them seriously, those issues themselves are best addressed at an operational level. If any Yukoner or a family member or friend who self-identifies as transgender is running into issues of that type with government departments, probably the best level to bring them forward at, in most cases, would be to the deputy minister responsible for that department. If they are not able to do so or if they are not clear about who that should go to, of course, if they pass them on to any minister or to MLAs, we will attempt to forward them to the responsible department so they can be looked into.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Madam Chair, I would also note and ask all members to join me in welcoming to the gallery a part-time constituent, Mr. Jonas Smith.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Madam Chair, in the interest of the Yukoners cancer care reception that is in the lobby — I believe it starts at 5:30 p.m. or close to it. I understand that

there has been some discussion about the possibility of wrapping up a little earlier today just in the interest of allowing members to attend.

I will sit down at this point in time. I look forward to any other questions. If there aren't any other questions from members, I would just like to again thank Lesley McCullough for joining me here today. I thank officials in all departments for the work that they have done in identifying the policy issues that are presented in the *Technical Amendments Act, 2016* and for their work in preparing this legislation.

Chair: Does any other member wish to speak in general debate?

We are now going to proceed with line-by-line debate.

Ms. Moorcroft: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 200, entitled *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses and title of Bill No. 200 read and agreed to

Chair: Ms. Moorcroft has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 200, entitled *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 1 to 12 deemed read and agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Madam Chair, I move that Bill No. 200, entitled *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*, be reported without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Cathers that Bill No. 200, entitled *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*, be reported without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Madam Chair, I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Cathers that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 200, entitled *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:07 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 263

1st Session

33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, May 2, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER — Hon. David Laxton, MLA, Porter Creek Centre

DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Darrell Pasloski	Mountainview	Premier Minister responsible for Finance; Executive Council Office
Hon. Elaine Taylor	Whitehorse West	Deputy Premier Minister responsible for Tourism and Culture; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Justice; Yukon Development Corporation/ Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Doug Graham	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Education
Hon. Scott Kent	Riverdale North	Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources; Highways and Public Works
Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Community Services; Public Service Commission
Hon. Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Minister responsible for Environment
Hon. Mike Nixon	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin	Minister responsible for Economic Development; Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Party

Darius Elias	Government House Leader Vuntut Gwitchin
Hon. David Laxton	Porter Creek Centre
Patti McLeod	Watson Lake

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Jan Stick	Official Opposition House Leader Riverdale South
Kevin Barr	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes
Lois Moorcroft	Copperbelt South
Jim Tredger	Mayo-Tatchun
Kate White	Takhini-Kopper King

Liberal Party

Sandy Silver	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, May 2, 2016 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Sexual Assault Prevention Month

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Sexual Assault Prevention Month and the many individuals who work 365 days a year to eradicate sexualized violence in our territory and in our country.

Mr. Speaker, here in Canada, it is estimated that one in three women will experience sexual assault at some point over the course of their lives. Sexual assault is one of the top five most common violent offences committed against women in Canada and remains one of the most under-reported and non-reported forms of violence committed against women. While this systemic violence affects all women, indigenous women and girls suffer at even higher rates.

Mr. Speaker, sexual assault and any other form of violence is not acceptable and it's not to be tolerated. Despite improvements being made, there is still much more work to be done to break the silence on violence in all of our communities. In Yukon we are very fortunate to have many organizations that are working hard to create a cultural shift away from the acceptance and normalization of sexualized violence. This month, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre is hosting a variety of events with other community partners, including BYTE, Les EssentiElles, Gwaandak Theatre and others to further the conversation about consent and sexualized violence. With summer approaching, the consent crew will also be out once again at Yukon festivals and events sharing the message that sexual assault is never acceptable and to ensure that people know the difference between consensual sex and sexual assault.

This initiative is operated as a joint project between the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, Les EssentiElles and the Yukon Women's Transition Home Society. The Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre also continues to run A Safe Place, which provides evening support and programming for women with housing and food insecurity as well as mental health challenges. Ensuring women have a safe place to go is an important part of preventing violence and we are very pleased to support this important initiative again with continued funding. For more information regarding these and other initiatives offered by Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, I urge all members and Yukoners to check out the new and improved website for Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre or to

find them on Facebook to learn about these and other events going on.

A new initiative that I would like to highlight is the youth for safety and justice initiative in Watson Lake supported by the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society.

Youth for safety is a youth empowerment project designed to foster community safety and justice for young women and girls. This project creates a space for active youth participation in addressing issues of violence against young women and girls and is designed to provide youth with the knowledge and skills needed to assume a leadership role in promoting safety and justice for young women and girls.

As a government, we are also working to improve our response, including preserving the dignity of victims and holding offenders accountable, both being central in enhancing reporting and providing supports to those who need it most. With a number of key departments we are focused on a comprehensive and integrated approach to violence prevention by sharing and leveraging resources, capacity, expertise and current services.

As the largest employer in the territory, we are developing a number of initiatives including a web-based training module for front-line staff, a domestic violence in the workplace toolkit, and revisions to our own communications style guide.

Together with First Nation and municipal governments, organizations and agencies, we're also continuing to work together to address violence against indigenous women and girls with the recent hosting of a family gathering and a Yukon Regional Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in December and February respectively.

In order to move forward on the issue of sexualized violence, we need to have a clear understanding of what is working and where there are gaps that still exist left to address. One way we are supporting this knowledge within government and throughout the Yukon is with the launch of a new website, *Shifting Territory — Indicators of Yukon Gender Equality*. This website is also an important tool in implementing gender-inclusive analysis, which the Women's Directorate currently provides to help ensure gender-equitable outcomes throughout government.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I wish to thank all of the many individuals throughout the territory who work in all of these and other efforts. I encourage everyone to participate in these events and to join the voices of men and women who already speak out against sexualized violence in our community. Thank you.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to acknowledge that during the month of May, we undertake national and local campaigns to prevent sexual assault. This campaign aims to raise public awareness about the prevalence of sexualized assault in Canada.

One in four Canadian women will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime. In the Yukon in 2014, the rate of sexual assault was 3.8 times higher than the national average. Fifty-seven

percent of aboriginal women report having been sexually abused, and aboriginal women are three times more likely to be violently assaulted.

The calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada specifically call upon governments to investigate and find remedies for the disproportionate victimization of aboriginal women and girls in Canada.

Sexualized violence refers not only to rape, but includes stalking, harassment, assault and sexist attitudes. These occurrences each contribute to a culture that condones and supports sexualized violence.

Sexual assault is a gendered crime and one that is rarely reported. Statistics Canada reports that over 80 percent of sexual assault victims in Canada are female. Of these victims, 66 percent are under age 24, 60 percent are under age 17, and 11 percent are under age 11. Those are numbers that should cause all of us to be outraged and motivated to end sexualized violence and all forms of violence against women and girls. Eighty percent of sexual assaults occur in the home; half of all sexual offenders are married or in long-term relationships.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said in this House before, the fundamental cause of violence against women is inequality. It is violence that keeps women “in their place”. The Canadian Women’s Foundation states: “In our society, gender inequality is visible in politics, religion, media, cultural norms, and the workplace. Both men and women receive many messages — blatant and covert — that men are more important than women. This fundamental inequality creates a rationale for humiliation, intimidation, control, abuse, and even murder.

“In this context, it becomes easier for a man to believe that he has the right to be in charge and to control a woman, even if it requires violence. This is not only wrong, it’s against the law.

“Violence against women is rooted in the belief that women deserve less social power and it is therefore acceptable — maybe even necessary — to exert power over them. This mindset also drives many other forms of violence, such as racism, homophobia, classism, ageism, and religious persecution.

“There is no evidence that alcohol or mental illness causes men to be violent against women. Men who assault their partners rarely assault their friends, neighbours, bosses, or strangers. In fact, when it comes to alcohol, there is a double standard: while alcohol consumption by an offender is often used to excuse their behaviour, victims who have been drinking are often blamed for their own victimization.”

Mr. Speaker, one of the most public trials in recent memory has shone a spotlight on the realities of sexualized violence and sparked a national outrage about how survivors are treated in the legal system. In the lead-up to the recent high-profile trial and acquittal of Jian Ghomeshi, we saw hashtags like #BeenRapedNeverReported and #IBelieveSurvivors dominate the public discussion. Following Ghomeshi’s acquittal, there has been much public discussion and legal comment about what is needed to improve the criminal justice system response to women reporting sexualized violence. There hasn’t been a systematic review of

criminal law since the law reform of the early 1980s when evidence, law and procedure were amended to abolish such rules as the doctrine of recent complaint, which provided that a woman who had not raised a hue and cry immediately after her assault must be discredited, and a requirement for a witness to corroborate such a complaint.

We must maintain the right of an accused person to a fair trial, while at the same time ensuring that trials are not discriminatory and that Charter rights to equal protection and benefit of the law are also respected.

One commentator asserted that fear of the unknown is preventing people from reporting. I believe that in fact many women who choose not to report sexual assault do understand the system and make a fully informed decision based on knowing what to expect in a courtroom, and that decision is that they do not report.

I recall a conversation I had many years ago with a senior RCMP official who said that he would advise his daughter not to report if she was raped. Because the system often re-victimizes, estimates in Canada are that only six out of every 100 sexual assaults are reported to the police. Since the summer of 2014, Yukon residents have the option of third-party reporting. This means that anyone 19 and over who has been sexually assaulted can make a confidential report to Kaushee’s Place about the crime. The assault is then reported to the police, but the victim’s information is kept confidential unless the victim later gives consent to disclose it to the police.

In 2012, Holly Johnson prepared an attrition pyramid published in *Sexual Assault in Canada: Law, Legal Practice and Women’s Activism*. The actual number of sexual assaults is unknown, but rates have been calculated from general social survey data. Many reports are filtered out as unfounded by the police, which means that charges are not laid. Many cases are dropped when a prosecutor determines that there is not enough evidence to proceed to trial, and conviction rates are low. Professor Johnson’s study finds that 0.3 percent of perpetrators of sexual assault were held accountable, and 99.7 percent were not. So what are we doing in Yukon to address a societal crisis of sexualized violence? Tomorrow night, Gwaandak Theatre is presenting a reading of Melaina Sheldon’s play *Chance*, followed by discussions.

On May 10 in Whitehorse, Victoria Faulkner Women’s Centre is presenting a panel of young speakers to share their reflections on the Ghomeshi trial, the media and how to prevent sexualized assault from happening by teaching and learning about enthusiastic consent. Their announcement reads: “Everyone is welcome to share your frustration, build your solidarity, and create dreams of a better response system to sexualized violence.”

In Watson Lake, a group called Youth for Safety has launched a petition about changing language in the criminal law to more accurately describe criminal acts of violence against children. This work with the Liard Aboriginal Women’s Society and Youth for Safety demonstrates youth leadership for justice.

Sexual assault prevention must become a focus of our attention 12 months of the year. We should encourage consistent dialogue and education for women and men on sexual assault and the root causes that lie in the sexism of our society. We need to recognize that in our territory this is an issue of increased concern. The rates of sexual assault in Yukon are alarming and are cause for immediate concern and action. No individual should ever experience sexual assault, but a quarter of all women in Canada will in their lifetime. What does this tell us? That we are not doing enough. High heels don't cause rape. Short skirts don't cause rape. Women's bodies don't cause rape. Rapists cause rape.

During Sexual Assault Prevention Month, I urge everyone present and all members of our community to meet the challenge of ending sexualized assault each and every day of the year.

In recognition of National Hospice Palliative Care Week

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I rise today in honour of National Hospice Palliative Care Week which runs from May 1 to May 7. Over the past few years hospice palliative care has become a topic of national conversation as the baby-boomers age.

We all want the same thing as we grow older or as we deal with a life-limiting condition: to live as well and fully as possible until we die.

Our Yukon population is aging too and more Yukon seniors are retiring here than in the past. Good planning and excellent end-of-life services are more important now than ever. As part of this planning, a hospice palliative care unit is being incorporated into the new Whistle Bend continuing care facility.

The Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association is a national voice for quality end-of-life hospice palliative care in Canada. Its principle aim is to relieve suffering and improve the quality of life and living and dying. In Yukon, we're lucky to have a number of volunteers and professionals providing support for those at end of life and their family and friends who care about them.

Health and Social Services' hospice palliative care team has been very busy. Some of the highlights of the team's past year include: the release of the Yukon palliative care framework; ongoing education to the public, health care providers and Yukon's First Nations to increase our capacity to help Yukoners living with palliative conditions to remain at home; collaboration with community-based service providers — for instance, Hospice Yukon to support the important work they do; collaboration with Yukon First Nation care providers to support them in providing care to elders in their communities; and the completion of a care at home resource binder to support those living with life-limiting conditions and their home care and palliative care team.

The palliative care team, working with the home care team, provided support to close to 100 Yukoners living with life-limiting illnesses. They also supported many people who were in a facility such as the Whitehorse General Hospital or in an extended care facility. Because their work is so

important, the hospice palliative care team received permanent funding during the last fiscal year to allow them to continue their important work.

In closing, it's important to thank all the volunteers, nurses, friends, doctors, Hospice Yukon workers, home care and hospice palliative care team members, whose caring and generosity of spirit have eased the way for so many Yukoners and their families.

Discussing end-of-life care is never easy, let alone when we are face to face with it either for ourselves or for our loved one. This week is an excellent time to open this discussion with our loved ones and our health care providers. I encourage everyone in this House to talk to their families and fill out an advanced care directive. Let your loved ones know what you want ahead of time.

Ms. Stick: I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Third Party to pay tribute to National Hospice Palliative Care Week.

Hospice and palliative care refers to end-of-life care in Canada. It includes educating ourselves and the public on advanced care planning, hospice care and palliative care. Too often these are topics we do not want to talk about, whether for ourselves or for family members or for friends. It's uncomfortable for most of us and, when it comes to an ill or dying family member or friend, it can feel as though we are giving up hope — but hospice and palliative care services are much more.

We have many professional health care providers and well-trained volunteers in Yukon. I know these individuals do exemplary work, from stories I have heard and from those living it. Those staff and volunteers from Hospice Yukon offer support to dying and bereaved clients at the Whitehorse hospital, in care facilities and in private homes, and they offer support in workplaces and in their downtown office space. They are there for all who are involved in the death and dying of an individual. This includes family, friends and coworkers. We also have health care professionals — physicians, nurses, LPNs and home care workers to name a few — who provide the care and support needed in our health facilities and in people's homes in Whitehorse and, when possible, in communities.

Imagine a time, Mr. Speaker, when hospice palliative care is available to all Canadians when and where they need it — where living well until death is the goal of care. Unfortunately that is not the case across Canada, where different jurisdictions offer different and varying degrees of palliative and hospice care. That, Mr. Speaker, is why a national strategy or framework guaranteeing that levels of care to all Canadians is something we encourage all levels of government to work towards.

As recently as March 2015, a report was released that is called *The Way Forward National Framework: A Roadmap for an Integrated Palliative Approach to Care*. This report was released by the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association.

If I can quote from this document, I think it sums up what a framework would accomplish: “An integrated palliative approach to care focuses on meeting a person’s and family’s full range of needs — physical, psychosocial and spiritual — at all stages of frailty or chronic illness, not just at the end of life. It reinforces the person’s autonomy and the right to be actively involved in his or her own care — and strives to give individuals and families a greater sense of control. It sees hospice palliative care as less of a discrete service offered to dying persons when treatment is no longer effective and more of a simultaneous or integrated approach to care that can enhance their quality of life throughout the course of their illness or the process of aging.”

I think this sums up what is needed and, fortunately, this report does go on to lay out how each jurisdiction in working collaboratively with each other can achieve this.

I want to thank those professionals and those trained volunteers who continue to provide this support to our friends, our neighbours and family members.

In recognition of Teacher Appreciation Week

Hon. Mr. Graham: I rise in the House today on behalf of all members to pay tribute to teachers in the Yukon and indeed throughout Canada.

Teacher Appreciation Week marks a time to honour the contributions of teachers — not only teachers, but administrators and paraprofessionals — to the lives of our students, not only here in our territory but throughout Canada and the world. The Silicon Valley venture capitalist Guy Kawasaki appropriately described the importance of teachers when he said that if we put someone on pedestals, put teachers; they are our society’s heroes.

Yukon educators may indeed be heroes in the lives of all of our Yukon students. Each day, they inspire our youth to not only learn, develop and grow, but also to go beyond their limits and reach their fullest potential. They motivate our students to reach as high as possible and to do things they never thought they were capable of doing. Through their work, they help to develop curious and creative individuals who are ready to take on any challenge. They also plant a seed for the love of learning, which continues to grow as students’ minds are nurtured by many different teachers during their time in school. When students’ minds eventually bloom and they use their education to achieve great heights, we have teachers to thank for the benefits that our society gains from the potential that they helped to grow. From the early years of learning to the point when a student completes high school and goes on to find their way of life, either in a career or through further education, a teacher is the prime factor in what that student eventually becomes.

We can see the effects of the influence of teachers every day in Yukon and across Canada and globally. Our political and business leaders, scientists, doctors and others who are changing lives and the world around them were all at some point influenced by a teacher. As we work toward a new vision in education, teachers will be even more important as we shift from what students learn to how they learn.

Yukon teachers will be empowered to lead the change within our schools and ensure that our current generation of learners and the next generation of leaders are ready to take on the new opportunities that our rapidly changing world presents.

It is this week that we celebrate those who have dedicated their professional lives to shaping young minds. We thank all teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators for their invaluable work and for the daily inspiration they provide our students. We acknowledge and thank them for their commitment to bringing out the best in our students and developing a passion for learning that we hope can last a lifetime.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Mayo-Tatchun and I had the opportunity to travel to Watson Lake to observe first-hand what a difference that dedicated, professional teachers make in the lives of young Yukon students during our visit to the rural experiential model. We were told by students at the interview stage of the week that it didn’t matter what mode they took their education in — whether it was by distance learning or personal — the difference in their learning experience was the teacher. It was very, very telling, I think, to both the member opposite and me to learn that from young students.

While I’m on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity to welcome one of those excellent teachers to the Legislature today. I would like to welcome Kim Hart, who is a teacher at Vanier Catholic Secondary School. She also brought members of her school choir here as part of the music school program and we just had the opportunity to listen to the excellent choir in the lobby. Welcome, Kim, and welcome members of the choir as well.

Applause

In recognition of Music Monday

Ms. McLeod: I rise today to pay tribute to Music Monday. At the behest of my colleagues, I will not break out in song.

This national day to raise awareness of the value of music education was established in 2005 by the Coalition for Music Education. Organizers say it’s the world’s largest single event dedicated to this purpose. Following so soon after the Rotary Music Festival, its timing is indeed fortunately timed in Yukon. Several schools take advantage of the work their students do every year to prepare for the festival by offering them another opportunity to showcase their talents in school-based activities and events to mark Music Monday.

Just to mention a few such events in Yukon schools today, Mr. Speaker: Christ the King Elementary School held its annual Rotary review today with instrumental performances on piano and violin and a song or two by the school choir. Members of the Filipino cultural club also performed a traditional dance. A class at Takhini Elementary School sang a fun song and learned about Music Monday celebrations elsewhere in Canada. Hidden Valley students participated in campfire singing during their music class today.

As members know, and as the minister has already shared with us, we were treated to a wonderful choir bomb performance by a very talented group of choristers from the Vanier Catholic Secondary School.

I would also like to remind members that tonight is the annual All-City Band spring concert at the Yukon Arts Centre, featuring music students from Porter Creek and F.H. Collins secondary schools.

Music Monday reminds us of the great value of music education, not only in and of itself, but in terms of many spinoff benefits. It's well-established that music education facilitates children's intellectual and social development. It provides an avenue for self-expression and fosters creativity. It increases attention span. It teaches a sense of empathy.

In closing, I would like to salute all the music teachers in Yukon schools by sharing with you a short poem by that famous and often-quoted writer, "anonymous":

This is why I teach music:
 not because I expect you to major in music,
 not because I expect you to play or sing all your life,
 not so you can relax,
 not so you can have fun,
 but so that you will be human,
 so that you will recognize beauty,
 so you will be closer to an infinite beyond this world,
 so you will have something to cling to,
 so you will have more love, more compassion,
 more gentleness, more good,
 in short, more life.

Mr. Barr: I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Third Party to celebrate Music Monday, which is organized by the Coalition for Music Education in Canada. This is a celebration of music in schools across Canada from coast to coast to coast.

Music is not a frill, but an important part of our children's brain growth. Playing music improves the development of both sides of our brain. We think that when children are introduced to playing musical instruments at an early age, they will almost always perform better than their peers in core subjects like math, science and reading. These same children often go on to be some of the most successful members of our society, including doctors, engineers, inventors, businessmen and businesswomen and, yes, Mr. Speaker, even politicians.

In Yukon, we are fortunate to have amazing music teachers in our public schools, but we also have the wonderful advantage of having Yukon and visiting musicians spend time with our children in school, sharing their music passions, exposing students to a variety of music styles, songwriting and music appreciation. I was just made aware that Mr. Steve Slade and Mr. Mike Stevens have been around the Yukon this last week. Mike Stevens is an internationally known fellow who has played the Grand Ole Opry and has gone to communities throughout the north, especially First Nation communities, sharing his skills and time and being with folks in schools. I also would like to mention at this time Mr. Peter Menzies, who, along with Steve, started music in the schools

several years ago. It has led to the volunteering of people either giving money or donating instruments to schools throughout the Yukon — a shout-out to them.

I have also had the privilege of playing not only in schools, but for an even younger crowd in daycares. It is quite the thing to get to be able to do.

Music entertains us, inspires us and is also a critical component of ongoing therapy for many who are suffering from a variety of illnesses and injuries, including dementia, Alzheimer's, strokes and depression. We know many local musicians who share their gift of music in continuing care facilities, and we thank them for that.

If I could, Mr. Speaker, I would share a song in here — like the Member for Watson Lake — but instead would encourage everyone to take a few moments to listen to their favourite music, sing along with the radio, and sing along with your children, as I had fortunate times with our family growing up on road trips to visit our grandparents.

I would also like to thank the Vanier Catholic Secondary School for the exceptional concert in the YG foyer celebrating music day here in the Yukon.

Applause

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.
 Are there any returns or documents for tabling?
 Are there any reports of committees?
 Are there any petitions to be presented?
 Are there any bills to be introduced?
 Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to use the 2016-17 budget to contribute \$686,000 to support the operation of the Yukon Wildlife Preserve as part of a five-year contribution agreement with the Yukon Wildlife Preserve.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to use the 2016-17 budget to invest \$350,000 in campground and facility improvements, including the development of accessible campsites, infrastructure replacement and staffing.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to follow through with its commitment to Yukoners' health and safety by implementing the final phase of the certificate of recognition program which requires employers to complete an occupational health and safety certification for Yukon government construction contracts below \$110,000 in value.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?
 This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Internet service reliability

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, this past Friday, few Yukoners were surprised to learn that the Yukon has the worst Internet speed in Canada, that the Canadian Internet Registration Authority's test confirmed what Yukon citizens and businesses already know: our Internet speed is terrible — 6.7 megabites per second. In the Northwest Territories, the speed is over twice that at 15.4 megabites per second. This test measured dozens of different indicators of Internet performance, including upload and download speeds. Time and again, this government tells the Yukon how committed it is to diversifying the economy and that it supports the IT sector; yet when it comes to our information technology infrastructure, this government has let the Yukon slide to the back of the pack.

When will the government demonstrate that it understands the needs of Yukon businesses and citizens who require reliable and quality Internet service?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, we've heard many times on the floor here in the Legislature that fast, affordable and reliable — that is what this government is looking for and that is what we are committed to providing.

Yes, we have seen this latest result saying that we are below average and that is the reason that the government presented at the CRTC hearings at the end of April and are recommending that we see an increase in the speed of our Internet here in the Yukon.

Ms. Hanson: The question is: How? When speaking of the long-promised fibre redundancy project on April 25, the government indicated — and I quote: "... discussions are ongoing with Canada with regard to funding that project."

So Mr. Speaker, we've had years of studies, spent over a million dollars and we're still awaiting a solution. To date there is no secured source of funding for the Dempster option — the preferred option of this government. To use a phrase that has become all too familiar with this government: There is no money in the bank for this project.

Can this government assure Yukoners that it has a plan B for the promised secondary fibre optic link if the federal funding is delayed or falls through?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Of course, as I said just moments ago, we understand the importance of fast, affordable and reliable Internet service in the Yukon. We do understand the importance of the IT sector in the Yukon. We are working with the federal government on the northern Dempster fibre link. We are trying to firm up that money through the federal government. We're working with Northwestel. We will continue to work diligently and make this project move forward in the most fiscally responsible way we can.

Ms. Hanson: Clearly Yukoners need to have the government move from talk to action. The minister indicates the preference for the Dempster route. The Dempster route has discontinuous permafrost along with other O&M concerns that present unique engineering challenges. Melting permafrost already creates serious issues on our highway

system and a fibre optic link is a sensitive piece of infrastructure.

The September 2015 Stantec report on the Dempster route advised that there are reliability concerns with the large distance associated with this proposed link to the outside world. It states — and I quote: that shorter routes will "... always provide a higher level of network reliability."

This government is committing to spend \$60 million of public funds to build this vital piece of Yukon infrastructure. If providing a fast, reliable and affordable link is the objective, does the government guarantee to Yukoners that the Dempster route is the best option?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Of course, as the member opposite has pointed out, we have done numerous studies. We're doing the due diligence to ensure that this project moves forward in the most responsible fashion possible. It's important that we do that engineering; it's important that we do the studies and just figure out what is the best way to move forward. We're not just going to go off half-cocked and put something in the ground that isn't going to work. It is important to do that planning, to do that engineering and make sure that this project is done properly.

Question re: In-house apprenticeship program

Ms. White: An apprenticeship is one of the most important things for budding tradespeople's careers and skilled trades are found on many of Yukon's jobsites — the construction workers on our highways, the heavy equipment operators and mechanics in our shops, mines and placer mines and the multitude of tradespeople who build our infrastructure. Post-secondary programs are an essential foundation to working in the skilled trades, but there is no substitute for the real-life skills developed by an apprenticeship that lets veteran workers mentor new ones to learn the skills they will use over the course of their careers.

I would like to start by asking about the government's role in apprenticeship creation. How many apprentices are currently employed by the Yukon government departments?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I'm not certain what the actual number is. I'm quite certain that, at the last report I received from my apprenticeship branch, we had approximately 483 apprentices in various trades throughout the territory. However, we don't track apprentices by place of employment; therefore, I'm unable to provide that information at the present time. I will undertake to try to get the information from the department. If it's available, we will bring it back and publish it here in the Legislature.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that response, but I'm curious — out of the 483 registered apprentices, how many of those work in government? As a journeyman myself, I know the importance of the role that government can play in supporting the private sector in creating opportunities for apprentices to move into Yukon's workforce. Those opportunities come through having enough placements so that new apprentices who are qualified to safely access workplaces can get their hands dirty and work toward their journeyman certification.

How can the Yukon government expect the private sector to take on apprentices when the government isn't doing their own part in the share of the work because they can't even tell us how many apprentices work within the Yukon government?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Maybe the member opposite didn't hear what I had to say. I said that we don't have the numbers here immediately available but that I would undertake to get back to her.

What we also have done on this side of the House, as part of the government, is create a new trades facility at Yukon College. We have our mobile trades trailer travelling around the territory. It was recently in Ross River. During the visit to Watson Lake, the member opposite and I had the chance to talk to the instructor who is teaching a dual credit course of high school students and adults in Watson Lake. We also have a number of other programs that are going ahead — the northern institute on mining facility will soon be ready at the college.

So we're doing a lot to increase the number of people in the trades program here in the territory. As I said, once we get the statistics available — if they are available — for Yukon government, we'll be only too happy to bring that information back.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that sentiment, but without knowing how many apprentices work within the Yukon government, we can't possibly say that Yukon government is doing enough to support the skilled trades. When will the government recognize its very own important role in supporting Yukon's new skilled tradespeople and create more apprentice opportunities within government workplaces?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I guess it's kind of difficult for me to stand up here and say the same thing over and over. We don't have that information. We'll get that information.

We're just rebuilding the tech wing at F.H. Collins to be available not only to F.H. Collins, but to the new francophone school as well. We support the trades in a number of different areas. I know at the present time we have a program operating in Old Crow, so we not only do it here in Whitehorse at the college, but we — in cooperation with the college — offer a number of programs throughout the territory.

To say that the government is not shouldering its own weight in the area of hiring apprentices is simply not accurate. We as a government are fully in favour of hiring people in trades — apprentices — and we will continue to do that into the future.

Question re: Economic outlook

Mr. Silver: An article appeared in *Up Here* magazine over the winter. It was called "Fortune Tellers — Yukon..." The Premier was featured in a section called, "Let's pay our way". In it, it said — and I quote: If the Premier's "dream comes true, by 2026 the Yukon would be sending millions — maybe even tens or hundreds of millions — of dollars to Ottawa in the form of transfer payments. Yes, he wants the Yukon to be so prosperous and self-sufficient in 10 years that

they become a 'have' territory — or in his words, a 'net contributor to Canada.' But, as it stands today, that's an ambitious goal."

Mr. Speaker, no kidding — under the economic leadership of this government, the Yukon's economy has stalled. It has shrunk three years in a row, in fact. The budget tabled this year shows Yukon generating only 12 percent of our total revenue. The rest comes from Ottawa and other sources.

Will the Premier confirm that Yukon generates only one-tenth of its own budget revenue?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Yes, it is a long-term goal of this government, and I'm happy to say that. I'm very proud of the fact that the Premier has said that.

In order to do that, we need to continue to do the hard work that we're doing. We need to continue to diversify the Yukon. We need to continue to do the hard work, the training, and do all of the things that this government is currently doing so that when the economics of the world turn around, the Yukon will be in a better place than it was when we went into this downturn.

Mr. Silver: In the five years that Yukon Party 2.0 has been in office, the needle hasn't moved in terms of generating more local income. It's not continuing — they need to start to do this. In fact, over the last 14 years of the Yukon Party being in office, the amount of local revenue as a percentage of our budget has actually dropped from 13.7 percent to 12.1 percent.

Corporate income tax generated locally over the last year has dropped by almost half. It was down from \$26 million to just \$14 million. We also know that the federal payments from Ottawa have increased steadily in the last five years and are at record levels. So while the Premier likes to paint a picture of the Yukon standing on its own two feet financially, the reality is quite different.

Is the Premier prepared to admit that, or is it just too inconvenient of a truth for an election year?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: It is no secret that world markets are down, as I've said before. It's not just the Yukon, Mr. Speaker, that is in this situation. We see it all across this country and all across the world. That's why I said we continue to do the good work that we do. We continue to invest in infrastructure; we continue to invest in education.

When the economy does turn around in the world — and it will, Mr. Speaker — I'm very confident that the Yukon will be situated in a great place.

Mr. Silver: We are the only jurisdiction in Canada with three years of economic decline. After 14 years of the Yukon Party being in power, we're actually further away from that goal of paying our way forward.

The Premier and the Minister of Economic Development won't admit it because it contradicts their message that the Yukon is a good fiscal manager of our government. That's an inconvenient truth in an election year, and the Premier simply doesn't want to talk about it.

The article in *Up Here* magazine should probably have been entitled "Fantasy Island" as opposed to "Fortune Teller".

Despite years of talk and years of promises, we are as dependent on Ottawa to keep our lights on as ever. Why should anyone believe the Premier's promises of paying our own way? After 14 years of Yukon Party government, the needle hasn't even moved.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: This party has and will continue to stand up for Yukoners, Mr. Speaker. I take note and Yukoners take note that the first question in this session that the Liberal leader put forward wasn't a question, but it was in fact to stand up to defend the cuts in the anticipated transfers from the federal Liberal government.

Mr. Speaker, this party is committed to, more than ever, standing up for our resource industry because we know that, for every mining job that there is in this territory, we see five or six other jobs created in this territory. That's why we will continue to focus on it and we'll stand very proudly for the record that we have had since coming into power.

As I have stated, since 2000, we have seen 6,000 people move into this territory. We've seen unemployment rates drop from being double-digit to being among the lowest in the country. We've seen average weekly earnings continue to rise — in fact, 39 percent between 2000 and 2014. This party, the Yukon Party, will continue to stand up and have a vision for the future to see that we pay our own way and we will do what is right for Yukoners.

Question re: First Nations/government relations

Ms. Hanson: You know, there is one issue in which the Premier is clear. He says he will not be providing financial resources to help implement recommendations contained in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report; however, this year's budget has over \$2 million allocated for what the budget calls "reconciliation" with First Nation governments with a further \$2 million for implementing the Kaska framework agreement — which are apparently linked to these reconciliation discussions. It would seem that the Premier is unclear on the concept of reconciliation. We are either spending money on reconciliation or these agreements are not really about reconciliation. When this question was raised in the past, the Premier refused to answer.

Mr. Speaker, what are the end goals of the Kaska framework agreement and the reconciliation agreement discussions with unsigned Yukon First Nations?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: This government is proud to have signed a framework agreement on reconciliation with the Kaska — something that the NDP failed to do and something that the Liberals failed to do. People for 30 years have tried to reach a reconciliation agreement with the Kaska and we're very proud that it's another example of how this government continues to focus, to work with First Nations and to partner with First Nations.

We will work with First Nations when it comes to the implementation of the calls to action as described through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We're very proud of the work that we have done already. We're proud to see that First Nations will lead us through a proposal that has been jointly tabled to the federal government. This has been a

priority for this government and it will continue to be a priority for this government.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was clear that reconciliation needs to be built on trust. There are no shortcuts to reconciliation. Call to action 47 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission called on federal, provincial and territorial governments to change the way that they interact with First Nation governments, by changing the laws, policies and litigation strategies that reinforce a colonial legacy.

The Premier has said that he accepts the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, yet behind-closed-door negotiations without community involvement continue to occur under the Premier's direction.

Can the Premier explain how the reconciliation agreements currently being negotiated with Yukon and BC First Nation governments advance the principles set out in the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission came out last June with their calls to action, I immediately asked all the departments to come forward, to examine the calls to action and to describe what we have already accomplished to that extent. I have shared that report with Yukon First Nations. We have worked with them. We have asked them to lead as we move forward with articulating a plan to engage this territory on a path to reconciliation.

As we know, reconciliation means many, many things. We all feel that it is the responsibility, not only of the public government and the First Nation governments, but indeed of all Yukon citizens, organizations and service clubs. That is the path that we are on. We are proud to submit a proposal to the Government of Canada along with Yukon First Nations, and we will be very proud to continue to move forward with First Nations on this very important issue.

Ms. Hanson: A key principle of reconciliation is that it cannot occur without a shift in thinking and a change in the way in which government — this government — goes about its business. These agreements that the government says are intended to reduce the social, economic and resource gap between Yukon First Nations and the rest of Yukon are supposedly being done to further reconciliation, yet they are being negotiated in Vancouver boardrooms, disconnected from the communities in which reconciliation is supposed to be taking place.

The notion that reconciliation can take place without the engagement of community members is inconsistent with the principles of reconciliation set out by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Does the Premier really believe that reconciliation can be achieved through negotiations in a distant boardroom rather than in working with all segments of Yukon's communities?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: When it comes to the Kaska — which the leader is implying — we indeed will meet anywhere that they want to meet to work forward. The Kaska wanted to

meet in their offices in Vancouver, so we were very glad to do that. We do support negotiating with the elected members of the Kaska. That is exactly how we are doing it. We have our negotiators who work with their negotiators. This is how public government recognizes the duly elected governments of First Nations. We will continue to work with them. We continue to work with White River as we move forward with reconciliation with them. Truly in this territory, having 11 final self-government agreements is a large — something that has been described by the TRC as being a very important step forward in Canada for reconciliation — something that this territory, again, leads the country in.

Question re: Speech-language pathology services

Ms. Stick: Speech-language pathology is a field of expertise practised by a clinician known as a speech-language pathologist. Speech-language pathologists specialize in the evaluation and treatment of communication, speech delays and disorders, and swallowing and feeding disorders, to name a few. Currently in Yukon, publicly funded speech-language pathologists work with individuals in continuing care, in education and in in-patient treatment at Whitehorse General Hospital, but sadly there are no publicly funded speech and language services in Yukon for adults who are not in hospital or in continuing care.

This is a serious gap in our health services. What steps has this government taken to address this gap in speech-language pathology services available for adults?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I certainly appreciate the question from the member opposite. It gives me an opportunity to thank the many men and women who work in this field throughout the territory, both in the publicly funded component and the private component. I know that I have utilized these services for my son Jack, who has autism, over the past number of years. I have certainly seen an increase in capacity here in the territory in providing that level of services to those individuals who need it.

I know that the Department of Health and Social Services, over the last number of years, has funded private contractors to work with children and youth in providing this level of service. I certainly commend the department for stepping up to the plate and those individuals who provide that level of service. From a personal perspective, I have seen great strides in my son's ability to communicate and look forward to the continued work of those professionals here in the territory.

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, that does not help individuals not in continuing care or not in hospital who require this service. Speech, language, swallowing and feeding disorders can result from a variety of causes including stroke, brain injury and hearing loss. They can be the consequences of serious degenerative diseases such as Parkinson's or ALS. Speech language pathologists can work with patients to evaluate, diagnose, treat and come up with methods to address this broad range of delays and disorders.

Currently, in Yukon, an in-patient receiving those services has no access to publicly funded follow-up services

when discharged from the Whitehorse General Hospital. These follow-up and ongoing services are critical.

Why has this government neglected to provide publicly funded speech therapy to adults once they —

Speaker: Order, please. The member's time has elapsed.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Again I appreciate the member's question. Certainly, as I indicated in my first response, I acknowledge the work that is done throughout the territory by speech language pathologists. I know there is exceptional work being done at the hospital and at our continuing care facilities, and through the Department of Education and through the Department of Health and Social Services and the respect through Family Services for children with disabilities and for those parents who wish to contract those professionals to work with their children.

As I mentioned in my first response, I have a personal connection with this. I have certainly seen the benefits with my son who was non-verbal and now has the ability to communicate with his family, his friends and his peers through the means of an iPad and with a little bit of spoken language. Again, I thank the member opposite for her question and I do thank the men and women who are providing this level of service throughout the territory to those Yukoners who need it.

Question re: Ross River suspension bridge

Mr. Barr: Mr. Speaker, over two years ago the people of Ross River came together to save the historic Ross River suspension bridge from being torn down. After years of neglect, this Yukon Party government had decided to tear it down rather than invest in repairs; however, Ross River residents opposed this and eventually forced the government to take the necessary steps to save the bridge. Yet the Ross River bridge saga continues to drag on as we enter year 3 of the bridge being shut down. The government has requested \$2.7 million for bridge repairs under the Building Canada fund.

Has funding for phase 2 of the Ross River bridge repairs been approved?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: As we know, over the past number of years we have spent over \$1.5 million to stabilize the existing bridge in Ross River and have plans to continue to do repairs on the bridge including adding stairs, repairing the decking of the bridge and replacing the cabling system. That's an application that we have submitted to the New Building Canada fund to the federal government. I tabled a list of projects earlier this Sitting, which included that list. The simple answer is no, we have not heard back yet from the federal government as to whether or not that has been approved. I hope to hear back from the federal government soon. We have made it very clear to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities and our colleagues in Ottawa that we are eager to see these projects that we have submitted get approved, and we look forward to moving forward on it once we hear.

Mr. Barr: The Ross River bridge is more than just a tourist attraction. The bridge provides much needed access to residents, hunters and prospectors to the far side of the river during spring thaw, winter freeze-up and when the ferry is not running. It also represents a cultural link to the people of Ross River to the old town site of Tu Lidlini. The bridge has been closed for two years. That means two years of reduced access across the river. This wouldn't be acceptable if it happened in Whitehorse so why is it okay in Ross River?

Can this government give the people of Ross River a firm timeline for when the suspension bridge will be reopened?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: No, I can't give a firm timeline because I don't know when the application will be approved by Canada. Once that funding is approved by Canada, we can move forward and hopefully do the work expeditiously. My understanding is that if we do have approval we would be able to complete the work in a building season, but that's assuming we get approval soon enough. It depends when the federal government will approve it.

We've made clear to the federal government that we want to see these projects approved expeditiously. We applied a number of weeks and months ago, depending on the project. With this particular one, I'm not sure when the application was submitted, but it was probably in March or February. My understanding is that the application is sound and that the federal government hopefully will approve it very soon.

Once we hear from the federal government on the funding, we will inform the residents of Ross River when the work will begin.

Mr. Barr: It is not lost on the people of Ross River that their bridge has sat closed for two years while the government drags their feet on repairs. Meanwhile they see the government's reaction to deficiencies on the Miles Canyon bridge closed and reopened in less than a year and a request for tender is currently underway for the permanent rehabilitation work. Quick government action on the Miles Canyon bridge is praiseworthy, but the people of Ross River are still wondering when their bridge will be fixed. What it comes down to is priorities and the will to get things done. The government has demonstrated it is capable of getting things done with the Miles Canyon bridge, but the same cannot be said about the Ross River bridge.

Will this government commit to making these repairs with or without the New Building Canada fund?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I don't think it's a fair comparison to use Miles Canyon as an example. That was a significantly less costly fix that was required, but in this particular case we have stepped up to the plate and responded exactly as the community has asked us to. We've stabilized the bridge — spent over \$1.5 million to date stabilizing the existing bridge. We have plans to begin the next phase of that work as soon as we get our funding application approved by the Government of Canada.

We don't know when that will be; obviously we hope it's soon. Once we get the money flowing from Ottawa, we'll be able to conduct the repairs to the bridge and open it again to the residents of that community.

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. 99: *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 99, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Pasloski.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I move that Bill No. 99, entitled *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It is moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 99, entitled *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: It is indeed my pleasure to introduce Bill No. 99, the second act to amend the *Income Tax Act* and regulations. This bill is the epitome of why, this year in particular, waiting for the federal budget before tabling our budget was the prudent and fiscally responsible decision. In Canada, every province and territory relies on the federal *Income Tax Act* to varying degrees for the administration of their respective income tax acts. Taxpayers benefit from a single administration of all income tax acts.

Could you imagine, Mr. Speaker, individuals and businesses having to complete up to 14 income tax returns with different definitions of income from every province and territory as well as the federal government? Yukon is without a doubt the jurisdiction that has harmonized our tax system with the federal government to the greatest degree. We have generally the same brackets and the same credits; we differentiate ourselves on tax rates. This has been the intention, as we believe there is benefit for taxpayers by simplifying the tax system. Simplification is beneficial not only for the purpose of filing tax returns, but for planning to reach financial goals, such as retirement planning.

One attribute that is universally seen as desirable in tax systems is certainty. Tax systems that are radically changing make it difficult for individuals and businesses to have confidence in their plans for the future. The new federal government promised extensive changes in their first budget. It was only prudent to wait to see how disruptive those changes would be for Yukon.

This bill responds to federal plans to phase out and then eliminate the children's fitness tax credit and the children's arts tax credit. However, before I discuss these credits, I want to discuss another tax measure in the federal budget. I would like to discuss the impact of the change to the northern residents deduction and the process, or lack of process, in making that decision.

The federal budget proposes raising the northern residents deduction residency amount by 33 percent, from \$8.25 to \$11 a day. We are in full support of this change, as it recognizes the unique challenges of living in the north. We estimate this

measure will put an additional \$6.3 million in Yukoners' pockets. However, the unique aspect of the change to the northern residents deduction is that it represents a change to what is referred to as the common tax base in Canada.

The common tax base, to grossly simplify, is the determination of taxable income that all provinces use to apply their incomes taxes against. It is basically total income less deductions before credits. Changes to the common tax base should be a matter of federal, provincial and territorial cooperation. Of the \$6.3 million saved by Yukon taxpayers, \$2 million is coming from the Yukon treasury without any consultation and transitional assistance when the federal government unilaterally changed the tax base. This is impacting every province and territory except for PEI, but obviously impacting the three territories the most proportionately. An unplanned imposed \$2-million cut to our treasury on the heels of the cuts to the territorial formula financing grant are not examples of sunny ways, Mr. Speaker. Fortunately, our prudence and strong fiscal management has enabled us to quickly respond to these challenges as demonstrated by our budget presented to this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to return to the specifics of this bill. Our government has been quite clear in our support of these two tax credits. Our government introduced the children's fitness tax credit in December of 2007, enabling families to claim a credit related to children's physical activities up to \$500 per year. In October 2012, we introduced a similar credit for children enrolled in music, arts and tutoring activities. In October 2014, the maximum amount per child that could be claimed for the fitness credit was doubled to \$1,000 per year. In March of 2015, the fitness credit was changed from being a non-refundable tax credit to a refundable credit, enabling families with incomes too low to incur taxes to benefit from this credit. Parents with children with disabilities are entitled to additional amounts when claiming either credit. The two credits' eligibility criteria and the amounts are determined by way of reference to the federal *Income Tax Act*. The federal budget released on March 22, 2016 proposes to reduce both credits by 50 percent in 2016 and eliminate the credits entirely in 2017. Without amendments to the Yukon *Income Tax Act*, Yukon equivalent credits will be phased out in a similar manner.

Mr. Speaker, we believe these important activities should be supported through the tax system; therefore, we are ensuring the continuation of the Yukon credits with this legislation. There are approximately 1,700 families claiming the fitness credit and 650 claiming the arts credit. These credits save taxpayers approximately \$96,000 and \$25,000 annually.

Before I close, Mr. Speaker, I want to just acknowledge the fine work of our Finance department that they do each and every day and for the due diligence that they did putting this together in cooperation with our legislative writers in the Department of Justice.

Ms. Hanson: I'll just speak briefly to this. I think that the Minister of Finance has outlined his interpretation of the

provisions that the federal government has implemented through their federal budget. We had spoken at length over the last while — last year in particular — when we spoke about the nature and the importance of taking a progressive approach to taxation and ensuring that more, rather than fewer, are able to benefit from the instruments that government has available to assist people — and it is clear by the numbers that the Premier tabled that basically those who have, get, and those who do not, do not. If you have the money to be able to fork out for expenditures for either arts or sports, that's great — they'll get a credit on top of everything else.

The reality is — and I think that what we have expressed previously in this Spring Sitting — that the proposed revamped approach from the federal government with respect to ensuring that a larger segment of the Canadian population with children will be able to benefit with a net increase to their income — non-taxable, Mr. Speaker. We are not going to challenge the Finance minister on this, but the fact of the matter is that the notion that we keep taking a little bit here and a little bit there from the territorial treasury — this is a choice that is made, as opposed to doing it in a more progressive manner that would actually, as the federal child benefit does, provide that cash in hand. It really begs the question — as these little boutique cuts have been made over the last 15 years — whether or not that is in fact what is driving the Minister of Finance to do his what he calls “innovative budgeting” to try to find the \$2 million that may make him come close to having a balanced budget at the end of this fiscal year.

Mr. Silver: I will be very brief in second reading of the *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016*. This tax credit is beneficial to many households with children in the Yukon, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately it does not benefit all parents, especially those in a lower-income bracket. The deduction is basically negligible for houses with low-income tax brackets. They are usually the ones needing most of the support.

Art and fitness programs have been proven to help with a child's psyche and promote creativity, interaction with peers, integrity, and overall confidence and self-worth. We need to support families with children to give them all equal opportunities.

It will create a well-rounded and inviting community for our children and I do understand the benefit of these taxes. Because it is a step in the right direction — supporting many parents with children — I will be supporting this bill that will continue the children's art and fitness tax credits. I'm looking forward to the debate in Committee of the Whole.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the indulgence of my colleagues to speak at second reading.

I just wanted to speak briefly in favour of this bill. It is one that we have discussed a little bit during this session. We debated a motion a few weeks ago put forward by my colleague — the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin — about the role of these credits at the federal level and encouraged the

federal government to continue with those federal credits under the children's fitness and art tax credit program.

That motion did pass. Of course the NDP didn't support that motion. The Liberals — it seemed — reluctantly did. This is the Yukon government's response to those federal changes. The tax credit has been reduced and ultimately will be eliminated by the current federal government, and we are trying to do our part to ensure that this does continue in some measure.

This is not the first time we have changed the *Income Tax Act* over the last few years. As the members will recall, we have consistently changed the *Income Tax Act* to reduce the tax burden on Yukoners by providing sweeping tax cuts for all Yukoners in the past years. We have also changed a number of tax measures to reduce the tax burden for Yukon businesses as well as many others. This is just another step forward for us in our overarching plan for the tax system in Yukon to ensure that Yukoners have low taxes and competitive tax regimes and that Yukoners can benefit from healthy choices like having kids in arts and recreation programs.

As the minister responsible for sport and recreation, I obviously support this bill. I know I have heard tremendous feedback from groups like Sport Yukon and others working in the sport field that want to see these tax credits continue. I know that I have spoken to parents who have accessed these credits at the federal level and they very much appreciate them. They certainly help with encouraging their kids to participate in those sorts of programs.

Also, as an MLA, I certainly support this bill as well. I know a number of my constituents have accessed these tax credits and have expressed to me that they would like to see them continue. Both as minister and as an MLA, I am very much supportive of this bill and look forward to seeing it passed so that my constituents and all Yukoners can benefit from this excellent tax credit program.

Speaker: Does any other member wish to be heard?
Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. Stick: Agree.

Ms. Moorcroft: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Barr: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for second reading of Bill No. 99 agreed to

Mr. Elias: I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 99, entitled *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

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

Bill No. 99: *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 99, entitled *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016*.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: It is my pleasure to speak to Bill No. 99, an act to amend the *Income Tax Act*. This bill before the House is a short and simple piece of tax legislation designed to ensure the Yukon children's fitness tax credit and the Yukon children's arts tax credit are maintained at current levels while the federal government reduces their credits by 50 percent this year and eliminates them entirely next year.

Section 2 of Bill No. 99 deals with the Yukon children's arts tax credit. The credit is enabled by the Yukon *Income Tax Act* subparagraph 6(29)(c)(ii), which references, another other items, the federal equivalent credit found in section 118.031 of the federal *Income Tax Act*.

Since the federal credit isn't being eliminated entirely for a year, the most eloquent drafting solution involves removing the reference to the federal credit in subsection 6(29). This

section enables other Yukon tax credits and will remain otherwise unchanged. A new subsection 6(30) is added, which essentially states that the Yukon child arts credit will contain the characteristics such as eligibility criteria and the amounts as found in the federal act and associated regulations in 2015.

Section 3 of Bill No. 99 deals with the Yukon children's fitness tax credit. The credit is enabled by the Yukon *Income Tax Act* paragraph 9.01(1)(c), which references the federally equivalent credit found in section 122.8 of the federal *Income Tax Act*.

The solution for preserving the fitness credit is the same as the arts credit with the sole difference that the new paragraph is not required since paragraph 9.01(1)(c) does not reference other existing credits.

Bill No. 99 includes a few minor consequential amendments designed to preserve the federal Minister of National Revenue's obligations to assess returns containing the refundable children's fitness tax credit. We believe these important activities should be supported through the tax system; therefore, we are ensuring the continuation of the Yukon credits with this legislation. There are approximately 1,700 families claiming the fitness credit and 650 claiming the arts credit. These credits save Yukon taxpayers approximately \$96,000 and \$25,000 annually.

Of course, maintaining the arts and fitness credits is in addition to the support provided through the Yukon child benefit program. Enhanced in 2015, the program provides lower-income households with \$820 per child, up from \$690 before the enhancements took effect on July 1, 2015.

I also — just for comment — find it interesting and I look forward to voting on third reading on this bill. As we know, on April 13, our Member for Vuntut Gwitchin tabled a motion that stated: "THAT this House urges the Parliament of Canada to recognize the importance of encouraging families to adopt healthy lifestyles by fully reinstating the children's fitness tax credit and the children's art tax credit." The record shows that all members of the New Democratic Party voted against that motion. They did support this legislation at second reading. We look forward to seeing whether the Official Opposition continues to support this legislation at third reading.

I also, for the record, want to take a moment to talk about the tax changes that have occurred under the Yukon Party government. This will be the 15th amendment that we have made to the Yukon *Income Tax Act*. As we have stated in the past, each time it is to reduce the tax burden either for Yukon taxpayers or for Yukon small businesses.

To briefly summarize: on May 1, 2003, the Yukon government extended the temporary Yukon mineral exploration tax credit until April 1, 2004. On May 18, 2004, we further extended the temporary Yukon mineral exploration tax credit until April 1, 2007. On December 14, 2004, the Yukon government lowered the small business tax rate from six percent to four percent effective January 1, 2005 and raised the small business tax deduction limit to \$400,000 from \$300,000 effective January 1, 2007. On December 6, 2005, we provided a one-time energy rebate of \$150 effective January 1, 2006 to low-income Yukon families who were entitled to

receive the quarterly GST rebate. On December 19, 2005, Yukon government harmonized Yukon tax brackets with the federal brackets, representing an annual savings to taxpayers of approximately \$473,000 per year. That speaks to the efficiencies of harmonization.

On May 24, 2006, a minor amendment to the Yukon mineral exploration tax credit set a cap on the maximum entitlement to \$300,000 for the last year of the program. On December 13, 2006, we doubled the pension income credit, increased the personal exemption credit and the eligible dependent credit, and introduced credits for adoption expenses, public transit passes and employment income. On December 13, 2007, the Yukon government introduced the Yukon child fitness tax credit and the Yukon child tax credit. On December 31, 2007, we increased the Yukon child benefit from a maximum of \$37.50 per child per month to \$57.50 per child. On November 9, 2010, we modernized the dividend tax credit provisions in the *Income Tax Act* and increased the small business tax deduction limit to \$500,000 from \$400,000 effective January 1, 2010. On December 6, 2012, we established the children's arts tax credit. On May 8, 2014, the Yukon government lowered the small business tax rate by 25 percent — from four percent to three percent — effective July 1, 2014. On April 30, 2014, Yukon government lowered all existing tax brackets, eliminated the surtax, increased the Yukon child benefit and changed the children's fitness tax credit to a refundable credit.

Those were 14 examples. This one that we have now tabled would be 15.

Ms. Hanson: I rise to speak on Bill No. 99, entitled *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016*. I just wanted to reflect on a couple of the comments that were made by the Minister of Finance.

I have a couple of questions, but I just wanted to reflect on this notion that he has — that is sort of a contradictory message that he delivers on a regular basis, which we've become quite inured to. The fact of the matter is that what we've heard over and over again is that this is a Minister of Finance who talks about being a net contributor to Canada and yet has, by his actions and his failures to create an environment conducive to business investment — and I heard this again this morning at a meeting where any resource sector, for example — but that's not the only kind of business investment that we need in this territory — considering or had in the past considering investing here is taking a very jaundiced view of it because of the tendency of this government to create an environment where it's one of uncertainty with respect to whether or not you can make a go of it because of the divisive nature that the government has created or their unwillingness to fulfill their obligations under the land claims agreements et cetera.

The decisions run contrary to what we know and would expect of a government that's trying to create those local businesses that in fact can bolster the economy through the creation of jobs where people actually pay personal income tax to support the public services that we all come to need and to enjoy in this territory and that cause this territory to be the

kind of community that people want to live in. The decisions by this government to award contracts to Outside multinational corporations, thereby minimizing or eliminating the number of locally sourced employees; income tax paid territorially; people making purchases; local multiplier effect — all drastically reduced in terms of the economic implications for dollars that this government has.

What we're seeing increasingly is that this government has lost sight of the fact that for 13 years they have had the opportunity to act like a province and yet they continue to act like an administrator of federal programs, making these decisions so that instead of looking at how they could maximize those federal transfers, they minimize them. When the minister opposite talks about his notion of — and it's really based on the ideology that all tax is bad and so he touts tax after tax that he has cut — I have to ask him: At what point does he think that he is ever going to translate some fiscal capacity to be able to become this net contributor to Canada?

I have some specific questions for the minister with respect to this particular bill. I would like to ask him in terms of the economic modelling that was done — he has referenced the number of families and certainly that information was provided in previous briefings. What I would ask the minister to do is to confirm the number of children — first of all, confirm the age range for eligibility for this credit; second, the total number of children in that age range in the Yukon who will benefit from this credit; and third, the percentage of children and families represented by the total number of tax filers in the Yukon.

If we're looking at the number of children in the Yukon, how many children have been benefitting or what percentage do they represent in terms of the Yukon total population of children whose families are eligible for this tax credit? If the minister is true to his word, it's really about whether or not children are actually accessing these benefits. I would imagine that the minister would have made an informed decision when he determined that this was a course of action that he wanted to take and he would know the number of children who would actually benefit from this and what percentage they form of the total youth population. I'm sure he would look at — or has that modelling been done based on the Yukon Bureau of Statistics? Even if he only has it as of September 2015, I would be quite happy with that number as opposed to the end of the calendar year or the end of the fiscal year. Whichever year he can provide, that full-year data would be helpful — and what the forecast is beyond 2017 in terms of, again, looking at the Bureau of Statistics population forecast for the eligible age range for this tax credit benefit.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I think part of what we heard from the Leader of the NDP really speaks to the significant ideological differences that exist between the NDP and the Yukon Party. The Yukon Party believes that now more than ever, we need to stand up for the resource industry and we are proud, Madam Chair, that there is one party in this territory that actually aspires to a longer term vision, a path to prosperity and a goal of being able to pay our own way, which

is something that we very much believe in and will work every day toward reaching that goal. Of course, that goal is not in the near term, but unless we actually put that out in front every day, it's difficult to — Madam Chair, you put it out in front of you every day and it helps you determine the decisions that you make. It's very important.

I think really one of the things that we do see and hear is that, not only the NDP's but also the Liberals' view of diversification is quite simple. Their view of diversification is to replace resource jobs. That's how they would diversify, whereas the Yukon Party wants to add jobs over and above the resource sector. I think that is a significant difference between the Yukon Party, the territorial NDP and the territorial Liberal parties.

Having said that, we continue to make significant investments across the board — I just think of the IT sector, the knowledge economy, where we're increasing our envelopes from \$6.5 million to \$9.5 million this year. I'm looking at the work that's going on as we move forward from Yukon College to creating a Yukon university and the tremendous work that exists through the Yukon Research Centre. We continue to look for opportunities to find areas within the economy that will allow us to continue to grow regardless of what happens in a cyclical mining industry.

Again, for all the 6,000 people who live here now who were not here when the Yukon Party took over in late 2002 — just a reminder of what we saw after a successive NDP and Liberal government and some of the significant policies — like a protected areas strategy, to name one off the top of my head — we saw a mass exodus of population, mostly people in their prime working years of 25 to 45 years of age, who left this territory. We saw massive unemployment — double-digit unemployment — at a point where, sadly, this territory was borrowing money just to pay wages.

We will continue to keep our focus on the resource sector. We know that, for every job that's created within the mining industry, it will produce anywhere from five to eight jobs in the rest of the economy. That is a large part of how we will get to our goal of becoming a net financial contributor, of paying our own way. It is through a strong, vibrant, growing, responsible resource sector — that's how we will get there. Again, I will say that this party will continue to stand up even more so for that industry at a time when it definitely needs that support.

To answer the member opposite's questions, 16 years of age is the age for eligibility — that's my understanding — for the tax credits. Of course, we know that children don't file taxes, so for the information she is requesting I will ask the deputy minister, who I rudely did not introduce when we started. I would like to recognize that Kate White is here and, again, I thank you for your support and the great work of your department.

We'll endeavour to provide that information, extrapolated as best as it can be from the tax information that we collect. As we continue to focus on creating opportunities to grow our economy, that will also mean, as we've seen in the past decade, a growth in population and therefore, I would suggest,

a greater utilization of these two credits, as I could echo the remarks of the Minister of Community Services that we have heard from many people who are supportive of these tax credits for fitness, as well as arts, tutoring and music. The numbers show 1,700 families claiming the fitness credit and 650 claiming the arts credit and, between them, they save taxpayers \$96,000 and \$25,000 respectively every year.

Ms. Hanson: The difference — as we've said repeatedly on this side of the House — is that we believe in evidence-based decision-making. So when I asked the Premier — I asked the Finance minister — I was clear that I was not talking about children filing income tax — really.

I was asking him about the children who are affected by this tax credit so I would have expected him to have that evidence. He has every bit of data at his behest.

In fact, when he quotes that the population is soaring in this territory, he may want to look at his own data. The Yukon Bureau of Statistics has shown in fact that the population has declined since 2014, through various numbers. I am sure that he can — those decreases do in fact have a material impact on the territory over time.

Madam Chair, I am not going to belabour this because I think that what we hear from the Premier is that, rather than him wanting to address the particulars just of this tax measure — is to trot out the same old shibboleths of party mantra. I would point out yet again that Standard & Poor's has made it clear in their reports that the actions of this Yukon Party government have narrowed the fiscal flexibility of this government increasingly over the last 13 years to the point that, if and when the government actually wanted to act like a government and make independent decisions based on the priorities of Yukon citizens, our fiscal flexibility is about 15 to 16 percent of our overall total budget or revenues. The revenues that we have in this territory become more and more inflexible in terms of predetermined requirements — non-discretionary, in other terms.

Madam Chair, I think we will just leave it at that because I really do not want to hear any more of the same Yukon Party — if he will not give me the information — if he cannot tell me the total number of children in the age range of the 16-and-under that he mentioned who will benefit from this and what percentage of the total number of children in that age range of under-16 who are represented in terms of Yukon children — I mean, it's just useful information to determine the comparative value of this kind of measure being written into law, as opposed to any other means.

Thanks, Madam Chair — and we will be happy to move on.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: By way of technology, I have part of that answer for the member opposite already.

For the 2014 tax year, there were 2,839 children who benefited from the fitness tax credit. Madam Chair, that is approximately 46 percent — almost half of the children — in the eligible age group who were actually able to subscribe to the fitness tax credit. I would say to the member opposite that it is a significant number of children and families who were able to use this tax credit — a refundable tax credit, I might

add. It will benefit those people whose incomes are low and those who don't pay taxes will also see a return as a result of this being a refundable tax credit. I think it truly does speak to how important Yukoners and Yukon families feel about this tax credit.

Chair: Does any other member wish to speak in general debate?

We are going to move on to clause-by-clause debate.

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Clause 3

Ms. Hanson: In clause 3(2), the expression “federal child fitness credit” is replaced with the expression “notional federal credit”. What is the implication of that?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: The federal child fitness credit ceases to exist at the implementation of the federal budget 2016 amendment. This provides for the continuation of the Yukon child fitness tax credit after the federal credit ceases.

Ms. Hanson: I am curious as to the language “notional federal credit”. If one is ceasing, why do we have language that says “notional federal credit”?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: It is because it occurs in the past.

Ms. Hanson: It occurs in the past tense or it has occurred in the past?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I believe I did mention this in my Committee opening statement — “in the past” in that it refers to 2015. That's correct because they are changing it for the 2016 tax year. It is “in the past” in that it will refer to as it was described in 2015 prior to them making amendments to the federal legislation.

Ms. Hanson: That clarifies that. How does that jive with section 3(3): “This section applies to the 2016 and subsequent taxation years.” If it is the past years, is it the future years too?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: This ensures that the Yukon child fitness tax credit continues on at the maximum of \$1,000 per child.

Ms. Hanson: So 3(2) says that it refers to the past, 3(3) makes this year and subsequent years, and the question still stands with respect to the language “notional federal credit”.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Maybe I will just try to go back to the notes that I said at the beginning of committee. Since the federal credit isn't being eliminated entirely for a year, the most eloquent drafting solution involves removing the references.

What we're doing is, as the federal government phases out 50 percent in 2016 to zero in the calendar year of 2017, we're ensuring that the Yukon portion of this credit remains as it was in 2015, in relation to the federal tax — that it remains at \$1,000 and remains as a refundable tax credit. We want no change to the Yukon portion of what had existed prior to the federal government making amendments through its budget 2016.

Ms. Hanson: I'm just unclear on the language used. We're talking about a Yukon tax credit, but we're talking

about it being a notional federal credit. I'm just looking for clarity as to the language of "notional federal credit". As I understood it, this is an amendment to the Yukon tax legislation.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: What we're talking about is that, by the time we get to 2017, there will be no record of this in the federal tax legislation. That's why it's described as it is. That was the necessity for us to make these amendments, to ensure that the Yukon portion of these tax credits will remain as they were in 2015.

Clause 3 agreed to

On Clause 4

Clause 4 agreed to

On Clause 5

Clause 5 agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Madam Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 99, entitled *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Pasloski that the Chair report Bill No. 99, entitled *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Mr. Elias: Madam Chair, I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Elias that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 99, entitled *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Bill No. 21: *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 21, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Pasloski.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I move that Bill No. 21, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 21, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I am pleased to introduce Bill No. 21, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, along with a companion budget document, the 2015-16 *Supplementary Estimates No. 2*.

Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature will have noted that a special warrant was issued February 5 in the amount of \$15,640,000. There may be critics who suggest that a warrant was not necessary — that a warrant does not represent open and accountable government. As I have stated in previous comments before the Legislature, my colleagues and I take very seriously and respect the importance of effective processes and procedures in support of our decision-making responsibilities. We prepare and table budgets based on the best and most current information at that time — notwithstanding, the best-laid plans are subject to change, Mr. Speaker, and we know that they always do. Changes to the budget plan through the supplementary estimates allow us to be responsive to emerging pressures and priorities of importance to Yukoners. Changes to the budget plan through the supplementary estimates maintain accountability to the Legislative Assembly and to all Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, as identified in the *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, the 2015-16 *Supplementary Estimates No. 2* provides for sums required of \$15,640,000. The sums required are offset by sums not required of \$34,448,000. In accordance with the *Financial Administration Act*, the amounts authorized by the special warrant are identified in the *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16* and summarized in schedule C.

Mr. Speaker, while the Legislature conducts its business, the amount authorized by special warrant ensures that government officials had the requisite legal authority to make expenditures delegated and entrusted to them to provide for uninterrupted government operations while Bill No. 21 is debated in the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, the second supplementary estimates detail the proposed expenditure changes that require legislative appropriation authority in addition to the spending authorities previously granted by the Legislature. Although I defer to the individual ministers on the details, I will take a moment to comment on our summary financials reported here today.

Mr. Speaker, *Supplementary Estimates No. 2* presented a forecast annual surplus of \$1.235 million, resulting in an estimated accumulated surplus for March 31, 2016 of just under \$1.354 billion; and continuing to avoid net debt, our year-end net financial asset position is projected at \$131.728 million.

I wish to emphasize for all members the significance of having net financial assets as opposed to net debt. This is a very significant indicator of our financial health and it means that the government is not relying on future revenues to provide current services. This is an enviable position as we continue to provide financially sustainable programs, services and infrastructure on behalf of Yukoners.

While most provincial and territorial governments have net debt, meaning they owe more than they are currently capable of paying, that is not the case in Yukon. We have the

cash and other financial assets to pay off all of our obligations. This is significant, as it allows our government to be flexible in timing our investment decisions. Our very healthy net financial resource position has provided and will continue to provide our government the opportunity to make significant capital and program investments to the benefit of all Yukoners.

As I have noted, ministers who are requesting supplementary budget approval will be pleased to provide members of the Legislature with the complete details of their expenditure requirements in a department-by-department, line-by-line review in general debate, if requested.

I would also like to take an opportunity again to recognize and to thank our Department of Finance for the great job that they have done and acknowledge the work of the finance people in all the departments who were required — even for the supplementary estimates — to put it together. Again, it's acknowledging the work of those great people who work for us every day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Finance minister, I commend the supplementary estimates for consideration by the Legislative Assembly.

Ms. Hanson: I believe that the Minister of Finance has demonstrated yet again, for the fifth straight time in a row, the problem that he has with managing — both in his ability to forecast additional expenditures as well as an inability to manage planned expenditures — those that had been approved by this majority government in the last fiscal year. I don't intend to comment at great length. The fact of the matter is that this government has demonstrated by this bill their inability to set clear objectives and/or program goals and/or implement those that it does establish or put in place.

The difficulty is that it's rather rich to talk about not relying on future revenues to provide current services when we see a government that doesn't base its decisions on evidence, but has shown by its repeated need to come back to get after-the-fact authority for the expenditure of dollars after the money has been spent — after they put their majority rubber stamp on expenditures already made. We know that the truth will only become known or confirmed after the fact when the Public Accounts are tabled or published later this fall.

The fact of the matter is that when the Minister of Finance says that we're not relying on future revenues to provide current services, the picture painted by this government in fact contradicts that when we look at the forecasts for this year, as an example, where we have an as yet unknown massive increase in O&M funding for an as yet not completely costed major capital expenditure — the facility at Whistle Bend.

So for the minister to suggest that the surplus that he has worn down from over \$80 million to \$1.235 million — I love the precision and will love to see how that looks in the fall — notwithstanding that he has left off that \$187.5 million in debt from our Crown corporations that the actions of this

government have saddled Yukoners with to be paying in the future.

What we have seen is a demonstration of an inability to develop a plan, much less stick with it. One of the things that we go back to talking about — as he said, the best-laid plans change and we know they always do. Unfortunately, Yukoners do know all too well that with the Yukon Party, the priorities and the plans — best-laid or not — do change; they always do.

I can imagine — when I look at the bill that's before us and I see areas where there is lapsed funding, that if we had a government that actually looked at priorities from the community-based approach, I can imagine citizens in Ross River would have appreciated recognition of the enduring challenges they face, driving the road between Ross River and Faro and the precarious nature of that road with respect to medevacs or even just as a road safety issue, as well as the implications it has for dissuading tourism from that region of the country — or those same citizens, if they thought that it would have been nice, with these lapsed funds on certain areas — the state of the airfield at Ross River or Pelly Crossing — they would wonder why no action was taken in moving "Mount Paz". Or they would wonder, with this almost a million in unspent capital for Yukon Housing Corporation, why there's such a delay in getting repairs done to the capital infrastructure — the housing stock of the Yukon Housing Corporation — with the million and a half in Community Services and the decision made not to respond to the repeated need in the Carmacks community for a viable community centre for their kids to be able to play hockey. We just spent a lot of time talking about the niceties of tax credits for kids for sports and fitness, but if you don't have a hockey rink, it isn't going to be very useful to have that fitness credit. No confirmation, as we heard yet again this afternoon for the community of Ross River, despite the fact that on tourism brochures going back many years and currently, the Ross River bridge is touted as a tourism icon — but we don't think it's a priority to put money into that.

The question that citizens could legitimately ask is: Will this government use its much-vaunted surpluses — wherever they're hiding them — to fund these critical community infrastructure projects?

Again, it's sad to see that the dependency on Canada doesn't decrease, but it is sadder yet to see the dependency on Canada in terms of decision-making — 13 years after devolution of provincial-like responsibilities to the Yukon government. When will the Yukon government act like a province to work with the communities to set priorities and to work with achieving them as opposed to simply waiting for Ottawa to tell them what is available to spend? As I said earlier, Standard & Poor's has just demonstrated and confirmed again that this government has restricted its flexibility by the decisions it has taken. We now have less fiscal flexibility than we have ever had. One would think that they would want to use that to the maximum to try to build an economy that actually has some of our own-source revenues.

There is nothing to commend this. It is the same old, same old, and we will just observe as the government goes on about it.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I am proud to rise to end second reading debate on Bill No. 21. I just have a few comments to make.

To reiterate, as I have said, today — was echoed by the Leader of the NDP. I have, in fact, said it many times: changes can happen and almost always do, because you do your budgeting and planning based on the best information that you have at the time. Inevitably, there are things that can occur. Many times it is beyond the control of the government as well.

The good news — and what Yukoners are thankful for and comforted by — is that there is a Yukon Party in power that has been responsible with the money. We are not asking future generations to pay for programs or services that we are providing today. We are not in that position and, in fact, we are now the only jurisdiction not in that position — not in the position where we are borrowing money to provide services and asking our kids or grandkids — or, in the case of some provinces, it might be six or seven generations to be able to get out of their fiscal imbalance. I will point out for the record, as well, that, because of assertions made by the NDP leader, the Auditor General of Canada every year does fully and completely audit our consolidated accounts and has, each and every year, provided an unqualified position and stated clearly that we are in a net financial position, that our assets exceed our liabilities, and that we have money in the bank. That allows us the flexibility to be able to react as things change and to be able to provide those services without having to mortgage the future. I know that Yukoners are listening and Yukoners across this territory are very grateful.

As I have said in this House many times, families and small businesses have to live within their means and their government should have to do the very same thing. Again, the Leader of the NDP wants to quote Standard & Poor's and talks about reducing flexibility, which is really code for "raising taxes". That is exactly what the NDP are talking about — raising taxes. To describe it in the manner in which the Leader of the NDP has said on the record, we should not really call them "taxes"; we should just be calling them "fees".

Mr. Speaker, when we are talking about financial management — I'm looking at and I have quoted in this House a few times some examples of some of the recent provincial budgets that are going on. We see right now in Alberta with the NDP government — I understand that their revenues are down; our revenues are down as well. What is happening in Alberta is that as revenues have gone down significantly, they have continued to increase their spending. In fact, within two weeks of tabling their budget, their credit rating was downgraded not once, but twice in less than two

weeks. They are now saying that they are going to have created, I believe, just under \$60 billion of debt by 2019. In fact, they had legislation that limited the amount of debt to GDP which they are now going to amend, so that they can in fact exceed the legislative limit that was put in place. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, they are now borrowing money to pay wages today and then asking future generations to pay that money back. We know that would be the path of the NDP and we know that would be the path of the Liberals — that is not the path for the Yukon Party.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 21 agreed to

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 21: *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 21, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Madam Chair, I am not going to forget as I start this time — I would like to acknowledge my Deputy Minister of Finance, Kate White, and thank her again and to thank her department for the incredible work they do every day.

As identified in the *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16, Supplementary Estimates No. 2* provides for sums required of \$15,640,000. These sums required are offset by sums not required of \$34,448,000.

The *Supplementary Estimates No. 2* presents a forecast annual surplus of \$1.235 million, resulting in an estimated accumulated surplus for March 31, 2016 of just under \$1.354 billion and, continuing to avoid net debt, our year-end net financial asset position is projected at \$131.728 million.

Chair: Does any other member wish to speak in general debate?

We're going to proceed now to clause-by-clause review.

Ms. Stick: Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses, schedules and the title of Bill No. 21, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses, schedules and the title of Bill No. 21 read and agreed to

Chair: Ms. Stick has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses, schedules and the title of Bill No. 21, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, read and agreed to. Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 1 and 2 and Schedules A, B and C, deemed read and agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Madam Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 21, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Pasloski that the Chair report Bill No. 21, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Chair: We are going to proceed to general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*. Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

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

Bill No. 23: First Appropriation Act, 2016-17 — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*.

Department of Economic Development — continued

Hon. Mr. Hassard: I would just like to thank a couple of people for being here to help me out today: deputy minister Justin Ferbey — and today we have joining us Andy Gaul, who is our acting ADM.

Madam Chair, when I left off last, I was in the process of talking about Yukon's economy, so with your indulgence, I'll just continue from there.

Yukon's economy depends not only on what happens within our territory's borders but also beyond them. The department represents Yukon's interest in national and international trade negotiations.

Yukon works with other Canadian governments to reduce unnecessary barriers to trade because the free flow of people,

goods, services and investments across Canada supports stronger economies. As a sparsely populated jurisdiction with a number of developing economic sectors, an important objective in negotiations is ensuring that Yukon continues to have the tools necessary to achieve economic strength and diversification.

In 2016-17, we will continue to support business development with transfer payment budgets of \$532,000. The department provides support and stimulates the development and growth of Yukon's small- and medium-sized enterprises to further maximize benefits from large resource development projects and other economic activities.

Last spring, our new enterprise development services unit was put in place to better serve the needs of small- and medium-sized enterprise community. Small- and medium-sized enterprises have access to business development to support, and advisory services through the branch's partnerships with non-governmental organizations and industry associations as well as through direct financial assistance. Clients have been able to benefit from staff expertise and also learn more about potential funding sources.

We've also started administering the Canada-Yukon Business Service Centre in collaboration with the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency to advise and direct clients to business services offered by the Government of Canada. The government's business incentive program was also recently incorporated into this one-stop shop in order to serve Yukoners better.

We're committed to growing the private sector economy. We're acting on that commitment by helping more businesses get the financing that they need to expand. This past year, we recognized that the Yukon venture loan guarantee program could be used by more businesses if it was updated to reflect current interest rates and would help more businesses obtain commercial loans. By extending the Yukon venture loan guarantee program to loans at lower interest rates, more companies can now secure financing to upgrade facilities, increase operations or develop new projects and, of course, hire Yukoners.

The department works to increase the benefits that Yukoners, businesses, First Nations and communities receive from economic projects and activities that take place. Government-to-government meetings are especially important as the federal government considers further infrastructure investments.

Over the past year, the department has supported a number of tourism and business missions. Recently, we accompanied local businesses to Ottawa for Yukon Days. This was a coordinated effort to promote Yukon in Ottawa through Yukon tourism promotion, business events and government-to-government meetings. Yukon First Nation chiefs and local businesses like Air North, Yukon's airline joined the delegation to strengthen relationships between government, businesses and tourism operators as well as to promote Yukon's industry to important partners.

The Yukon government has been pleased to partner with the City of Whitehorse, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce,

Air North, and many Yukon tourism and business operators to generate partnership opportunities.

Seeing that I am about out of time, I will take this opportunity to sit down and let the member opposite speak.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for his introductory comments. I hope that we can move through this budget area by focusing on some of the particular areas and some of the particular questions that arise in the Department of Economic Development. The minister just spoke to a certain degree about the support that is provided to local businesses with respect to a number of events. We have seen travel increase from a number of departments and, notably — and I will link this back to what I have read in the departmental strategic plan.

I have a question: Could the minister outline what travel from Economic Development is projected for this fiscal year? I am presuming this is based on the plan that he has in place as the minister responsible for Economic Development — this is travel related to China, for PDAC, Roundup. For what other key events does the Department of Economic Development provide staff travel? What is the purpose of the travel? What goals are established for that travel? How does the department, the minister, determine the success of that? What retrospective look is taken to determine, basically, the return on the investment for that travel?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: If I could just take a few minutes to finish my opening remarks before I get back to the member opposite regarding the travel, I will.

As I was saying, the enterprise trade fund was developed to stimulate and support the growth of Yukon business activity by focusing on the development or expansion of export markets, attracting investment capital for businesses, and supporting business planning, marketing and business skills and training. The fund has been accessed by businesses from a wide variety of sectors, including the manufacturing, service, cultural, mining, and film and sound sectors. In addition to being available to all Yukon businesses, the enterprise trade fund also accepts applications from for-profit and not-for-profit business-related organizations and industry associations.

From April 1, 2015 to January 28, 2016, we funded 133 projects from Yukon businesses to assist them to expand their export-related operations. In this budget, we are allocating \$360,000 for this important fund. We are also budgeting \$73,000 to continue the microloan program administered by Dāna Nāye Ventures. This program provides loans for the creation of small- and home-based businesses and targets a segment of the market that has not been adequately served by banks because of high transaction costs. From March 2000 to December 31, 2015, 152 loans with a total value of over \$467,000 were disbursed. There are currently 15 active clients.

Other 2016-17 budget item highlights include: Yukon Federation of Labour for \$36,000; Yukon Chamber of Commerce for \$35,000; Yukon Building and Construction Trades Council for \$15,000; the Alaska trade show for \$8,000; and the Business Development Bank for \$5,000.

Madam Chair, in terms of connectivity, a current multi-jurisdictional concern is the state of broadband connectivity here in the north. Of course telecommunications is an important enabling factor in the economy and the Technology and Telecommunications Development Directorate's — or T2D2 — work includes exploring options for improvement. Information and communication technology services are essential for Yukon residents and businesses alike. This sector has an incredible potential as a contributor to a diversified Yukon economy. Further, we believe that the information and communication technology sector and telecommunications infrastructure in the north should be comparable with other areas of Canada in terms of access, service, quality and price. Of course connectivity means modern, affordable and reliable infrastructure, Madam Chair.

Our Department of Economic Development's Technology and Telecommunications Development Directorate has been working hard over the past couple of years to ensure Yukoners get fast, affordable and reliable telecommunication infrastructure and services. For the past two years, this government has conducted extensive research into alternate fibre route options with particular focus of course on the Juneau and Dempster Highway fibre link possibilities. Of course, we have decided that the Dempster Highway fibre link is the route to go in partnership with Northwestel. Of course, we have in the budget this year \$500,000 for next steps in this project. This link will provide the best long-term diversity for Yukon as well as enable diversity of voice and mobility services. This route is the only route that ensures redundancy to most Yukon communities.

As part of this announcement, Northwestel has committed to contributing its own capital to strengthening fibre in the territory, including extending the existing fibre line from Stewart Crossing to Dawson City. This means that, in addition to redundancy, there will be an increase in the number of communities with reliable fibre service. The Dempster Highway fibre link project will build more than 750 kilometres of fibre along the Dempster Highway and connect the Yukon's fibre network with that of the Northwest Territories, providing fibre diversity to both Yukon and the northwestern part of the Northwest Territories. This means that should there be a backhoe cut or fire damage, for example, it will not be as noticeable to residents and businesses along the loop.

Cloud data services, ATMs and credit card machines will remain in operation while the primary line is fixed. Internet access will continue with broadband speeds. This enhanced reliability should provide the confidence for network-dependent businesses to invest and expand here in Yukon.

The Dempster Highway project is a two-year build, with completion anticipated in 2017. Northwestel started the first leg of this project by issuing a tender back in March for the Stewart-to-Dawson link. Both Canada and the Northwest Territories are supportive of northern redundancy, and we continue to work with those governments to explore partnerships. By creating a fully redundant fibre loop, we are ensuring every Yukoner and every Yukon business has access

to reliable Internet service, as well as mobile services, which are increasingly important to Canadians both economically and socially.

As well as Internet connectivity, the Government of Yukon wants to ensure that Yukoners in all communities have access to those same economic and social benefits. The Government of Yukon is providing \$760,000 in funding to Bell Mobility between 2014 and 2018 to assist with the expansion of 4G services in Yukon communities to ensure Yukoners have mobile access that is comparable to the rest of Canada: over \$68,000 in 2014-15, \$438,000 in 2015-16, \$46,000 in 2016-17 and over \$207,000 in 2017-18. As a result of this initiative, 4G mobile service is now currently available in 17 Yukon communities, and 4G service is scheduled to be available in Beaver Creek this year, with service to Destruction Bay and Stewart Crossing scheduled for completion in 2017. 4G service, which allows people to use smart phones, is economically and socially important to Yukoners. By 2017, Yukoners in every community will have access to 4G cellular service.

It is also through T2D2 that the department supports Yukon's research, innovation and commercialization sector as an area of prime strategic importance to our economy. Development of the research, innovation and commercialization sector has a strategic long-term benefit for Yukon, including enabling growth of the private sector, supporting the development of wealth-generating industries and secondary industries, as well as supporting the development of a knowledge-based economy here in the Yukon.

The Department of Economic Development is investing over \$1.1 million in research-, innovation- and commercialization-related projects in 2016-17. \$820,000 of that is budgeted for Yukon College toward support for Cold Climate Innovation and technology innovation at the Yukon Research Centre. The Cold Climate Innovation centre's vision is to become an internationally recognized hub for cold climate technologies and related solutions for the subarctic regions around the world. In turn, this will support the development, enhancement and success of Yukon's technology industries.

As well, Madam Chair, \$302,000 is budgeted toward the technology and telecommunications sector. This includes \$150,000 for the Yukon Information Technology and Industry Society for operational funding and other projects intended to provide a focal point for the industry and to enable the society to act as an advocate for the industry, to provide a forum for industry members, and to promote the industry outside of the Yukon.

As well, Madam Chair, \$75,000 will be provided in continued support to YuKonstruct for their operations, which began last year and will continue in 2016-17. YuKonstruct will also receive funding to complete a strategic planning project, as well as funding for (co)space, which is the first of its kind here in the north.

The Government of Yukon is also participating in the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications

Commission's hearing on basic service offerings, which may fundamentally change the landscape of services.

The Government of Yukon is also investing resources to support the development and diversification of the Yukon information technology sector in funding specific projects that will support the development, growth and diversification of the information and communications technology sector.

Now a little bit more about economic diversity — for example, just as we reach out to mineral industry investors, we also reach out to the film and sound industries to create opportunities for Yukoners and to maximize the economic impact of media production in the Yukon. Our film and sound industry is vibrant and growing. The Yukon Film and Sound Commission will build on its recent activities and successes providing Yukoners with employment and training opportunities and encouraging investment from Outside interests.

A portion of the 2015-16 funding was designated to the film location incentive program, with several productions currently being shot here in the Yukon. Our investment attraction efforts in this sector have increased attention from Outside interests to the Yukon as a film location, with spinoffs to the tourism, hospitality and retail sectors.

Madam Chair, because of this, visitation to the Yukon has increased, and the tourism and hospitality industries are benefiting economically from the spending generated by tourists and film productions. From April 1, 2015 to January 28, 2016, the Yukon film location incentive program provided financial benefits to two projects for over \$673,000 and has an anticipated direct spend to Yukon businesses and crews of over \$2.6 million, Madam Chair. As of January 28 this year, over \$8.3 million has been awarded to 428 film- and sound-related projects and initiatives since 2003. This investment has resulted in direct spending being injected into the Yukon, contributing significantly to the growth of our economy, and we, of course, want to continue the momentum of that growth.

In 2016-17, the Government of Yukon is budgeting \$815,000 toward Yukon Film and Sound Commission transfer payments. Some highlights of this funding include: \$380,000 toward the film production fund; \$140,000 for the film location fund; \$50,000 toward the film training incentive fund; \$50,000 for the film development fund; \$50,000 has been budgeted toward the sound recording fund; and \$40,000 will be available from the filmmakers fund.

These programs provide funding to Yukon producers for projects that have demonstrated commercial potential. The programs also provide financial benefits to production companies from outside Yukon to film in Yukon and hire Yukoners. From April 1 of last year to January 28 of this year, the Yukon Film and Sound Commission approved 36 projects totalling over \$1 million in funding under the film and sound incentive program. Additionally, during this same period, seven film projects were approved for over \$25,000 under the enterprise trade fund program to support Yukoners in seeking additional investment in their projects from outside of the territory.

We are taking on new and innovative initiatives as the environment changes and presents new opportunities for enhancement. As part of our commitment to encourage industry development, film and sound initiative programs are currently being reviewed. Recently, the Yukon Film and Sound Commission launched a pilot producer mentorship program to provide local film producers with knowledge and advice from experts in the field. The program offers up to 15 hours of mentorship that allows writers, directors and producers to access supports as they complete funding applications, develop their business or pitch projects to national and international markets. The Government of Yukon is proud to respond to the needs of our local film industry by offering a mentorship opportunity that will advance Yukon film and media projects.

Moving on to Regional Economic Development — this branch supports a broad range of foundational activities for organizations with a mandate in the area of economic development. The Regional Economic Development branch works with First Nations, local governments, communities and community-based organizations to facilitate strong, economically self-reliant regions and communities. The branch supports social and economic development projects and works with clients throughout the process from project articulation to implementation. Over \$3.3 million has been budgeted toward regional economic development transfer payments for this fiscal year. This includes over \$405,000 for First Nations and regional economic development and over \$2.9 million for the community development fund.

As well as providing advisory and coordination services, the branch financially supports worthwhile initiatives through the regional economic development and the community development funds. The regional economic development fund was established in 2004 to support an inclusive and comprehensive approach to developing regional economic interests. From April 1 of last year to January 28 of this year, 38 projects from Yukon communities were approved for the regional economic development fund for a total of just over \$580,000. These approved projects included: implementation of a municipal economic development strategy; due diligence and feasibility studies of potential First Nation business ventures across a number of sectors, including renewable energy, tourism, transportation, environmental remediation and community economic development, as well as attendance for a variety of stakeholders at networking and educational events.

In August 2015, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the Government of Yukon were pleased to announce the finalization of the *Regional Economic Development Plan for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Traditional Territory*. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in traditional territory regional economic development plan was developed with the assistance of an oversight committee consisting of representatives of the final agreement signatories — Government of Canada, Government of Yukon, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the City of Dawson — as part of regional economic development and opportunity planning initiatives.

The plan presents a long-term sustainable community-based approach to economic development that will lead to increased local spending, increased employment opportunities, growth in existing businesses and the emergence of new businesses in key sectors. The dedication of all involved parties has resulted in a plan that will contribute to the enhancement of local and regional business development with benefits for the entire territory.

Madam Chair, a memorandum of understanding between the participants of the North Yukon Regional Economic Action Development Initiative — or READI initiative — was signed in August 2015 and is now underway. The participants in READI are the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Vuntut Gwitchin, First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun, the City of Dawson and the Village of Mayo, along with the Yukon government. The initiative is a pilot project designed to provide a blend of economic development and business advisory services to north Yukon.

The guiding principles of the north Yukon READI will ensure partnerships and shared oversight of the project, shared resources and decision-making, and community-based planning and deliverables. This project will continue through 2016-17.

Madam Chair, I'll just take a moment and stop there for now.

Ms. Hanson: I'm not sure if we're actually going to have any discussion about the budget or if we're just going to have read the minister's prepared statements. I thought the purpose of this was to ask questions about the Department of Economic Development — questions that may or may not have been covered in the briefing. I guess I'll give it another try. I have one question on the record, and I hope that we will come back to that.

I'll just start backward from where the minister was and we'll come back to the other questions that I have, because where he left off was on regional economic development plans pursuant to chapter 22 of the First Nation final agreements. Yes, indeed, I was there when the READI was finally signed off this winter in Dawson. Can the minister tell the House how many regional economic development plans, pursuant to chapter 22, have been finalized? How many have been completed? Could he name them please, for the record?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: I just have a few more minutes left of my opening remarks. I do think they are important and would like to get them on record today. I'm not ignoring the member's questions, but I think it's important for people out there to understand the work that is being done by the department.

Back to Regional Economic Development — the intended outcomes include coordinated regional economic development plans, a positive long-term plan, long-term impacts on employment and wealth creation, diversified local economies and an inclusive workforce.

Assistance under the regional economic development fund is available for activities related to regional economic development including: assistance in developing regional economic development plans; participation in regional

economic development planning processes; opportunity identification; and related research. The fund also supports activities related to capacity development including: needs assessments; training plans; and corporate organizational capacity training for corporate business, enterprises and economic development organizations. Since inception, the fund has invested over \$4 million in 284 projects.

We can just discuss communities and how we work to strengthen them. The community development fund provides support to Yukon communities, industry and professional associations, non-profit and charitable organizations and municipal and First Nation government projects for projects and events that support community well-being, create jobs, generate spending on Yukon goods and services and have measurable social, cultural and economic benefits for Yukon residents and communities.

The primary goal of the community development fund, or CDF, is to support projects and events that provide long-term sustainable economic or social benefits to Yukon communities. From April 1 of last year to March 1 of this year, Government of Yukon approved over \$3.7 million in funding toward 82 projects throughout the territory.

Some examples of the CDF projects include: \$15,000 for the Association of Yukon Fire Chiefs for training and education tools; \$20,000 to the Copper Ridge Neighbourhood Association to build a playground; \$5,884 to the Mount Lorne Community Association for improvements to the sound tech system and media system; \$19,750 to the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre to develop a comprehensive communications plan and website to strategically target key Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre audiences; \$10,865 to the Yukon Church Heritage Society for research, writing, printing and signage to support the development of a multi-media photo and static display; and \$5,796 to the Yukon Council on Aging to modernize the yukon-seniors-and-elders.org web page, allowing accessibility by all electronic communication devices and desktop computers and giving it an updated look and feel, incorporating a more user-friendly design.

Some examples of projects made possible through the community development fund also include — since 2003-04 the department has provided over \$38 million toward 1,190 community-related projects. These projects have enhanced our communities and the Yukoners who live in our communities. This makes our Yukon region even more appealing.

Madam Chair, the Department of Economic Development plays an important role in the well-being of our territory. The operational budget totalling \$16.4 million and the capital budget of \$1.2 million reflects the priorities outlined. This work is even more crucial during difficult economic times and we will continue to work hard to achieve the goals I have outlined today.

I appreciate the member's attention to detail and further appreciate your support for the resources that will enable Economic Development's continued work on behalf of a vibrant and diversified economy and high quality of life for Yukoners.

Back to the questions regarding the travel — we have a couple of different ways of doing it. We have the investment attraction activities, as well as the investment attraction strategy. In the investment attraction activities — to achieve the Government of Yukon's objective of enhancing the development of Yukon's private sector economy, investment attraction activities focus on the territory's investment-ready sectors: natural resources, technology and tourism. The government's focus has been to promote investment to several key markets around the globe. Over the past year, the Premier and a number of Cabinet ministers have showcased Yukon on the global stage by making presentations to investors at PDAC, the Cambridge House, Colorado Precious Metals Summit and the Yukon Mining Alliance investment tour.

These events provide opportunities for Yukon mining companies to introduce their projects to investors and raise the profile of Yukon's mineral potential and mining projects. In the investment attraction strategy, the department's strategy involves a relationship-oriented approach with the goal of building stable networks between First Nations, industry, government and investors.

The department continues to strengthen existing relationships with First Nation development corporations, industry and industry representatives. This includes a coordinated effort to ensure an effective and consistent promotion of Yukon and its resources.

Madam Chair, the government has recently created a new unit, focusing increasing investment in Yukon, which I mentioned earlier — the investor relations unit. The mandate of the unit includes current investment attraction activities, key after-care for investors once they enter the market, and efforts to promote a competitive business environment within the Yukon.

The travel is broken out across a number of sectors, so there isn't actually one number that can cover all the travel, and there are no specific additional dollars allocated for 2016-17 in terms of travel. In terms of China — as part of its ongoing investment attraction initiatives, the Government of Yukon travels to China to participate in a variety of conferences and meetings. Attracting foreign direct investment is critical to the development of Yukon's economy. The Government of Yukon supports continuing relationship-building and investment work, such as travel to China and hosting inbound Asian investors here in Yukon. Some examples of the annual Chinese investment attraction initiatives include the China mining conference and trade show, Investment Canada forums and PDAC as well.

Now, I am just jumping around, but there were quite a few questions asked all at once.

In terms of foreign investment, the Government of Yukon is committed to encouraging private sector growth and attracting foreign direct investment. Relationship-building activities, such as attendance at these forums and trade shows in Asia, Europe and here in North America and hosting inbound investors to Yukon, have led to significant investments by foreign-based companies in Yukon projects. The department has developed a long-term partnership and

collaboration with the Yukon Mining Alliance. This partnership permits the department to strategically plan investment-attraction initiatives in a manner that is industry-led and government-supported. This has allowed the government to support a large number of mining companies and to maximize its efforts and returns.

I know the member opposite had questions in regard to the north Yukon READI. The north Yukon regional economic action development initiative is a pilot project to provide support and advisory services to north Yukon and, as I mentioned, all of the partners in that. The guiding principles of the north Yukon READI will ensure partnership and co-management, shared resources and decision-making, and community-based planning and deliverables. The First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, as well as the City of Dawson and the Village of Mayo, signed this MOU back in August. The initiative is based on combined financial contributions from the Department of Economic Development, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and the City of Dawson. The First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun will be a non-financial participant in 2015-16, but they have indicated that they will contribute financially in 2016-17. The Village of Mayo has indicated that they may consider contributing financially after the first year as well. The process is that the First Nation would initiate the process and, to date, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in is the only one that has finalized the plan.

I have, as minister, taken the following trips outside of the Yukon: port tour in Skagway on June 17; PNWER in Bozeman, Montana, or Big Sky, Montana, August 10 to 14; port tour in Stewart, BC, on September 21; investment in mining meetings in Toronto on September 23 and 24; mining meetings in Vancouver on September 30 and October 1; oil and gas meetings in Calgary on October 7; PNWER in Yellowknife on November 1; mineral Roundup in Vancouver in January of this year; Winterlude Yukon Days and meeting with federal counterparts or federal ministers in Ottawa at the end of January, and then I went to Yellowknife and met with Premier McLeod as well as Minister McLeod regarding the fibre project at the end of February; and PDAC in Toronto the first week of March.

I think that was all of them, but if I missed any the member can get back to me.

Ms. Hanson: I will come back to a few of those questions. I just wanted to commend the Yukon Party government for continuing with the community development fund. It's good to see that they have invested \$38 million of Yukon taxpayers' into a fund which was created by the NDP — this indicates that it was both sound and visionary when it was created by the New Democrats.

I would like to come back to the question with respect to the chapter 22 plans. I have asked the question in previous budget debate of the minister with respect to regional economic development. I have heard many times in the regions and in particular in Dawson — their concerns that were expressed there — about the lack of presence. So we have this entity within Economic Development that talks

about regional economic development and, as we see by finally getting the fact that the First Nations and the municipal government in that region are working together to develop a regional strategy for economic development, I would have thought that it would have been one of the functions of the Regional Economic Development branch within Economic Development to work to stimulate that interest and to have a presence — one of the undertakings that Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in has invested in here is to actually have a human being who has the lead role here. Economic Development has staff people. Now, how many staff people in Regional Economic Development are actually based in a region outside of Whitehorse?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: There are actually zero RED employees in the regions. It's based out of Whitehorse. Staff travels to the communities, but of course the purpose of the north READI program was to provide funding for people in the region to do that work, not for the government to be there continually — the government is there to support, but the purpose is for the region to have a community-led organization, not a government-led organization.

Ms. Hanson: Absolutely, Madam Chair. I do believe that was the intention of the regional economic development plans that are contemplated in chapter 22, which is why I asked the question in terms of what work to liaise and to facilitate, to ensure that in our regions — one of the issues we face is that once you get outside of Whitehorse, quite frankly, you drop off the face of the system here. The minister's own riding encompasses a vast region of the territory — many of the regions of the territory. Even if we took the land use planning regions that were identified in the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, we would have a basis for beginning to look at regional economic development that isn't simply focused on.

When I talk about regional economic development — and the minister outlined a number of really good objectives for that regional economic development plan or process that will unfold over the next number of years within the northwest region of the Yukon — or central and west region — because they're actually present in that region.

Madam Chair, we hear this time and again. It is not just economic development; it is tourism. If you do not know the community, if you do not live in the community, if you do not have a sense of the pulse of what is going on there — who the players are and what the opportunities are — then how do you put together a coherent approach to the economy and the potential opportunities that are there, unless you are doing it as an administrative exercise from Whitehorse?

What plans does the minister have to stimulate interest toward fulfilling the commitments set out in chapter 22 — in terms of liaison with the regions in this territory, with the communities and with First Nation governments — to achieve some marked progress toward work on these regional economic development plans?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: I guess I don't totally agree with the member opposite. I do not think that we fall off the edge of the world when we get out of Whitehorse. I guess I am getting confused and I'm getting mixed communication when

she is speaking — because I agree that it is very important that these be community-based and they be community-driven because you cannot come from somewhere else and tell someone what they need or how it should be done. If it is not community-driven, then quite often it is a waste of time. I guess I do not understand what the member's question is, because the department provides the funding and the department has the resources. When the community or the organization needs those resources, they are only a call away. The department has people who travel to the communities and to these regions to provide whatever the group may need in terms of training or advice. I guess I'm a little bit confused at where the question is going, Madam Chair.

Ms. Hanson: Maybe I could provide a little clarity, then. Perhaps I could ask the minister: Does he, in his letter of expectation or his expectations of his deputy minister, articulate what his expectations are with respect to this area? Has he set any expectations in terms of performance for the deputy with respect to developing at least a terms of reference in terms of regional economic development and, in turn — in terms of the senior management within the economic development branch — are those part of the performance criteria for the senior public servants there — the deputy and the ADMs?

I say this, Madam Chair, because, again, it goes back to what we've said many times in this House. Until and unless you know what the expectations are, it's very difficult to measure, and then it's very difficult to reward. We're talking about performance bonuses for deputies and other senior public servants. Rather than just having it simply on a bell curve, let's link it to performance.

Does the minister set those expectations — that regional economic development is something that he says is a priority and he expects his department to focus on?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: In the letter of expectation, it talks about diversification of the economy. I would think that this is a very strong example of diversifying the economy.

Ms. Hanson: If it was repeated 11 times or 14 times, it might be, Madam Chair, but one is not strong. One is driven by the community, in particular the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. Thank goodness there was at least a response to it, but I'm looking for something that gives some sense that the minister understands that this is a two-way street.

I was encouraged to hear that there was some work being done to develop a municipal economic development strategy. I'm wondering if the minister could elaborate on that and provide a copy of the terms of reference.

Hon. Mr. Hassard: In regard to the communities, Regional Economic Development staff — this is for the Beaver Creek area — continue to engage with the White River First Nation and other community stakeholders in relation to economic development planning and opportunity identification initiatives. During the course of the year, the regional economic development fund approved \$17,250 to the White River First Nation for planning related to the creation of a development corporation. This project is expected to be completed by August of this year.

The department also approved \$14,951 from CDF for the functional plan of a potlatch house for the White River First Nation, as well as \$19,600 to help develop a community garden. Burwash Landing and Destruction Bay — the department continues to engage with the Kluane Community Development Corporation.

Work continues to advance the community's wind-diesel project through its business planning stages. Of course, this assistance has included advice on the overall development process, the necessary inclusions in a business plan, selection criteria for qualified consultants, the issuing of an RFP by the Kluane Community Development Corporation, and coordination with the Energy Solutions Centre to provide technical assistance. The department has also approved \$47,767.50 in funding to enable the corporation to complete its business plan so that it can attract the necessary financing. This project is expected to be completed in July of this year.

The department has approved \$50,000 to the Kluane Community Development Corporation for a tourism strategic plan, and the goal of this plan is to develop a comprehensive, complementary approach to developing community resources related to tourism, culture and recreation and respective priorities. The project is expected to be completed in September of this year. As well, the department supported the participation of the Kluane First Nation and the Kluane Dana Shāw Corporation at the 2016 Cambridge House investment conference as well as at the mineral Roundup in Vancouver and the First Nation's participation in Yukon Days in Ottawa.

In May 2015, the community development advisor for Destruction Bay was instrumental in identifying the need for an organizing and community meeting together with the Kluane Lake Athletic Association. This meeting was facilitated by an independent contractor with financial support from the Government of Yukon's Regional Economic Development branch. The objectives of the meeting were to identify community priorities over the next one-to-three years and to build commitment and collaboration moving forward on future priorities. Thirty-four community members attended and six community priorities were identified, including three infrastructure capital project ideas. The department approved \$20,000 from the community development fund to the Kluane First Nation for the purchase and installation of a playground at the Copper Joe subdivision.

Building on previous investments in Carcross, the department has provided \$21,172 in financial assistance to the Carcross/Tagish Development Corporation in the current year for feasibility work related to a potential tourism venture. The department also provided \$960 to support the Carcross/Tagish Development Corporation at the mineral Roundup in Vancouver and the First Nation's participation in Yukon Days in Ottawa. Departmental staff made a presentation to chief and council in October 2015 listening to their perspective on economic development and discussing how departmental programming might be able to help them achieve their goals and objectives. The department continues to engage with the First Nation and its development corporation with a view to opportunity, identification and programming assistance.

In Carmacks, the department continues to work with Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation in relation to a community-readiness initiative. Financial assistance provided in the previous, current and 2016-17 fiscal years by the department has enabled the First Nation to successfully design a resource development planning application that was used to access almost \$92,000 in CanNor funding in 2015-16 and an anticipated further \$130,000 in 2016-17.

This funding will help the First Nation plan for resource development across a number of sectors within its traditional territory. Going forward, the department anticipates involvement in a number of related multi-sector planning activities in collaboration with the First Nation. In addition, the community has access \$124,380 through the CDF for projects related to trail-building and community outdoor spaces and knowledge-keeping.

The department also approved just over \$6,000 to support the Carmacks Development Corporation in attending Roundup in Vancouver and PDAC in Toronto as well.

In Dawson City, the department has been working on a number of initiatives with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in as well as the municipality and NGOs. Of course, I talked about the north Yukon regional economic action development initiative, the UNESCO world heritage site nomination process, as well as the signing by Yukon, Canada and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in of the regional economic development plan that we talked about earlier. A number of projects identified in the plan have been and are being implemented in the community led by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in with funding from the regional economic development fund, the community development fund, strategic industry fund and CanNor. The community of Dawson is also a participant in the READI program, as I mentioned earlier.

In addition to the UNESCO CDF funding, the community has accessed a further \$377,468 through the community development fund for seven projects related to building biking trails on the Dome, restoring St. Paul's Church, building public washrooms on the waterfront and researching the Jewish presence and influence in Dawson during and after the gold rush. The department has also assisted both Chief Isaac Inc. and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in attending Cambridge House, Roundup and Yukon Days in Ottawa with a contribution of \$5,643.

In Faro, the town has commissioned a number of studies over the years related to tourism and now wants to take what is still relevant from those studies, create a current awareness of opportunities and vitalize the economic potential of tourism. The Regional Economic Development branch provided \$30,000 toward the *Great for Faro — Good for Tourism* strategy, which was completed in December of this past year. Departmental staff visited Faro in January and presented the economic development programs at a town council meeting and they continue to provide research, support and advice to the council administration. In addition the community accessed \$54,920 in this current fiscal year through the community development fund to restore the Tintina shooting range. In September 2015, in partnership

with the Economic Developers Association of Canada, departmental staff supported 15 economic development professionals from across Canada to tour the community.

In Haines Junction, departmental staff continue to engage with the municipality, the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, its development corporations, the St. Elias Chamber of Commerce and other community stakeholders on a variety of capacity-building and opportunity-identification initiatives.

In the current fiscal year, the department has provided \$1,303 in funding to the Village of Haines Junction to allow a senior staff person to attend economic development-related workshops at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities conference. The department has provided technical assistance to the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations related to a forestry opportunity and continues to discuss support for other projects with the First Nation.

Funding was also provided to Dakwakada capital investment to attend Cambridge House as well as Roundup in Vancouver. Department staff attended a forum in Haines Junction in November to explain how best it could support the initiatives spearheaded by the reconstituted St. Elias Chamber of Commerce. The Regional Economic Development branch continues to engage with the chamber and is currently providing technical assistance to help develop marketing material for its members.

Mayo — the Na Cho Nyäk Dun and the Village of Mayo are involved in the north Yukon READI project, which we have discussed already. Building upon prior-year investments, the First Nation Development Corporation has been approved for \$50,000 in funding this year by the department to support its business development activities in the region. As well, the development corporation was approved for \$14,718 to help offset the costs related to a five-year review of a First Nation community benefit agreement with Alexco. In addition, the development corporation was approved for \$2,300 to help offset expenses related to attendance at Roundup and Cambridge House.

Regional Economic Development staff are also in discussion with the development corporation about ways in which the department could help the community maximize benefits from the proposed Stewart-to-Keno transmission line upgrades.

Old Crow: the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation is actively involved in the north Yukon READI project as well. The Vuntut Gwitchin have accessed \$65,157 through CDF to research, mark and clear three traditional travel routes to support both potential tourism and traditional lifestyle opportunities through opening new trapping areas and potential tourism routes.

Pelly Crossing: activities this year in Pelly include support of \$2,908 for the Selkirk Development Corporation staff to attend the Roundup in Vancouver in January and the completion of the Minto mine socio-economic household survey, which was conducted by the Selkirk First Nation with financial support from the Department of Economic Development. The department also continued to support capacity development within the First Nation through an

arrangement that allowed a departmental employee to complete a two-year senior management assignment with Selkirk First Nation in November of 2015.

Ross River: the department continues to engage with Ross River and the First Nation and its development corporation in relation to economic development planning opportunities and opportunity identification initiatives. During the course of the year, Regional Economic Development provided \$11,476 in funding to enable a commercial subsidiary of the First Nation to establish a joint venture relationship with a third party. The department also approved \$6,000 for the community development fund for Yukon College and the Dene Cho Kê'endj Ross River Campus to deliver an eight-week housing maintenance program designed to develop the skills necessary to prepare and maintain housing units within the community.

Watson Lake: departmental staff visited Watson Lake in August, as well as again in December of 2015, when they prepared an overview of economic development programs at a town council meeting. The department continues to engage with the Town of Watson Lake, the Liard First Nation and its development corporation, the Watson Lake Chamber of Commerce, as well as other community stakeholders, in relation to economic development planning and opportunity identification initiatives. The department approved \$7,500 in funding for the Liard First Nation Development Corporation to undertake an economic development strategy planning session. In the current fiscal year, the community was approved \$238,032 through CDF to support the Mike Smith hockey camp and to undertake upgrades to the Watson Lake ski hill, to install a toddler play room area at the Watson Lake recreation centre and to build a playground at the Watson Lake Daycare Centre.

Madam Chair, in Teslin, the Teslin Tlingit Council continues to work on its bioenergy and wood project feasibility study, with phase 1 of the project anticipated to be completed during this fiscal year. The department also provided almost \$1,000 toward the First Nation's participation at Yukon Days in Ottawa; the DDC, or Dèslin Development Corporation, has been approved for \$37,500 in the current year to help it maximize the benefits to the community of a number of capital projects occurring within Teslin. This is part of \$150,000 approved over 36 months to help DDC maximize the benefits to the community of a number of capital projects occurring within Teslin. In addition, the Village of Teslin accessed \$117,825 from CDF for three projects, which included building a gazebo in Friendship Park, community beautification projects and upgrades to the arena.

Madam Chair, I think that covers — that is not including Whitehorse, so that definitely shows where we have been working with the communities.

Ms. Hanson: I believe the question I had asked was also with respect to the municipal economic development strategy — what we heard is quite a long list of projects. That's great, but it does not speak to a strategy; it speaks to a list of project submissions. The challenge that you have is that, year over year, when we simply have a series of projects,

there is often a disconnect and an inordinate amount of time and energy put on those people applying for funds, their administrative staff, without a coherent or a cohesive connection between projects. So there are two aspects: one is the overall regional economic development strategy; and secondly, there was a reference made by the minister to a municipal economic development strategy, and I had asked if there was a copy of the terms of reference for that.

I just want to go back to a couple of other areas. I would ask the minister if he could provide an update. Over the last little while, I've heard some talk about the Yukon Film and Sound Commission. I would like the minister to update me. My understanding is the policy review process that was underway for the Yukon Film and Sound Commission has either been suspended or is not happening. I would ask the minister to confirm the status of the Yukon Film and Sound Commission policy review and what aspects of the commission are being reviewed. Is there increased focus on the flexibility of the commission in terms of its competitiveness with other jurisdictions? Does the Yukon Film and Sound Commission currently address — or is it current enough to address issues of digital media? Are dollars provided to digital media?

Given that it seems to be that the approach being taken today is to talk out the 20 minutes, then I will ask a few more questions so he can have something to talk to, as opposed to just going back and forth in budget debate and discussion.

The budget identifies \$717,000, as he mentioned, for a new investor relations unit. He talked about one of the key activities being after-care. I would like the minister to address more specifically the purpose of that unit. How does this unit fit with the strategic plan that was established in 2012 for 2012-17 and the current staffing for the investor relations unit? The department published the Yukon investment attraction strategy in 2014: the *Yukon Investment Attraction Strategy: Yukon Mining Industry*. Is the unit specifically created for this purpose or are there other sectors that the investor relations unit is also focused on and looking at? This might be in line with the Film and Sound Commission question I just asked.

If it's not exclusively focused on the non-renewable resource sector — and I would like to know which elements of the non-renewable resource sector, in addition to mining, would be included — has the department developed any other documents that speak to investment attraction? What consultation with industry and other stakeholders has taken place? Would the minister table those, if they're available?

The minister spoke in his comments about numerous trips and money spent on investment attraction. He spoke about after-care. What has been the result of the initiatives to date — so since 2014, 2015, 2016 — in terms of the return on investments? He mentioned that he actually used the words, at one point, about linking foreign investment. He made the comment that there would have been significant foreign investment. If he could quantify what is significant foreign investment and in what areas? So what are we talking about — he also used the phrase, “as a large number of mining

companies to maximize opportunities". Could he expand on that? Because surely when we're spending territorial resources, we would like to know what our ROI is on that.

What are we getting back? What benefits have flowed directly to the Yukon? How is investment attraction measured? Are there clear measurements with respect to new Yukon businesses, the expansion of existing businesses and Yukon jobs in terms of what money is flowing directly into Yukon's economy? Has the minister directed that his department — I know this is not being done on local jobs. We have asked this numerous times when we talk about local procurement in terms of the local procurement multiplier effect, but hopefully at some point we will begin to get that kind of economic analysis occurring. I would ask the minister if that is part of what he directed, as it would appear from the strategic plan that this should be coming up for review. In anticipation of that, what is the minister looking for from his department in terms of ensuring that there is actually a return on the investment for this area?

There is a whole range of issues to be raised, for sure, with respect to fibre optic and Internet because clearly we have a lot of talk about it, but actually no action. We are most fascinated to hear the minister's plans about how he actually anticipates that the fibre optic link will be up and running by 2017, which I would remind him is next year — actually, it is less than a year away. I am looking forward to hearing when he anticipates actually having something to announce about how and how much that will be.

He mentioned the CRTC hearings on basic services and the implications that may have for the north and for Yukon in particular. I would ask the minister to elaborate on what position the Yukon government is taking in those hearings, what points of view and what is the basis for those points of view. Who have they consulted? I would ask the minister also to update the House with respect to — again going back to local procurement. It's an initiative the Premier has certainly made clear that he expects people to use their credit cards to do local procurement but, as we know, the issue is much broader than that.

The minister, in the past — and certainly the Premier — has not been forthcoming with respect to the current status of discussions around the *Agreement on Internal Trade* and what is the current status of those discussions? Who from the Department of Economic Development — which sector — is involved, or is it simply ECO? Does Economic Development have a view or a role in influencing the Yukon's position on AIT? As they've done that, what consideration have they been giving to the local businesses that have identified a number of specific issues around how the business incentive programs for Yukon businesses could be better defined and provide greater opportunities to level the playing field, in terms of local businesses and the spinoffs — again, the multiplier effect of local businesses hiring local people, paying local income taxes, buying local houses and supporting local businesses? In turn, it's that whole cycle.

I think I've laid out about five or six key areas that I look to the minister to identify in terms of what focus and what

direction he's giving as a department, and how the department will be assessing progress on these fronts.

I just wanted to ask him one last question before I sit down, because it would be my last question, probably, because I imagine he will use the balance of the day to respond. Can the minister provide us a confirmation on whether or not there has been an update to the enterprise trade fund that was last updated in 2007, which, according to their documents, we pick up when we go to a public event? It says the enterprise trade fund was updated in 2007, and I'm just curious as to that — also the other public document that talks about the small business investment tax credit. He knows I've asked him previously about — him and his predecessor — the openness of this government to expanding the base amount that's available in terms of a tax credit, and the number of businesses that have accessed that — if that has changed — and the assessed impact of the small business investment tax credit on Yukon businesses and the Yukon economy.

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Let's see how many of these we can touch on.

First, the municipal economic strategy was actually a specific project that was initiated by the City of Whitehorse. It's not a departmental initiative, and I believe that it is online with the City of Whitehorse website in case that's of interest.

In terms of Internet speeds, we did just hear about the collected Internet speed test information. The CIRA released a study in April — just the other day — summarized the results of the test between May 2015 and December 2015, and it did show that the average result of 6.7 megabits per second of download is substantially below the Canadian average of 18.6 megabits per second download. We have talked to Northwestel. The department was recently at the CRTC hearings at the beginning of April and has advocated for a minimum service standard of 25 megabits per second. We are working on that as well.

In terms of the Yukon film fund review, the government remains committed to reviewing Yukon's media programs to ensure that they are competitive and that they keep pace with the changes in the industry, they keep pace with the changes being made to programs available nationally and in other jurisdictions.

Currently, we have provided 271 productions with \$7.852 million since April 2013. The recent announcement by Canadian Heritage to strengthen Canadian content, creation, discovery and export in a digital world was presented to stakeholders and media creators with an opportunity to reflect on how content is created and distributed in a digital age. Of course, it will be critical to Yukon to ensure that our film funding review addresses any changes to national funding programs.

After meeting with groups and individuals with an interest in a strong economic media industry, the department has prepared a "what we heard" document. The document is currently being analyzed internally and is expected to be made public once the analysis is complete. Government, through the Film and Sound Commission, works with the Yukon's film and sound industries to create opportunities for Yukoners and

to maximize the economic impact of media production in Yukon.

As of January 28 of this year, over \$8.3 million has been awarded to 428 film- and sound-related projects and initiatives. These programs provide funding to Yukon producers for projects that have demonstrated commercial potential. The programs also provide financial benefits to production companies from outside Yukon to film in the Yukon and to hire Yukoners.

From April 1 of last year to January 28 of this year, the Yukon Film and Sound Commission approved 20 film projects for funding under the film incentive programs, providing approximately \$965,000 to support filmmakers. Additionally, during the same period, seven film projects were approved for approximately \$25,000 under the enterprise trade fund.

In the new investor relations unit, the external investment in the territory's investment-ready sectors — such as natural resources, technology and tourism — is key in developing the Yukon's private sector economy. To assist in attracting this investment, the department has recently created this new investor relation unit. The mandate of the unit includes raising awareness of Yukon investment opportunities, to facilitate the connection between investors in Yukon projects, to provide business care and after-care for investors once they enter the market, and to provide advice on and act as advocates for the formation of investment policy within the Yukon government.

The creation of units that target high-priority areas of the economy — such as the investor relations unit, the enterprise development services unit and the Technology and Telecommunications Development Directorate — bring a greater focus within government while providing one-window access points for clients. The department uses a special teams approach to deliver on a broad mandate in an efficient and effective way. The organization of the Business and Industry Development branch allows for teams of skilled professionals to focus on their areas of mandate, and BID now has four teams overseen by one director position. Those four teams include: Yukon film and sound, enterprise development services, technology and telecommunications, and investor relations. The investor relations unit, which was created in November of last year, consists of a manager, three senior business development advisors and a program officer. The investment attraction budget for this year as the member opposite mentioned is \$717,000.

Madam Chair, the enterprise development services unit provides a storefront location for Yukon small- and medium-sized businesses seeking advice, support and resources. In 2015, the EDS staff have had the opportunity to advise numerous small businesses inquiring about local support services and relevant government policy. Some examples of that include: assisting a local company to fully understand how the *Liquor Act* applies to their business by liaising with the Liquor Corporation; advising several small groups and companies interested in commercial greenhouses of available programming and funding from CanNor, Yukon's Agriculture branch and the Yukon Cold Climate Innovation centre;

participating in the BYTE conference to provide start-up advice to young entrepreneurs — and several attendees have had subsequent meetings with the unit and one has expanded her business through the enterprise trade fund as a result; and connecting multiple clients with federal funding programs to advance significant projects.

They have advised local business owners on Yukon tax policy and available resources for filing business taxes for the first time, worked with tourism operators to explore options for connecting their remote location to the power grid, advised local companies on how to fully take advantage of the rising American dollar by expanding into Alaska, worked with a wilderness lodge to secure a temporary permit to maintain a government-owned road to avoid suspension of winter season renovations, helped companies take advantage of the Canada job grant offered through partnership with Advanced Education to build workforce capacity for their business, and researched and identified local and external expertise for companies looking to open or expand current businesses into new industries.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Mr. Elias: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Elias that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 21, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 23, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.